



**Merri-bek**  
City Council

## COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

Wednesday 13 May 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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## **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 10 June 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 27 May 2026 commencing at 6.30 pm.

## **WELCOME**

### **1. APOLOGIES/LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

### **2. DISCLOSURES OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

### **3. MINUTE CONFIRMATION**

The minutes of the Council Meeting held on 8 April 2026 and the Special Council Meetings held 15 April and 22 April 2026 be confirmed.

### **4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND OTHER MATTERS**

### **5. PETITIONS**

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*Pursuant to section 3(1)(g(ii)) of the Local Government Act 2020 this report 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.*

## 5. PETITIONS

### 5.1 PETITION REQUESTING COUNCIL NAMES THE DRIVEWAY BETWEEN BARKLY STREET AND WILSON AVENUE, BRUNSWICK

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A petition (D26/178991) has been received containing 12 signatories requesting Council names the driveway between Barkly Street and Wilson Avenue, Brunswick.

#### **Officer Recommendation**

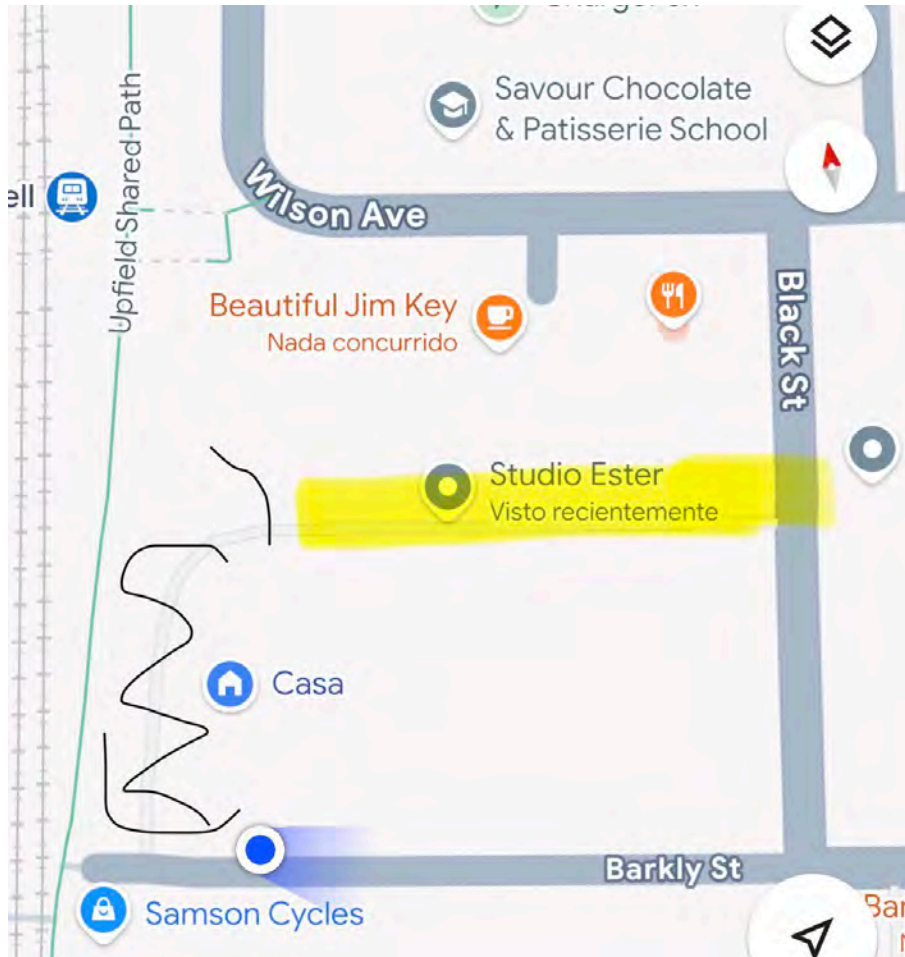
That Council:

1. Receives the petition, requesting Council names the driveway between Barkly Street and Wilson Avenue, Brunswick.
2. Refers the petition requesting Council names the driveway between Barkly Street and Wilson Avenue, Brunswick to the Director Place and Environment for consideration and response.

#### **Attachment/s**

- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| 1 <a href="#">↓</a> Petition - Requesting Council names the driveway between Barkly Street and Wilson Avenue, Brunswick - May 2026 - Redacted | D26/178991 |
|---|------------|

I'm writing to you today because my neighbours and I are dealing with a pair of growing problems that have become a daily headache for our little pocket of Brunswick.



First, "porch piracy" has become incredibly common here; because we don't have a registered rear address, couriers leave packages right on our front doorsteps in full view of the street, and they are being stolen at an alarming rate.

Second, because the bluestone laneway behind us doesn't officially exist on a map, we constantly have delivery drivers and visitors getting lost, driving into our narrow dead-end alley by mistake, and having to perform dangerous U-turns or reverse back out onto the traffic of Barkly Street.

Thirdly, as you might be able to appreciate from the map's screenshot, google is showing that the back lane has an exit in Barkly st. But that is incorrect as there is no through road, this has caused in several occasions that food delivery gets left in the bike path next to the railway. The 2 business operating in this lane are not able to locate themselves in Google Maps and so they need to leave the building to collect their visitors, one of them is used for philosophy lessons, where over 30 people need to be led from Wilson's Ave into their space at the rear lane.

The solution we are proposing is to formally name this laneway Cordelia Lane. By giving this "back street" an identity, it will finally show up on GPS and Google Maps. This simple change would allow us to direct deliveries and business logistics to our secure rear garages, instantly cutting down on theft.

We've chosen the name Cordelia to honour Cordelia Barkly (daughter of Sir Henry Barkly), which we feel is a great way to respect Brunswick's history while supporting the Council's goal of recognizing more women in our local street names.

In short, naming this lane provides four major wins for our community:

- Crime Prevention: Allows secure, GPS-tracked deliveries to our rear gates, ending the current "porch piracy" issue.
- Business Growth: Provides a formal "Commercial" access for the mixed-use properties in this block, separating business deliveries from residential frontages.
- Safety & Navigation: Corrects GPS data so lost drivers stop entering a narrow dead-end, making the lane safer for the residents and children who use it.
- Better Waste Management: Allows us to move bins to the rear for collection (alongside the Wilson Ave trucks), keeping Barkly Street's footpaths clear and tidy.

I also wonder, if naming the rear lane would allow us to have our rubbish collected through there, joining the Wilson's ave. building's rubbish collection, as the new fortnightly system gets implemented using the back lane for this purpose would be a good solution for those Neighbours concern about having 2 weeks of accumulated rubbish on their front entry.

We believe this is a great way for the Council to solve several safety, security and logistic issues for a large group of residents and business owners.

I've already started a petition and have found that my neighbours are overwhelmingly in favour of this change and so I have attached the signatures of all the neighbours which reside in this pocket of Barkly st and have access to the lane, supporting this proposal.



## NAME THE BACK LANE

Sign here to support the petition of naming the driveway between Barkly st. and Wilson Ave.

NAME	ADDRESS	SIGNATURE
[Redacted]		

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

## 7. COUNCIL REPORTS

### 7.1 PROPOSED AMENDMENT C239MBEK – BRUNSWICK AND COBURG ACTIVITY CENTRES HERITAGE PROJECT: DECISION GATEWAY 1

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade

City Design and Economy

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*At its meeting on 8 April 2026, Council deferred consideration of this report to the May 2026 Council meeting, to allow further consideration of the matter. The report has been updated to include an additional paragraph within the Background section, providing further information on GML Heritage's Stage 1 study.*

#### Officer recommendation

That Council:

1. Adopts the *Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centre Heritage Study: Stage 2 Final Report* (GML Heritage, 2025) at Attachment 1 as the general basis for Amendment C239mbek to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme (Amendment).
2. Notes the *Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres Heritage Study Peer Review* (Lovell Chen, 2025) at Attachment 2 and the *Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centre Heritage Project: Summary of findings and officer recommendations* report at Attachment 3.
3. As the planning authority, applies to the Minister for Planning (Minister) under section 8A of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (Vic) (Act), for authorisation to prepare the Amendment.
4. If authorisation is received:
  - a) Authorises the Director Place and Environment to make changes to the draft Amendment documentation at Attachment 5 as required prior to exhibition of the Amendment to correct any administrative errors and to meet any conditions the Minister imposes through authorisation.
  - b) Endorses, for the purpose of exhibition, the draft Amendment documentation at Attachment 5, subject to any changes required under (4)(a) above.
  - c) Exhibits the Amendment in accordance with sections 17, 18 and 19 of the Act.

## REPORT

### Executive summary

The Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres contain a mix of commercial shopfronts, civic and community buildings, former industrial buildings, and residential development ranging from the nineteenth century to the present day. As key Activity Centres, both centres have seen (and will continue to see), significant change and development.

Following two Council resolutions, Council engaged independent consultants, GML Heritage, in 2024 to provide technical heritage expertise for the project, as a single study covering the scope of both resolutions at the same time. The work was delivered in two stages:

- **Stage 1:** Preliminary heritage assessment of *all* properties within the Brunswick and Coburg activity centre boundaries. Stage 1 is not addressed in this report.
- **Stage 2:** Detailed heritage investigation and recommendations for places identified in Stage 1.

Council received GML Heritage's final report, *Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centre Heritage Study – Stage 2 Final Report* (Stage 2 Report), in June 2025. The Stage 2 Report is provided at **Attachment 1**. On significant heritage studies Council often undertakes an independent peer review to ensure a thorough process. In this case an independent peer review was completed in October 2025 by Lovell Chen Heritage Consultants (see **Attachment 2**).

Based on this work, officers recommend that Council adopt the Stage 2 Report as the strategic basis for Amendment C239mbek to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme and seek authorisation from the Minister for Planning to prepare and exhibit the Amendment.

The proposed Amendment will ensure the Heritage Overlay is current and accurate, including the identification of places of heritage significance in areas undergoing change. Specifically, the Amendment would:

- Apply the Heritage Overlay to six individually significant places.
- Apply the Heritage Overlay to one new heritage precinct.
- Amend four existing Heritage Overlay precincts.
- Correct mapping errors affecting HO170 and HO600.

If Council endorses the Stage 2 report to proceed to the next stages, it will be exhibited for community feedback. Community feedback will then be considered before a final amendment is presented to Council.

*The Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres Heritage Project: Summary of findings and officer recommendations* report is at **Attachment 3**.

## **Previous Council decisions**

### **Heritage Shopfronts in Coburg - 12 July 2023**

*That Council:*

1. *Includes an action in the Heritage Implementation Plan 2022-2025 to undertake a preliminary heritage assessment of properties within the Coburg Activity Centre (from Bell Street to Moreland Road), subject to funding allocation of \$60,000.*
2. *Considers funding allocation of \$60,000 in 2023/24 as part of the quarter 1 budget review.*
3. *Makes the following additional changes to the Heritage Implementation Plan 2022-2025:*
  - a) *Item P5: Prepare a Conservation Management Plan for CERES Community Environment Park and Joe's Market Garden to support implementation of the findings of the Merri-bek Heritage Nominations Study - move to 2025/2026.*
  - b) *Item P6: Undertake a preliminary assessment to understand extent of Victorian cottages in Brunswick that are within a Heritage Overlay, and those that are not - move to 2025/2026.*

### **Vibrant Brunswick – 10 May 2023**

*That Council:*

1. *Notes the feedback from the community in Phases 1 and 2 of community engagement as outlined in the Vibrant Brunswick Final Engagement Report at Attachment 1.*
2. *Endorses the revised Draft Brunswick Activity Centre Zone at Attachment 2 and Draft Vibrant Brunswick Structure Plan at Attachment 3 for Phase 3 of community engagement.*
3. *Resolves that subject to funding allocation, to commence a comprehensive review of built form controls in the Brunswick Activity Centre across the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years.*

## Community Heritage Action Plan – 7 December 2022

*That Council:*

1. *Note the Heritage Action Plan 2017 – 2032 Implementation Plan for the 2022-2025 period as shown at Attachment 1.*
2. *Include an additional action in the Implementation Plan 2022-2025, to research and document the history of the Upfield Rail Line, with an anticipated budget requirement of \$20,000.*
3. *Develop a Terms of Reference for and establish a Heritage and Local History Reference Group chaired by Cr Tapinos, which meets quarterly and includes representatives from local historical societies.*
4. *Refer unfunded items in the Heritage Action Plan 2017 – 2032 Implementation Plan 2022-2025 to the 2023/2024 budget process for consideration.*

### 1. Policy context

#### Council Plan

The *Merri-bek City Council Plan 2025–2029* identifies “Beautiful and liveable city” as a key strategic objective. Protecting and managing places of heritage significance through the planning scheme supports this objective by maintaining the valued character, identity, and sense of place within Merri-bek’s activity centres as they evolve and grow.

#### Heritage Action Plan

The *Merri-bek Heritage Action Plan 2017-2032* guides Council in meeting its heritage obligations outlined in legislation, including the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. The Plan seeks to protect Merri-bek’s heritage places from inappropriate demolition, development or subdivision by identifying and protecting heritage places through the Merri-bek Planning Scheme. The following actions are relevant to Amendment C239mbek:

- K15 - Prepare heritage reports as required to assist with the assessment of planning applications or planning scheme amendments where there is no current heritage control.
- P8 - Continue to review new and emerging heritage in Moreland [Merri-bek] as it develops.

#### *Planning and Environment Act 1987*

The *Planning and Environment Act 1987* outlines the objectives of planning in Victoria. Councils have a duty under section 4(1) to implement these objectives. Specific to heritage, these include objectives to:

- Provide for the fair, orderly, economic and sustainable use, and development of land.
- Conserve and enhance those buildings, areas or other places which are of scientific, aesthetic, architectural or historical interest, or otherwise of special cultural value.

Council therefore has an obligation to manage its local heritage and subsequently is required to undertake the relevant research to identify properties which hold local significance.

#### Merri-bek Planning Scheme

The Merri-bek Planning Scheme provides the statutory framework for managing development affecting places of heritage significance. State policy at Clause 15.03-1S (Heritage Conservation) seeks to conserve places of heritage significance and ensure development respects identified heritage values and the setting of heritage places.

Local policy at Clause 15.03-1L (Heritage in Merri-bek) provides more detailed guidance for development affecting heritage places. This includes respecting the scale, form, massing and siting of heritage buildings and ensuring alterations and additions are visually recessive.

### Heritage Overlay

The Heritage Overlay (HO) is a planning control in the Merri-bek Planning Scheme that applies to places and precincts identified as having heritage significance. Where the overlay applies, a planning permit may be required for subdivision, demolition, external alterations, additions or new development. This ensures that changes respect the heritage significance, character and setting of the place.

## **2. Background**

Following two Council resolutions in 2023, the Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres Heritage Project (Project) was initiated as a single heritage study, to review existing and potential heritage places and precincts within the two evolving centres.

These vibrant centres are anchored by the Upfield rail corridor and the Sydney Road commercial spine. Their heritage reflects the historic evolution of the Sydney Road corridor as a major transport and commercial route serving Melbourne's northern suburbs. This is expressed in the fine-grain pattern of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century shopfronts along Sydney Road, complemented by civic buildings, former industrial sites and surrounding Victorian, Edwardian and interwar residential areas.

Currently across Victoria, there is a strong policy focus on facilitating housing supply. Both Brunswick and Coburg have been identified by the Victorian Government in the Activity Centres Program (Program), which seek to support increased housing in locations that are well serviced by jobs, services and public transport.

Progressing a heritage review within this context of competing planning priorities requires clear strategic justification and robust supporting evidence.

### **Supporting technical heritage advice**

Council engaged independent heritage consultants, GML Heritage, in early 2024 to undertake a review of places within the Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres. GML Heritage progressed this work in two stages:

- **Stage 1:** Preliminary heritage assessment of all properties within the Brunswick and Coburg activity centre boundaries. Stage 1 is not addressed in this report.
- **Stage 2:** Detailed heritage investigation and recommendations for places identified in Stage 1.

Stage 1 involved a review of over 3,700 properties across the Brunswick and Coburg activity centres. GML Heritage assessed each place for potential inclusion in the Heritage Overlay, and the appropriateness of existing controls. The Stage 1 report identified precincts and individual places for further assessment in Stage 2 (in both Brunswick and Coburg), including potential new areas and sites. To support a Planning Scheme amendment, each place and precinct must be tested against heritage criteria to confirm it meets the required threshold of cultural significance. This detailed work was undertaken in Stage 2 of the project.

The second stage involved assessing five new precincts and 11 new individual places, as well as two individual places with an existing Heritage Overlay and the Sydney Road Precinct (HO149).

The *Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centre Heritage Study, Stage 2 Final Report* (Stage 2 Study) at **Attachment 2** provides the following recommendations:

1. Add three new precincts of local heritage significance to the Heritage Overlay.

2. Add ten new individual places of local heritage significance to the Heritage Overlay.
3. Amending existing Heritage Overlay controls including:
  - HO1 – Albert Street Brunswick Precinct.
  - HO77 – Frederick Street Precinct.
  - HO149 – Sydney Road Brunswick Precinct incorporating: HO61, HO151, HO154, HO155, HO156, HO158, HO160, HO162, HO163, HO167, HO170, and HO248.
  - HO243 – Former Alhambra Theatre.

#### Peer review of the Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres Heritage Study

Council engaged Lovell Chen Heritage Consultants in mid-2025 to undertake an independent peer review of the *Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres Heritage Study – Stage 2 Final Report*. This was to ensure the methodology, findings and associated heritage citations are robust, defensible and fit for purpose.

The *Brunswick and Coburg Heritage Peer Review* (Lovell Chen Heritage Consultants, 2025) was completed in October 2025 and is provided at **Attachment 2**.

Importantly, the peer review found that the methodology, significance gradings and research undertaken in the Stage 2 Study are consistent with accepted heritage practice and supported by appropriate comparative analysis, consistent with *Planning Practice Note 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay* (PPN01).

The review supported the inclusion of one new heritage precinct and six individually significant places in the Merri-bek Planning Scheme and recommended updates to several existing Heritage Overlay schedules. While the overall application of the HERCON criteria was considered sound, the review noted that in some cases the threshold for local heritage significance involved professional judgement.

The Stage 2 Report provides the primary technical evidence base for identifying places of potential heritage significance within the Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres. The independent Peer Review provides an additional level of scrutiny to confirm the methodology, analysis and recommendations.

### 3. Issues

#### **Officer assessment**

Council officers have reviewed both the *Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres Heritage Study – Stage 2 Final Report* (GML Heritage, 2025) and the *Brunswick and Coburg Heritage Peer Review* (Lovell Chen, 2025).

The findings of these reports, together with officer commentary and recommendations, are summarised in the *Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres Heritage Project: Summary of Findings and Officer Recommendations* report (**Attachment 3**).

In considering both reports, officers have assessed the recommendations and exercised professional judgement to identify an appropriate and balanced outcome for Council's consideration.

In summary, the following final supported findings of the Stage 2 Report are identified:

1. Add one new precinct of local heritage significance to the Heritage Overlay (Linden Street, Brunswick East).
2. Add six new individual places of local heritage significance to the Heritage Overlay.
3. Amend existing Heritage Overlay controls including:
  - HO1 – Albert Street Brunswick Precinct.

- HO77 – Frederick Street Precinct.
- HO149 – Sydney Road Brunswick Precinct incorporating: HO61, HO151, HO154, HO155, HO156, HO158, HO160, HO162, HO163, HO167, and HO248.

Officers also support correcting mapping anomalies affecting HO170 and HO600 identified in the Peer Review. These corrections were identified during the officer review process and were not included in the Stage 2 Report. Further detail is provided in **Attachment 3**, Section 4.

#### State Government Activity Centres Program – Merri-bek Train and Tram Zone Activity Centres

On 18 March 2026, the State Government released the final maps for the Activity Centres Program (Program) for Merri-bek's train and tram zone activity centres. These maps establish core and catchment boundaries, indicative building heights and other built form guidance for the Coburg and Brunswick Activity Centres, forming part of a wider State initiative to plan for more homes close to public transport across Melbourne.

While the Program introduces new built form guidance to inform future development, existing heritage protections are still expected to apply alongside these controls. The Heritage Overlay and other statutory overlays remain relevant, ensuring that heritage considerations continue to be taken into account when assessing planning applications within a Heritage Overlay.

**Attachment 4** shows the Activity Centre core boundary, the application of the existing Heritage Overlay, and the proposed Heritage Overlay under Amendment C239mbek.

#### **Officer recommendation – Proposed Amendment C239mbek**

Based on this assessment, officers recommend that Council adopt the *Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres Heritage Study – Stage 2 Final Report* at **Attachment 1** as the primary strategic basis for Amendment C239mbek to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme.

Officers also recommend seeking authorisation from the Minister for Planning to prepare and exhibit the Amendment, with draft documentation provided at **Attachment 5**.

The Amendment would apply and update the Heritage Overlay for identified places and precincts within the Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres to ensure their heritage values are appropriately recognised and managed.

Specifically, the Amendment would implement, in part, the recommendations of the Stage 2 Report by amending the Merri-bek Planning Scheme to:

- Apply the Heritage Overlay to six individually significant places and one new heritage precinct.
- Amend the boundaries and controls of existing heritage precincts.
- Correct mapping anomalies within the Heritage Overlay.
- Amend the Merri-bek Heritage Exemptions Incorporated Plan.
- Update Clause 15.03-1L (Heritage in Merri-bek) to reference the heritage study.
- Amend Clause 43.01 – Heritage Overlay Schedule to include new places and updated controls.

The Amendment supports the objectives of planning in Victoria by conserving and enhancing places of heritage significance, while ensuring that as the Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres continue to evolve and accommodate growth, new development responds appropriately to their identified heritage values.

## **Community impact**

The proposed Amendment may affect property owners and occupiers where new or amended Heritage Overlay controls are introduced. The Heritage Overlay does not prevent development but requires certain works to be assessed through the planning permit process to ensure they respond appropriately to the heritage significance of the place. Public exhibition of the Amendment will provide affected landowners and the broader community with an opportunity to review the proposed controls and make submissions.

## **Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications**

Council declared a climate emergency in 2018 and is committed to urgent action. While the Amendment primarily relates to heritage planning controls, conserving and reusing existing buildings can contribute to environmental sustainability by reducing demolition waste and embodied carbon. Overall, the Amendment is not expected to have significant direct climate emergency implications.

## **Economic sustainability implications**

The Amendment may have economic implications for some landowners where heritage controls are applied, as certain works may require planning approval. However, the Heritage Overlay does not prevent development and can support the distinctive character and attractiveness of activity centres, which may contribute to local economic activity.

## **Legal and risk considerations**

Planning scheme amendments must follow the statutory process under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, including Ministerial authorisation, public exhibition, and consideration of submissions. The Amendment is supported by a heritage study and independent peer review, providing a robust evidence base for the proposed controls.

## **Human Rights Consideration**

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with *the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

There are no human rights implications related to the report.

## **4. Community consultation and engagement**

Public consultation will occur through the statutory exhibition process for the Amendment. Subject to the Minister for Planning granting authorisation, it is anticipated that exhibition will occur in mid to late 2026 for a minimum period of four weeks.

In accordance with Section 19 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (Act), notice of Amendment C239mbek will be given to:

- Owners and occupiers of affected land.
- Prescribed Ministers and relevant public authorities.
- Municipal councils that may be affected by the Amendment.
- Relevant community organisations, including the Coburg Historical Society.

To comply with other notice requirements in section 19 of the Act and to reach the wider community, the following will be provided throughout the exhibition process:

- Publish notice of the Amendment in the Government Gazette and a newspaper circulating generally in the area.
- Make Amendment documentation available on Council's website, with hard copies available on request.

- Provide updates through Council communication channels, including social media.
- Include notice in relevant Council publications, where available during the exhibition period.

## 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

Budget to resource the exhibition of the Amendment and an independent Planning Panel process will be funded by the Strategic Planning Unit operating budget in 2025/2026. The estimated costs are broken down as follows:

### Resources

If the Amendment is approved and gazetted, the impacts on the Urban Planning Unit are expected to be minimal. While the inclusion of additional properties within the Heritage Overlay through Amendment C239mbek may result in a small increase in planning permit applications, this increase is expected to be modest and can be managed within the existing resources of the Urban Planning Unit. No additional resourcing is anticipated.

## 7. Implementation

If Council resolves in accordance with the officer recommendation, the next step will be to seek authorisation from the Minister for Planning to prepare the Amendment, as drafted. Following receipt of Ministerial authorisation, the Amendment will proceed to public exhibition.

The implementation timeline is structured around key decision gateways for Council. Timeframes are indicative only and are subject to Ministerial authorisation timelines and the reporting schedule of Planning Panels Victoria. The timeline assumes exhibition of the Amendment in late 2026.

- Decision Gateway 1: Authorisation and exhibition (current report).
- Decision Gateway 2: Consideration of submissions and request for a Planning Panel (early 2027).
- Decision Gateway 3: Consideration of the Planning Panel report and decision on the Amendment (mid 2027).

## Attachment/s

1	<a href="#">Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres Heritage Study - Final Report</a>	D26/118683	Under Separate Cover
2	<a href="#">Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres Heritage Study - Peer Review</a>	D26/118689	Under Separate Cover
3	<a href="#">Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres Heritage Project - Summary Report</a>	D26/87715	Under Separate Cover
4	<a href="#">Activity Centre Boundary and Heritage Overlay (Existing &amp; Proposed)</a>	D26/132191	Under Separate Cover
5	<a href="#">Proposed C239mbek - Draft Amendment Documentation</a>	D26/119799	Under Separate Cover

## 7.2 COMMUNITY GRANT PROGRAM ANNUAL ROUND RECOMMENDATIONS 2026

Director Community, Eamonn Fennessy

### Community Wellbeing

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#### Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Allocates Community Strengthening Grants to the value of \$84,948 for projects to be delivered in FY 2026/27
  - a) Australian Greek Welfare Society Ltd (trading as PRONIA) - \$5,700
  - b) Blind Sports Victoria Inc - \$7,000
  - c) Colour Them Safe - \$7,000
  - d) Friends of Merri Creek - \$6,248.00
  - e) Jesuit Social Services - \$7,000
  - f) Merri Community Health Services TA Holstep Health - \$7,000
  - g) Merri Maker Mums (auspice by Fawkner Neighbourhood House) - \$7,000
  - h) Off The List Records Inc - \$7,000
  - i) Open Table Inc - \$7,000
  - j) Pink Ember Studio Co-operative Ltd - \$5,000
  - k) Schoolhouse Studios Inc - \$2,500
  - l) The Onemda Association Inc - \$7,000
  - m) Uniting Vic Tas - \$4,000
  - n) Women`s Housing LTD - \$5,500
2. Allocates Organisational Establishment Grants to the value of \$16,000 per year for 3 years (\$48,000 over 3 years): 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29.
  - a) KindSugi Upcycling Inc - \$10,000 per year for 3 years (\$30,000 over 3 years)
  - b) Merri-bek Robotics Club Inc - \$6,000 per year for 3 years (\$18,000 over 3 years)
3. Allocates Facility Improvement Grants to the value of \$326,477.00 for projects to be delivered in 2026/27; two types recommended under this category:

Smaller Facility Improvement Grants up to \$10,000 per project,

  - a) Fawkner Neighbourhood House Inc - \$9,696
  - b) Merri-bek Community Gardening Inc - \$9,975
  - c) Mulberry Community Kitchen Garden Glenroy Inc - \$10,000
  - d) North Coburg Rebels Baseball Club Inc - \$10,000
  - e) Shirley Robertson Children's Centre - \$10,000
  - f) St Matthews Anglican Church Glenroy Hadfield with St Linus Merlynston - \$7,854

Larger Facility Improvement Grants up to \$40,000 per project,

  - a) Brunswick Juventus Football Club Inc - \$40,000
  - b) Carinya Society - \$40,000
  - c) Coburg Cricket Club Inc - \$24,945

- d) Dawson Street Child Care Co-operative Ltd - \$22,495.50
- e) Hadfield Tennis Club Inc - \$15,084
- f) Moomba Park Tennis Club Inc - \$30,000
- g) Next Wave Festival Inc - \$16,427.25
- h) The Bicycle Recycle Shed Inc - \$40,000
- i) West Brunswick Tennis Club Inc - \$40,000

<b>REPORT</b>
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## **Executive Summary**

The Community Grant Program offers a range of community grants for not-for-profit community organisations to apply for funding towards initiatives that benefit the Merri-bek community.

This round of applications opened for a period of over 9 weeks from 1 January for groups to apply for funding to support the delivery of projects between 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027 and support of new organisational between 1 July 2026 – 30 June 2029. Applications for this round support one-off project implementation, the development and delivery of facility improvements, and new organisations that benefit and engages the Merri-bek community through community led initiatives.

This report provides recommendations for funding in relation to the three annual categories:

- Community Strengthening Grant (up to \$7,000 per application),
- Organisational Establishment Grant (up to \$10,000 per year for 3 years),
- Facility Improvement Grant
  - smaller projects (up to \$10,000 per application),
  - Larger projects (up to \$40,000 per application, with a minimum 25 per cent contribution from the applicant towards the project).

For the 2026 annual program:

- Twenty-six (26) applications, to the value of \$170,786 were received under the Community Strengthening Grant category. Seventeen submissions were eligible for assessment; the community assessment panel is recommending to fund thirteen (13) projects to the value of \$84,948.
- Three (3) applications to the value of \$26,000 per year were received under the Organisational Support Grant category. Two (2) applications were eligible for assessment; the community assessment panel is recommending to fund both new organisations to the value of \$18,000 per year totalling in \$48,000 over 3 years.
- Twenty-five (25) applications requesting \$547,204 were received for Facility Improvement Grant funding program. Twenty-one (21) submissions were eligible for assessment; the community assessment panel is recommending to fund fifteen (15) projects to the value of \$317,074.50.

Following Council endorsement, all successful applicants will be notified of the outcome of their applications, and the necessary funding arrangements will be implemented. Unsuccessful, withdrawn, and incomplete applicants will be provided with feedback and relevant advice to help strengthen future applications.

## Previous Council Decisions

### Community Grant Program Annual Round Recommendations 2025 – 11 June 2025

*That Council:*

1. *Allocates Community Strengthening Grants to the value of \$89,365 for projects delivered in 2025/26:*
  - a) *Australia Nepal Public Linc Inc \$3,911*
  - b) *Celebrating & Conserving Cultures \$7,000*
  - c) *Culture, Arts & Language Academy \$7,000*
  - d) *Estrela do Mar Inc \$5,100*
  - e) *KindSugi Upcycling (auspiced by Social Health Australia) \$7,000*
  - f) *Merri Community Shed \$7,000*
  - g) *Merri Creek Management Committee \$7,000*
  - h) *Multi Art and Culture Association Inc \$7,000*
  - i) *Nepalese Association of Victoria \$7,000*
  - j) *Northern and Inner North Multiple Birth Association Inc \$7,000*
  - k) *Pink Ember Studio Co-operative Ltd \$6,500*
  - l) *Rain Moth Community Nursery (auspiced by NECCHI) \$6,677*
  - m) *U3A Merri-bek Inc \$6,077*
  - n) *Women`s Housing LTD \$5,100*
2. *Allocates Organisational Establishment Grants to the value of \$40,000 per year for 3 years; 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28:*
  - a) *Merri Community Shed \$10,000*
  - b) *Oddany Inc \$10,000*
  - c) *Styling Station Melbourne Ltd \$10,000*
  - d) *Vixen - Peer-Led Health and Support Network (Auspiced by Scarlet Alliance) \$10,000*
3. *Allocates a total of Facility Improvement Grants to the value of \$353,740 for projects delivered in 2025/26; the two types recommended under this category are:*

*Smaller Facility Improvement Grants (up to \$10,000 per project)*

  - a) *Coburg Primary School \$10,000*
  - b) *Cretan Brotherhood of Melbourne and Victoria \$10,000*
  - c) *Moomba Park Tennis Club Inc \$9,790*
  - d) *Newlands and East Coburg Community Hubs Inc (NECCHI) \$9,972*
  - e) *Norm Warehouse \$10,000*
  - f) *Transgender Victoria \$10,000*

*Larger Improvement Grants (up to \$40,000 per project).*

  - a) *5th Brunswick Scout Group (auspiced by Scouts Victoria) \$24,078*
  - b) *Bioquisitive LTD \$30,816*
  - c) *Ceres Earth Limited (t/a CERES Inc) \$40,000*
  - d) *Parish of St Vasilios Brunswick - Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia \$40,000*

- e) *Hadfield Tennis Club \$32,620*
  - f) *Kevin Heinze Grow \$22,013*
  - g) *Northern Schools Early Years Cluster Inc. (Glenroy Central Kindergarten) \$25,125*
  - h) *Pascoe Vale Sports Club Inc \$39,300*
  - i) *Sussex Neighbourhood House \$40,000*
4. *Notes Facility Improvement Grants second round for smaller projects up to \$10,000 per project. Recommendations to value of \$46,122 were endorsed by Director Community for projects delivered in 2024/25:*
- a) *Newlands and East Coburg Community Houses Inc. (NECCHI) \$9,122*
  - b) *Pascoe Vale Sports Club Inc \$10,000*
  - c) *Schoolhouse Studios \$7,000*
  - d) *St Matthews Anglican Church Glenroy Hadfield with St Linus Merlynston \$10,000*
  - e) *Sussex Neighbourhood House \$10,000*
5. *Notes the updated Community Grants Guidelines for 2025-2026.*

## **1. Policy Context**

This report is consistent with the Merri-bek Community Grants Policy (DSD1-CL) and the Council Plan 2025-2029.

The Community Grants Policy (DSD1-CL) outlines clear funding criteria and provides suitable direction for officers to promote and for the community panel to evaluate applications to fund locally based not-for-profit organisations. The assessment criteria ensures that there are equity, transparency and accountability.

Theme 2: Healthy and inclusive communities - To support accessible facilities, programs, services, housing that promote community wellbeing, and connection for all ages, abilities, genders, and cultures, fostering a safe, inclusive, and thriving Merri-bek community.

## **2. Background**

Merri-bek City Council (Council) provides annual and multi-year funding to support the community to; respond to community needs, provide programs and services that strengthen the Merri-bek community and deliver strategic outcomes for Council. This program provides support for new and innovative initiatives that respond to emerging community needs.

The Community Grants Program is one of the main community-strengthening initiatives run by Council and has been in existence since 1996. Council is committed to providing this funding efficiently, equitably and ethically.

This Annual Grant round was open to receive submissions over a period of 8 weeks from 1 January to 28 February 2026.

The 2025-2026 budget includes the following allocations for the Community Grants Program:

- \$607,908 for the Community Grants Program
- \$385,000 in the CAPEX as Partnership Grants that is allocated to Facility Improvement Grants

The Community Grants Program incorporates a range of funding categories and subcategories including:

- Community Participation Grants
  - For Individuals

- For Groups
- Membership Activity Grants
- Community Strengthening Grants
- Organisational Establishment Grants
- Facility Improvement Grants
  - Smaller projects
  - Larger project

This report relates to the Community Strengthening Grant, Facility Improvement Grant and Organisational Establishment Grant categories only.

For categories open all year round, Community Participation Grants: for groups, for individuals and Membership Activity Grants, these are approved all year round under delegation as per the Policy (DSD1-CL). The successful listing of these categories can be viewed on Council's website. <https://www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/my-council/grants-and-awards/community-grants-program/all-year-round-grants/>

The funding categories included in the Community Grants Program that are open all year round or operate on different timeframes are not being considered as part of this report.

### Assessment

Following an assessment against funding eligibility, an external multi-disciplinary assessment panel of community members was formed to consider and assess applications against the funding criteria. Relevant Council officers were consulted where specialist advice was required.

Council engaged The Public Value Studio to facilitate the assessment process for this round of annual grants. The Public Value Studio selected and recruited a Community Assessment Panel (CAP) that reflected a diverse mix of age groups, demographics, specialist expertise, geographic representation across Merri-bek, and a broad range of lived experience

Submissions were assessed against the following criteria:

% of Score	Criteria	How we assess applications
40%	Supports Community Grants Objectives and Funding Priorities	How does the application meet one or more of the <a href="#">Community Grants Objectives</a> ? To what extent does the project address the <a href="#">Funding Priorities</a> ?
35%	Demonstrates community need	Why is the project needed? How many local people will benefit from the project? What benefits will the project have for the community? Has the applicant asked local people or groups if this project is needed? Is there anything else like this project in Merri-bek?
25%	Has capacity to implement the project	Is the project well planned and achievable within the timeframes? Does the organisation have the resources and experience to manage the program? Does the budget reflect value for money? Is there evidence of in-kind contribution?

## **Grant compliance**

Not all applications provided the required information at the time of submission. To support a fair and comprehensive assessment process, applicants whose submissions did not initially meet policy requirements were given the opportunity to provide additional information and were offered assistance to submit the necessary documentation.

Applicants were advised to address specific issues, provide supporting documentation, consult with a Council officer, and supply the required number of quotes and detailed costings to substantiate their budgets. This guidance was a direct outcome of the eligibility checks conducted by Council officers and was intended to help applicants meet category objectives and align their submissions with the assessment criteria.

Instances of non-compliance were minimal due to the controls within Council's online Grants Management system. The system prevents submission of applications with incomplete mandatory fields or missing attachments, resulting in limited follow-up requirements.

## **3. Issues**

### **Community impact**

A number of applications have been recommended with specific feedback for the applicant and conditions to support of the application and delivery of their project.

### **Community Strengthening Grant**

Community Strengthening Grants are designed to support one-off community projects that benefit the Merri-bek community. These grants aim to address key priority areas, including social inclusion and community participation, environmental sustainability, healthy and active living, and the creation of vibrant spaces, while also strengthening community and organisational capacity.

This category can fund up to \$7,000 per project. Projects must be delivered between 1 July 2026 - 30 June 2027.

Twenty-six (26) applications were received under this category, requesting a total of \$170,786 in funding. Seventeen (17) applications were assessed, with thirteen (13) projects recommended for funding, totalling \$84,948.

Three applications were not recommended for funding, with the panel encouraging applicants to further develop their proposals and reapply in a future round. A number of submissions have been recommended for partial funding.

The total value of the projects recommended is \$259,823. This amount represents the calculated value that includes Council funding; as well as contributions of significant cash, in-kind and volunteer contributed by the Applicants.

Detailed listings of recommendations for Community Strengthening Grant projects are listed in **Attachment 1**.

Nine (9) applications were not forwarded for assessment for the following reasons: one application was withdrawn; one application sought funding to continue a project already supported under the Flourish Arts Grant Program; and five (5) applications requested funding for projects identified as contributing to core business functions or activities.

In addition, one application will be encouraged to apply under the Participation Grant category, and one application, which sought funding to support member activities, will be encouraged to apply under the membership activity category.

## **Organisational Establishment Grants**

Organisational Establishment Grants are designed to support newly established organisations with funding up to \$10,000 each year for 3 years to grow and become independent. Community groups must be based within the Merri-bek municipality and be no more than three years old to be eligible for consideration. Funding will support the organisation between 1 July 2026 - 30 June 2029.

Three applications were received under this category requesting funding to the value of \$36,000. Two were forwarded for assessment. Both are recommended for funding to the value of \$26,000 per year for the next 3 financial years; 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29, this equates to \$48,000 over 3 years.

There was one application that was not forwarded for assessment for the following reason: The group had been formed for more than 3 years and did not meet the eligibility criteria for the category. They have been encouraged to apply under the membership activity category to support their members meet regularly in Merri-bek.

Detailed listings of recommendations for Organisational Establishment Grants are listed in **Attachment 1**.

## **Facility Improvement Grant**

This funding supports changes to community facilities or assets that will help community members participate more in community life. Priority is to support community-led projects that increase community access and participation, demonstrate collaboration between groups and result in greater use of facilities.

Projects must be delivered between 1 July 2026 - 30 June 2027. Two types of grants are available under this category.

### Smaller Projects

This category can fund up to \$10,000 per project. Nine (9) applications were received under this category; six (6) were eligible for consideration and have been recommended to the value of \$57,525.

There was one application that was not forwarded for assess for the following reason: it requested funding to support community building activities and included components that could not be supported under the grant program it was re-categorised to the Community Strengthening Grant category for eligible components.

### Larger Projects

This category can fund up to \$40,000 per project. The applicant must contribute a minimum of 25 per cent of the total project value.

Twenty-eight (28) expressions of interest were received seeking \$995,045 of funding. Of the twenty-eight submissions, twenty-five (25) eligible applications were invited to submit a full application.

Eight (8) applicants that were progressed to stage two withdrew their intention to submit a full application; Council officers will encourage them to apply in a future round.

Sixteen (16) full applications were received and thirteen (13) were forwarded for consideration, nine (9) have been recommended for funding to the value of \$268,952.

Three (3) applications were not progressed for assessment as the application was considered incomplete as they did not submit all information requested as part of the application process.

Six (6) submissions were not recommended for funding support and are outlined in **Attachment 2 (confidential)**.

The total value of recommended projects is \$641,322. This amount represents the total project value that includes Council funding; significant cash, in-kind and volunteer contributions by the Applicant; collaborative partnerships and other contributors to these projects.

Detailed listings of recommendations for Facility Improvement Grants are listed in **Attachment 1**.

### **Review of Community Grant Program**

The Community Grant Program is scheduled for a minor review following recommendations from the 2019 internal audit, particularly to ensure alignment with the Council Plan. However, with another internal audit planned for mid-2026, the review will be placed on hold until the audit is completed. This approach will enable any new findings and recommendations to be effectively incorporated.

Subject to the audit outcomes and timeline, it is anticipated that the minor review will be finalised by the end of 2026.

In addition, a number of suggestions from the Community Assessment Panel have been identified in Attachment 1, highlighting key considerations for the upcoming review of the program.

### **Diversity of Applicants**

Applications from a diverse range of applications representing and supporting priority groups including multicultural and migrant and refugee groups, children and childcare centres, LGBTIQ+ groups, food access groups, people with disability, seniors and sporting organisations have been received and recommended for funding. Community organisations that support the wider community are strongly represented. This demonstrates that Council supports a diverse range of local organisations via the various grant categories. It is worth noting culturally diverse groups are heavily represented and supported in a number of other funding categories included in the Community Grant Program.

The applications recommended for funding in this Grants round reflect a good geographical spread across the municipality.

### **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 considered in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

The proposal supports Sections 12 and 18 of the Human Rights Charter which relate to freedom of movement and taking part in public life respectively.

## **4. Community consultation and engagement**

The community grant program was well advertised within the community. The program was distributed through the following various publications, media, social media between August 2025 and February 2026:

- MCC Facebook – reaching over 29k accounts
- MCC Instagram – reaching over 13.7k accounts
- MCC LinkedIn – reaching over 20.8k accounts
- Libraries Facebook – reaching over 7.2k accounts
- Libraries Instagram – reaching over 3.9k accounts
- Arts Facebook – reaching over 4.3k accounts
- Arts Instagram – reaching over 4.8k accounts

- MCC paid social media – reaching over 23k accounts and 803 website clicks
- MCC paid in-language social media – reaching over 15.8k accounts from multicultural communities (Italian, Greek, Arabic, Turkish, Spanish, Nepali and Urdu)
- My Merri-bek enews – 5.3k subscribers
- Libraries enews – 7.1k subscribers
- Arts enews – 2.8k subscribers
- Sustainability enews – 2.5k subscribers
- Article in Community News January 2026 edition – distributed to over 80k households
- Community Connector updates – shared with 25 Community Connectors who shared the flyer (which featured a unique QR code and link created to register for the information sessions) this was scanned 87 times.
- Leadership Lens (Internal newsletter) - 85 Leaders received the update
- Digital screens at Glenroy and Coburg Civic Centres – all visitors in February
- NorthWest Radio Interview with Mayor Nat Abboud – reaches local listeners
- On Hold messages - Callers to Council in February

All prospective applicants were encouraged to contact relevant subject expert Council officers to discuss their application prior to submission, enabling greater alignment with Council's strategic objectives and improving the likelihood of success.

Information sessions for community members were held regularly in-person and online.

There were a number of direct emails sent to community providing information and funding opportunities available through the Merri-bek's community grants program. In addition, using our grants management program (SmartyGrants) previous applicants to the Community Grant Program were sent notification informing of the grant round and upcoming funding opportunities. There were also targeted reminder emails to unsubmitted applicants of each category including EOI's of closing dates and application requirements.

## **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 report relates to the Community Strengthening Grant, Organisational Establishment Grant and Facility Improvement only. The other funding categories included in the Community Grants Program operate on a different timeframe and are not being considered as part of this report.

The 2025-26 Council budget includes \$607,908 to the Community Grants Program; this incorporates an allocation towards Community Strengthening Grants and Organisational Establishment Grants; all unallocated annual round funding will be available for allocation under the all-year-round grant categories.

There is \$385,000 in the CAPEX budget labelled as Partnership Grants, this budget is allocated to Facility (Structural) Improvement Grants. The recommendation for Facility Improvement Grants is \$326,477 this equates to \$58,523 under the available budget, this underspend will be declared as a saving.

## 7. Implementation

Following Council endorsement, all successful applicants will be advised of the outcome of their applications, and the necessary funding agreement and relevant funding condition requirements will be put in place. Unsuccessful, withdrawn and incomplete applicants will be given feedback or relevant advice on how these can be strengthened for future rounds or redirected to other funding sources.

### Attachment/s

1↓ Community Grants Assessment Panel - Project Report D26/183364

2 Community Grants Assessment Panel - Appendix 1 - Confidential D26/183365

*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.*

# Merri-bek Community Grants Assessment Panel Project Report



**public  
value  
STUDIO**

Prepared by Emanuela Savini, Public Value Studio  
[www.publicvaluestudio.com](http://www.publicvaluestudio.com) April 2026



We acknowledge Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways in the area now known as Merri-bek. We acknowledge that sovereignty of those lands has never been ceded and right of all First Nations people to self-determination. We celebrate and pay respect to Elders past and present.

Photo credit: An image of the Ballerit Mooroop site by Petr Svoboda.

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Recommendations for Future Rounds .....	22

## Executive Summary

This report documents the design and delivery of the 2026 Community Grants Assessment Panel process for Merri-bek City Council. The Community Assessment Panel is a model Council should be proud of. Placing grant decision-making in the hands of community members – people with lived experience, local knowledge, and a genuine stake in the outcomes – reflects Council's meaningful commitment to participatory practices. Participants also gain something from the process, with assessors building skills in evaluation, governance, and understanding of the community sector. Public Value Studio is proud to have been engaged to facilitate this process.

The report covers four stages: recruitment and selection of the panel; induction and support; the individual assessment and deliberation process; and funding recommendations.

A recruitment campaign across multiple channels generated 27 applications, from which 10 panel members were selected through a structured scoring process. The panel reflected the diversity of the Merri-bek community, spanning different ages, geographic areas across the municipality, and a range of human rights priority groups.

Following induction, panel members assessed 40 applications across three grant categories – the Community Strengthening Grant, Organisational Establishment Grant, and Facility Improvement Grant (Small and Large) – with each application reviewed by five assessors. A full-panel deliberation meeting was held on 13 April 2026, culminating in funding recommendations across all categories.

The panel recommended funding for 31 applications, with total recommended funding of \$454,039.

The report concludes with recommendations for future rounds, including the development of dedicated assessment criteria for infrastructure grants, access to technical expertise during deliberations, and the retention or enhancement of the panel honorarium.

# Assessment Panel Recruitment & Selection

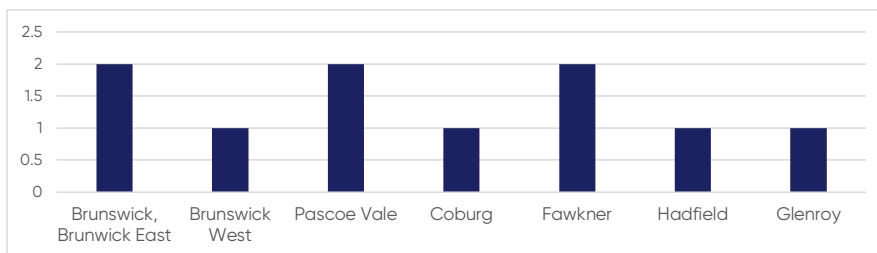
## Assessment Panel Recruitment and Selection

Promotion of the Community Assessment Panel was conducted through multiple channels to ensure broad reach across the Merri-bek community. This included distribution of printed flyers, targeted email outreach to relevant community networks, and direct communication with members of existing council advisory committees. The recruitment campaign generated 27 applications, reflecting strong community interest in the role. There was a high standard of candidates overall.

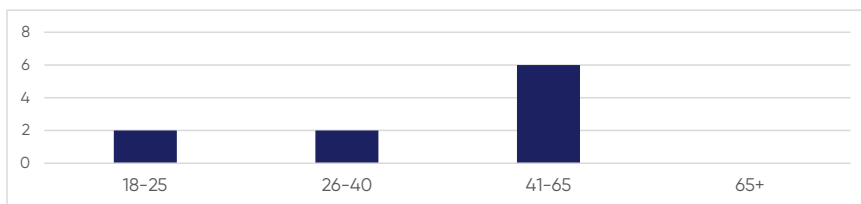
Final panel selection was undertaken in collaboration with Sayanti Bhata, Social Cohesion Officer at Merri-bek City Council. Applications were assessed using a structured scoring matrix across three criteria: connection to community, experience and knowledge, and communication skills. Following this assessment, the highest-scoring candidates were reviewed as a group to ensure the selected panel reflected a diverse range of demographics, geographic representation across Merri-bek, and breadth of lived experience. This approach ensured that the final panel was not only individually strong but collectively representative of the community it was convened to serve.

## Assessment Panel Demographics

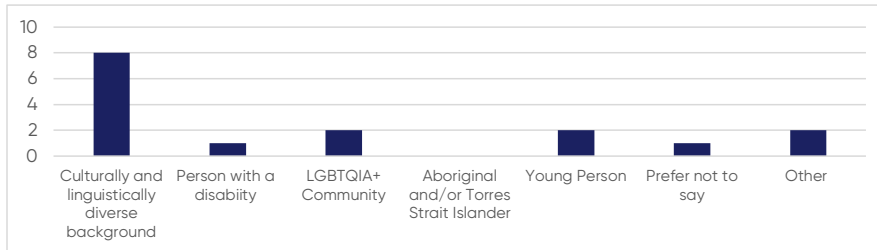
Where the Panel members live in Merri-bek:



## Age of Panel members



Merri-bek Human Rights Priority Groups



Other included:

- I have worked with seniors and people with a disability for the past 10 years
- Forcibly displaced person

No Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people applied for the panel, and no applicants were aged 65 or over. These are acknowledged gaps in representation. To partially address the absence of older community members' perspectives, two panel members were selected who have extensive professional and community experience working with older people.

## Induction & Support

### Induction Workshop

A panel induction workshop was held on 12 March 2026 at the Merri-bek Civic Centre. The session was designed to equip panel members with a thorough understanding of the Community Grants Program, the assessment process, and their responsibilities as assessors. The agenda covered: an overview of the program's objectives, funding priorities, and eligibility criteria; navigation of the SmartyGrants platform; a detailed walkthrough of the assessment criteria and scoring framework; confidentiality obligations; and conflict of interest protocols.

The session also included a practical assessment exercise in which panel members scored a sample application in pairs and then discussed their rationales as a group, providing an opportunity to calibrate scoring approaches and surface questions before the assessment period commenced.

### Grant Allocation

Following the induction workshop, each panel member was assigned approximately 20 grant applications to assess individually, with each grant application reviewed by a total of five assessors.

Allocations comprised a mix of Community Strengthening and Infrastructure grants across the panel, with one exception: at their request, one panel member was allocated infrastructure grants only, reflecting their professional expertise in that area.

### Ongoing Support

In addition to the induction workshop, panel members were provided with an assessor handbook to support them throughout the individual assessment phase. The handbook included guidance on navigating the SmartyGrants platform, decision-making prompts to assist with scoring and constructive feedback, the assessment criteria and weighting, and relevant program guidelines and policies.

The project team also provided both group and individual follow-up support to panel members during the assessment period. Panel members demonstrated a high level of engagement and commitment throughout this phase, raising a number of clarifying questions and reflecting both the rigour with which members approached their assessments and their dedication to the role.

## Assessment Process

### Individual Assessment Phase

Following allocation, each panel member completed their individual assessments via SmartyGrants ahead of the deadline of Sunday 12 April 2026. All ten panel members submitted all assessments on time.

### Panel Deliberation Meeting

The panel deliberation meeting was held on Monday 13 April 2026, with nine of the ten panel members in attendance.

Analysis of the individual assessments ahead of the meeting revealed that only five of the 40 grants had reached consensus to fund across assessors. The remaining 35 applications showed considerable diversity in assessors' recommendations, with some recommending funding in full, others partial funding, and others not recommending funding for the same application.

Given this, the meeting opened with the establishment of shared panel protocols to guide collective decision-making and ensure consistency in how the panel would reach its recommendations.

The deliberation meeting ran for approximately four hours.

### Review of Recommendations

Following the deliberation meeting, panel members were given the opportunity to revisit a subset of decisions – in particular, to review applications that had not been recommended for funding and assess whether those outcomes were consistent across comparable grants.

Following this review, a further seven grants were recommended for funding.

Throughout the process, the panel demonstrated thorough and considered engagement with each application, reflecting the care and commitment they brought to their role.

## Funding Recommendations

Community Strengthening Grants – total funding \$84,948

Organisation Name	Project Title	Project Description	Panel Recommendation	Additional Comments
Merri Community Health Services TA Holstep Health	The Respect Lab	The Respect Lab is a short-term, student-led pilot program engaging Grade 5/6 students at one culturally diverse primary school in northern Merri-bek to explore respect, gender equality and contemporary masculinity. Through four facilitated workshops delivered in partnership with Jesuit Social Services, students will examine findings from the Adolescent Man Box Study, conduct interviews with trusted adults and youth workers, and present their own reflections through creative or presentation-based outputs shared with the school community.	\$7,000	
Blind Sports Victoria Inc	Inclusive Dance & Rhythm Program for Adults with Vision Loss in Merri-bek	The project will deliver an inclusive series of accessible African drumming and rhythm and dance sessions for adults who are blind or have low vision in Merri-bek. This new program will create meaningful opportunities for physical activity, creative expression, social connection and improved wellbeing in a safe and welcoming environment. Funding will support trained facilitators, project coordination, accessible promotion, volunteer recruitment and training and venue access to remove barriers to participation. The program has been developed in direct response to participant feedback identifying a gap in inclusive, movement-based and creative recreation opportunities for people with vision loss, and it will also create a meaningful paid employment and skills development opportunity for a project worker with lived experience of vision loss.	\$7,000	
Pink Ember Studio Co-operative Ltd	Stoke the Embers, a series of free events at Pink Ember to foster community.	We are seeking funding to deliver "Stoke the Embers," a series of free community events and workshops at Pink Ember, a LGBTQIA+ community arts hub in Merri-bek, that will provide accessible cultural experiences while platforming LGBTQIA+ artists. The program will include two new arts events, and two new workshop series designed to foster connection, creativity, and wellbeing for marginalised communities including LGBTQIA+, BIPOC, and women.	\$5,000	Partial funding was recommended because some of the proposed costs were determined to constitute core operational expenditure and therefore ineligible under the Community Grants Guidelines.

The Kevin Heinze Garden Centre Incorporated	Fresh Horizons Program	This grant will enable KHG to run Fresh Horizons, a targeted 10-week pilot program offering structured psychosocial support and social connection for Merri-Bek community members experiencing mental ill-health and isolation who currently fall outside NDIS eligibility. Merri-Bek is not listed among the municipalities hosting a Victorian Mental Health and Wellbeing Local, the state-funded centres providing free mental health treatment, care and support for people aged 26 and over, including those with co-occurring alcohol and drug needs. Fresh Horizons is therefore specifically designed to support this underserved cohort who currently have no access to a Local service in their area.	\$0	While the Panel recognised that the project concept has merit, it did not recommend funding at this stage. The application would benefit from further development, particularly in relation to how the organisation proposes to recruit a suitably qualified coach or support worker and whether the budget allocation is sufficient to support this role. The panel also noted the value of scoping existing initiatives in the community with which the organisation could collaborate. The panel encourages the organisation to develop the application further and reapply in the next funding round.
Merri Maker Mums auspiced by Fawkner Neighbourhood House Inc	Making Together	We are seeking \$7,000 to deliver a 12-month program of monthly creative and wellbeing workshops for CALD mothers in Merri-bek. The funding will enable accessible session delivery of culturally safe spaces for mothers of all ages to express themselves, develop skills and engage more fully in community life, strengthening connection, confidence and leadership.	\$7,000	
Women's Housing LTD	Health and Well-being for WHL Residents	The primary aim of this project is to strengthen the physical and mental health of our tenants and to support the trauma treatment of those, many of whom have experienced domestic violence trauma, with weekly yoga classes. We will also be offering fresh fruit and vegetable platters after yoga classes to promote healthy eating. To reinforce long-term health and wellness habits, we will periodically hold informational sessions on healthy eating and lifestyle after yoga classes. Brunswick Salvation Army, a partner in this project, has provided free use of its facilities. Therefore, tenants participating in this project will also be aware of and benefit from all other services and programs of the Salvation Army.	\$5,500	Partial funding was recommended where the panel considered that costs associated with the use of Uber could be substituted with alternative, community-based transport options – such as The Salvation Army minibus referenced in the application.
Colour Them Safe	Lived Experience Activation Project (LEAP)	The project will provide a bespoke leadership development program for diverse young people from intersectional and marginalised backgrounds. Young people will participate in structured training and mentoring sessions to develop their leadership capabilities. Participants will each be supported to lead an art activation to put training into practice. In addition the art activations from the project enhance creativity in the community, and become a celebration of the unique diversity in Merri-bek.	\$7,000	

<p>Australian Greek Welfare Society Ltd (trading as PRONIA)</p>	<p>Multi Cultural Connections Storytime</p>	<p>This project is a completely new program, Multicultural Storytime. While it has been informed by previous community engagement activities, it is a newly developed initiative designed to bring together carers and their preschool-aged children from diverse cultural backgrounds to enjoy stories, songs, and activities from a range of cultures and languages. Each session will run for one hour during the Victorian school terms and will create a welcoming space for families to connect, learn, and share culture. The program supports early literacy, language development, and community engagement while helping children maintain and celebrate their languages and cultural heritage. Multicultural Storytime also encourages social interaction among families and strengthens community connections within the local area through regular, inclusive, and culturally enriching weekly gatherings.</p>	<p>\$5,700</p>	<p>Partial funding was recommended as coordinator costs were considered operational expenditure and are therefore ineligible under the Community Grants Guidelines.</p> <p>A condition of funding was also that the project delivers storytime in languages not already offered by local libraries, to ensure the funded activity extends rather than replicates services currently available to the community.</p>
<p>Friends of Merri Creek</p>	<p>50th Anniversary of a walk along the creek - with the Friends of Merri Creek</p>	<p>Marks the 50th anniversary of community volunteers and local Councils coming together to protect and restore Merri Creek. The Brunswick community was invited to a walk along the creek in 1976, and we propose to invite the Merri-bek community, including the Mayor and councillors, to a guided walk and associated activities to celebrate the transformation into the much-love Merri Creek Parklands. The project includes: - a walk along the Merri Creek in Merri-bek - an end of walk BBQ and planting event - a lead up event: 'a brief history of community campaigning along the Merri Creek' - a series of before and after photos at sites long the Merri Creek and/or a series of QR codes linked to online photos</p>	<p>\$6,248</p>	
<p>Uniting Vic Tas</p>	<p>Asylum Seeker Radio</p>	<p>We are proposing the production of a 10-part standalone podcast series made in collaboration with consumer partners at the Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre; Asylum Seeker Radio. This series will explore the daily experiences, challenges and triumphs of people seeking asylum and the realities and impacts of living on a temporary visa in prolonged uncertainty. The clear objective of this podcast is to platform and empower the voices of people seeking asylum, to encourage social inclusion and community participation.</p>	<p>\$4,000</p>	<p>Partial funding was recommended as the panel considered the budget requested to be beyond the scope of the proposal, including costs for equipment that may already be available at the booked recording studio. The panel also noted opportunities for collaboration with suitable community partners who could assist with some of the technical aspects for which costs have been included.</p>
<p>Off The List Records Inc</p>	<p>Ramp Up Amp Up Merribek</p>	<p>This application seeks funding for Off The List to engage Dale Gorfinkel from Out Hear to deliver a free accessible live music event during Disability Pride Month in July. The project will provide up to 12 paid opportunities for emerging and established disabled musicians, as well as delivering a free live performance skills workshop for disabled musicians in Merribek. As part of delivery, Off The List will engage experienced disabled and/or neurodiverse musicians in the music scene</p>	<p>\$7,000</p>	

		to deliver a live performance skills workshop in Merribek. These musicians will share their experiences and lend tips on how to prepare for live performance with emerging disabled artists. Together all artists involved will present an accessible live performance for the Merribek community.		
Open Table Inc	Cook and Connect: After School Cook Club	Cook & Connect: After School Cook Club is a pilot after-school cooking program for children aged 7–12 at the Glenroy Community Hub. Kids arrive after school and prepare the elements of a shared meal together – working in small groups, each taking on a different dish that comes together at the table. It's hands-on, fun and social, building food literacy and kitchen confidence alongside a genuine sense of connection with peers and community.	\$7,000	
Luscombe Street Community Garden Inc	Community workshops to improve small garden beds	The project will deliver community workshops to learn and share skills to improve the small garden beds at the community garden and share skills on small veggie plot gardening. The first workshop will improve and learn to build new wicking veggie beds and convert existing beds (not wicking) to make them more water efficient, productive and accessible for people with limited mobility. The second workshop will educate members and the local community about how to grow food by propagating from seeds and cuttings.	\$0	The panel noted that the majority of proposed activities relate to the routine operations of the garden rather than a discrete funded project. The application did not provide sufficient evidence of community need, and given the organisation's current membership size, the number of people likely to benefit is limited. The panel also noted a discrepancy between the quote provided for veggie beds and the associated budget line item. While the proposed workshops to build gardening knowledge were viewed positively, the panel considered that the project would benefit from a stronger community-facing focus – for example, by expanding the workshop component to reach a broader audience – rather than centring expenditure on the purchase of garden beds. The panel encourages the organisation to develop a more collaborative model and reapply in a future round.
Jesuit Social Services Ltd	The Artful Dodgers Studio: Our Story	Artful Dodgers Studio seeks \$7,000 to deliver an 8-week youth co-design program engaging approximately 10–12 young people from Merri-bek in a series of facilitated art workshops at the Artful Dodgers Studio. Working alongside a professional First Nations facilitating artist, participants will take part in eight structured weekly sessions where they will collaboratively design a new visual identity, logo and merchandise for the studio. Through hands-on creative participation, young people will build artistic skills, confidence and peer connection while contributing to	\$7,000	

		a visible outcome that strengthens their sense of belonging and community engagement.		
Schoolhouse Studios Inc	SHS Year of the Horse Open Call Exhibition	Schoolhouse Studios is seeking funding to support an open call exhibition titled 'Year of the Horse'. 'Year of the Horse' will respond to the symbolic, cultural, and mythological resonance of the horse across time and geography.	\$2,500	Partial funding was recommended because some of the proposed costs were determined to constitute core operational expenditure and therefore ineligible under the Community Grants Guidelines. Only funding to artists was approved.
Fawkner Nature Walks (under auspice of Urban Planters Merri-bek)	Fawkner Nature Walk Map	We are applying for funding to produce a Fawkner Nature Walk Map that is visually appealing, easy to use, translated into the key languages spoken in Fawkner, and printed in a compact, pocket-sized foldable format so the community can carry it with them on their self-guided walks between Bababi Djinanang and Moomba Wetlands. The map is designed to empower individuals, families and groups to take this walk independently with family, friends and community, and make the beautiful Merri Creek more accessible to more people in Fawkner.	\$0	While the project concept was well received by the panel, the application did not provide sufficient evidence of community need for the proposed resource, particularly the format of a printed resource. The panel also had concerns regarding the budget and proposed timeframes, which were considered unclear and unrealistic, and noted the absence of a clear plan for promoting and distributing the map to ensure community uptake. The panel encourages the organisation to further develop the proposal and to reapply in a future round.
The Onemda Association Inc	Title Café to Career Pathways: Transitioning Young People with Intellectual Disability into Open Employment	Onemda's Community Café at Glenroy Community Hub provides real world hospitality experience for young people with intellectual disability. This project will fund a dedicated Project Worker for six months to design a targeted Café to Career transition model focused on building employment partnerships and creating a clear pathway into open employment. The role will develop streamlined tools including skills profiling, an accessible intake process, individual employment planning, and a practical coaching guide for the Café Lead. The Project Worker will also broker 2-3 employer partnerships, formalise DES referral pathways, and pilot the model with 5-6 participants to create a sustainable, transferable employment pathway for Merri-bek.	\$7,000	

## Organisational Establishment Grants – total funding \$48,000

Organisation Name		Panel Recommend	Notes
Merri-Bek Robotics Club Inc.	The Merri-Bek Robotics Club is a community organisation facilitating young people in the Merri-Bek area to participate in learning, experimentation and competition in robotics. We participate in the FIRST Australia robotics competition. Through participating the competition we provide young people in Merri-Bek the opportunity to learn and enjoy robotics and to develop the breadth of skills and experiences that being a part of the club provides.	\$18,000	
Kindsugi Upcycling Inc.	A Kindsugi Future aims to create a safe, supportive and inclusive space for community members to undertake hands-on activities which feel meaningful, purposeful and cultivate a sense of belonging, and all whilst in a low pressure environment where connections may be more readily fostered. It is aimed at supporting Merri-bek community members who are at greater risk of loneliness and isolation, such as those who are elderly, have a disability, and/or marginalised (e.g. LGBTQIA+, culturally diverse, First Nations). It also aims to reduce waste added to landfill, but proactively sourcing and utilising books otherwise destined for landfill (due to them not being able to be re-used or sold by local op shops) as the primary materials for workshops, and to create beautiful and unique gift cards and gift tags as a social enterprise income stream for the organisation. Key examples of workshop activities include crafting that has a focus on upcycled materials, and learning how to hand-make pasta. A key component of workshops run by A Kindsugi Future includes an invitation for community members to not only create for themselves, but the opportunity to also undertake a 'small act of kindness' where they personally create and contribute something meaningful to support someone else in the community facing loneliness or difficult times. The tasks can be completed within a single session, and are adaptable to the skill level and capacity of the participants.	\$30,000	

### Facility Improvement Grants – Smaller Projects – total funding \$57,550

Organisation Name	Project Description	Panel Recommend	Notes
St Matthews Anglican Church Glenroy Hadfield With St Linus Merlynston	Installation of solar panels on the north facing roof of St. Linus' Community Hall	\$7,854	
Shirley Robertson Children's Centre Inc	<p>Sounds Good - installing acoustic panels in Children's Rooms</p> <p>Installing acoustic panels to the raked ceilings in the Marram and Walert rooms at the Centre. The raked ceilings and hard surfaces reflect sound in the rooms, inhibiting concentration and calmness. This will help create quieter indoor spaces to better facilitate children's learning and enjoyment, as well as providing a more pleasant environment for educators. Creating quieter environments will particularly assist children sensitive to noise to better engage in their early learning experience.</p>	\$10,000	
Mulberry Community Kitchen Garden Glenroy Inc	<p>Installation of Irrigation System to Improve Water Efficiency and Garden Sustainability</p> <p>This project will install a new irrigation system at Mulberry Community Garden Glenroy, including, irrigation lines, drip &amp; sprinkler systems and associated infrastructure. The works will replace the current manual hand watering approach with a water-efficient system that ensures consistent, and sufficient irrigation across garden beds &amp; trees. This will ensure the irrigation infrastructure operates reliably and in accordance with safety standards. The garden currently relies on manual watering undertaken by volunteers. This approach is time-intensive, physically demanding and increasingly unreliable in the context of a warming climate. More frequent extreme heat, prolonged dry periods and high-wind events make it difficult and at times unsafe for members to attend the garden for long, resulting in inconsistent irrigation and reduced crop resilience. Installing an irrigation system represents a structural improvement to the facility that ensures consistent watering regardless of weather conditions, reduces physical strain on volunteers, and strengthens the garden's long-term sustainability and productivity. The works will strengthen the garden's capacity to produce and share healthy, organic food, and free volunteers to undertake other essential maintenance and community-building activities. The upgrade will improve the functionality, resilience and usability of the site as a valued community facility.</p>	\$10,000	Condition – input from open space to find most effective solution for water efficiency
North Coburg Rebels Baseball Club Inc	<p>Scorers box on the outer diamond at Parker Reserve West, Mathieson St, Coburg North,</p> <p>Following the Council's commitment to installing a permanent back net on the diamond at Parker Reserve West, the Club is seeking to complement this investment with the</p>	\$10,000	

	<p>construction of a permanent scorer's shelter at the same facility. Currently, scorers are exposed to the elements with no protection from wind or rain during games. The outer diamond at Parker Reserve West is largely open, with minimal surrounding shelter, vegetation, or natural windbreaks conditions that become particularly challenging during the winter months when cold and blustery weather is common. This not only creates significant discomfort for volunteer scorers but can also impact the accuracy and reliability of scorekeeping during games. A permanent, weatherproof scorer's shelter would address this issue by providing a dedicated, enclosed or semi-enclosed space from which scorers can perform their duties safely and comfortably, regardless of weather conditions. This improvement would enhance the overall functionality of the facility and better support the volunteers who play a critical role in the running of our competitions</p>		
Fawkner Neighbourhood House	<p>Installation of Audio Visual System at Major Road Community Hall</p> <p>We plan to install a projector, screen, and sound system at Major Road Community Hall to make the space more versatile and attractive for hire. This will allow Fawkner Neighbourhood House to host a wider range of activities such as movie nights, fundraisers, and community events. The upgrades will improve usability and increase hire potential for events like weddings and conferences. Resultingly, FNH will generate more income to help us continue our mission of supporting the Fawkner community to learn, create, and connect.</p>	\$9,696	
Merri-bek Community Gardening Inc.	<p>Rainwater Harvesting Pergola at 24 Peacock St, Brunswick West</p> <p>Merri-bek Community Gardening (MCG) proposes to construct a water-harvesting roof and rainwater capture system to support environmentally sustainable gardening practices. The works will involve installing a new roof for rainwater collection, supportive timber framing and associated plumbing to direct and store harvested rainwater for reuse on site. These upgrades will transform the existing pergola into functional water-harvesting infrastructure. The rainwater captured by the new structure will be used for irrigation of the community garden and food forest. This project will reduce reliance on mains water, lowering the garden's environmental footprint and lowering water supply costs for Merri-bek council. Inspired by the nearby Merri-bek council rain garden, the project reflects water-sensitive urban design principles and aligns with the council's environmental sustainability and climate adaptation objectives. The system will improve the site's resilience to drought and support sustainable food production in the context of a changing climate. The new rainwater pergola will also act as a visible demonstration of sustainable water management. It will enable education and inspiration for community members and visitors while reinforcing MCG and council's commitment to environmental leadership.</p>	\$10,000	

## Facility Improvement Grants – Larger Projects – total funding \$259,524.50

Organisation Name	Project Description	Panel Recommend	Notes
Brunswick Juventus Football Club Inc	<p>Solar Panels installation, Brunswick Juventus Football Club</p> <p>We are seeking funding to install a 33.66kWp solar PV system with 61.44kWh battery storage to power our clubhouse and support field lighting. Our current electricity costs range between \$25,000 and \$35,000 per year, placing ongoing financial pressure on the club. This upgrade will significantly reduce energy expenses, strengthen our long term financial sustainability and deliver measurable environmental benefits. The project includes 66 solar panels, a 61.44kWh battery system and a 30kW hybrid inverter to manage generation, storage and grid interaction. Accredited Clean Energy Council installers will complete the works, including structural certification, electrical compliance and commissioning. Energy savings will be reinvested into community programs, equipment and facility improvements. The project is low risk and ready for timely implementation following approval.</p>	\$40,000	
The Bicycle Recycle Shed Inc	<p>Bike Shed Workshop Redevelopment</p> <p>Our project aims to make much-needed improvements to The Bike Shed's primary workspace by undertaking modifications to a bluestone building adjacent to our current location. We aim to utilise the building's current infrastructure as much as possible whilst adapting it as a purpose-built bicycle workshop, recycling hub, and learning space, to be used by our large volunteer community and the general public. Wherever possible, we will retain and repurpose the building's existing structure and infrastructure, ensuring a cost-effective and environmentally responsible redevelopment. The upgraded space will provide a safer, more functional, and fit-for-purpose environment for our volunteers and the broader community to restore bikes, divert materials from landfill, and build practical skills together.</p>	\$40,000	
Coburg Cricket Club Inc	<p>Coburg City Oval – Awning Installation at Russell St, Coburg</p> <p>Funding is requested to support the installation of 3 (three) x Retractable Shade Awnings on the front facade of the Level 1 multi-purpose social room to shade the concrete concourse and expansive glazing at Coburg City Oval.</p>	\$24,945	Condition – the Panel noted that awnings of this type have a high risk of failure and would require vertical supports to ensure safety and longevity.

Dawson Street Child Care Co-operative Ltd	<p>Upgrade to children's play space: restorative, inclusive and immersive at 31 Dawson St, Brunswick</p> <p>An upgrade to the children's play space at Dawson Street Childcare Co-op will enable an adaptable, nature-rich outdoor learning space for child centered engagement. It will feature landscaping elements which evoke curiosity and exploration. Incorporating landscaping for inclusive play which presents open ended physical and cognitive challenges, builds confidence and resilience, and offers opportunities to navigate risk.</p>	\$22,495.50	Condition – given the expensive nature of replacing the water pump, the Panel suggests identifying a cheaper solution to moving water through the water play area and enabling more funds to be spent on the landscape and pathway upgrade – recommend consulting with appropriate Council staff.
Next Wave Festival Incorporated	<p>Brunswick Mechanics Institute Facility Upgrade Project</p> <p>Next Wave Festival Incorporated seeks funding to undertake essential facility upgrades at the historic Brunswick Mechanics Institute, including the improvement of back-of-house areas and reinstatement of a green room. These works will enhance the building's functionality, security, and compliance so it can operate as a fit-for-purpose multi-use creative facility serving the local community and supporting diverse cultural activity in Brunswick.</p>	\$7,000	Partial funding was recommended as the panel considered the proposed scope of works to be achievable at a significantly lower cost than the budget submitted.
Moomba Park Tennis Club Inc	<p>Outside Multi Purpose Facility at 276 McBryde St, Fawkner</p> <p>Multi purpose area for social gathering, BBQ, seating, watching tennis under cover. Encouraging people to be able to come together as a group outside instead of being spread round the facility on their own which is quite isolating and not so friendly. This is necessary now because of the larger numbers of new people who have become very friendly with one another and want to sit, chat and have something to eat and be social. Also any groups outside of the club who need somewhere to meet, ie STEM groups etc who have used the facility in the past</p>	\$30,000	
West Brunswick Tennis Club	<p>Inclusive and Sustainable Shelter Upgrades – West Brunswick Tennis Club</p> <p>West Brunswick Tennis Club is seeking funding to upgrade and replace the existing shelters located between our tennis courts to create a more inclusive, sustainable, and user-friendly facility. The project will install five new weatherproof and fully accessible shelters. These improvements will enhance comfort, safety, and accessibility for players, spectators, and</p>	\$40,000	

	visitors – including people with disabilities – and enable year-round use of the courts and surrounding areas. The project supports Merri-bek Council's goals of fostering active, connected, and environmentally responsible community spaces.		
Hadfield Tennis Club Inc	<p>Permeable groundcover to replace nature strip and bicycle hoops for securing bicycles at 90-100 Middle St, Hadfield.</p> <p>The proposed projects at Hadfield Tennis Club support Merri-bek City Council's aim for a vibrant, safe, healthy, and resilient community by installing bicycle hoops to promote cycling to encourage active lifestyles and innovative use of recreational space. Currently, bicycle users bring their bicycles on the courts, damaging court surfaces. Concreting or installing permeable groundcover addresses regenerative and safe community goals by minimising rainwater runoff and flooding on Courts 1 &amp; 2, enhancing environmental sustainability. By improving the area to minimise rainwater runoff, this improves user safety and contributes to durability of the synthetic court surfaces.</p>	\$15,084	
Carinya Society	<p>Pathways to Participation: a safe and inclusive outdoor redevelopment at 10 Bellevue St, Coburg.</p> <p>To redevelop an outdoor space within Carinya's existing grounds that will encourage and facilitate a range of safe outdoor activities for adults of all abilities. The intention is to establish inclusive multipurpose outdoor areas for our clients. This includes an accessible sports/activity area (for ball sports), garden beds, and an accessible pathway around an outdoor sensory garden with an outdoor water feature.</p>	\$40,000	

### Facility Improvement Grants Not Recommended for Funding

Organisation Name	Project Description	Panel Recommend	Notes
Coburg Basketball Association Inc.	<p>Wall mounted Drinking fountain at Coburg Basketball Stadium</p> <p>Planning to install a wall mounted drinking fountain at Coburg Basketball Stadium which will be accessible to all users of the facility</p>	\$8,748	Refer to Confidential Attachment 2
Trans Gender Victoria	<p>Affirmation Station Accessibility and Infrastructure Upgrade</p> <p>Transgender Victoria seeks support to upgrade the lighting and data infrastructure at our Brunswick East premises, improving accessibility, comfort and</p>	\$10,000	Refer to Confidential Attachment 2

	<p>functionality for our community programs and local partners. The project includes replacing outdated fluorescent lights with energy-efficient LED lighting that better supports sensory needs, and installing new wired data points and network infrastructure to enable reliable hybrid and online access. These works will make Affirmation Station a safer, more inclusive and environmentally sustainable facility for trans and gender diverse communities in Merri-bek.</p>		
Coburg Tennis Club Inc	<p>BBQ Social Area Project at Bush Reserve, 227A Bell St, Coburg</p> <p>Currently we have no designated barbeque area where members can socialise during games or after games or for special events we run. The project consists of developing an area we cleared of two water tanks in our last Disability Access project and providing a shelter over the area with lights and external power points, two electric barbeques, table and seating. The funding is for the purchase and installation of the shelter, barbeque and electrical connection of the Barbeques, Lights and power points in the barbeque area. The barbeques are DDA compliant, and the area will have wheelchair access with the layout to provide wheelchair mobility.</p>	\$28,000	Refer to Confidential Attachment 2
Holstep Health (formerly Merri Health)	<p>Commercial Solar Panel installation - Brunswick and Bell Street Coburg Health Service Facilities</p> <p>Holstep Health are committed to leading environmentally sustainable practices and proactively responding to climate related health impacts. As a key priority in our Strategic Directions 2025-28, we are committed to reducing our carbon footprint through building organisational and community resilience to climate-related risks and continually improving our environmental sustainability practices. Solar is more than an energy solution - it's part of our broader commitment to climate resilience. The installation of commercial solar at two of our main health services located at Brunswick and Coburg, will support a further reduction in Holstep's overall carbon emissions and environmental impact. By reducing emissions and strengthening our energy sustainability, we are helping prepare our organisation and the local community to adapt and thrive in a changing climate. In future stages, we will expand the installation of solar to the remaining Holstep facilities and expand complementary technologies such as battery storage to further strengthen our energy resilience.</p>	\$40,000	Refer to Confidential Attachment 2

The Big Umbrella Incorporated	<p>Upgrade to Community Volunteer and Training Space</p> <p>Upgrades to the front room at our Emergency Food Relief Center to create a clean and comfortable space for volunteers, corporate guests and others to be utilized as a break-out room and a training facility. Works to include an upgrade to the attached bathroom/toilet facility (to ensure better functionality).</p>	\$30,750	Refer to Confidential Attachment 2
Moreland Community Child Care Centres Inc	<p>Renovation of toilet facilities at Mitchell street child care centre, 98 Mitchell St, Brunswick.</p> <p>The current toilet facilities at Mitchell Street are outdated and no longer reflect best practice in design, hygiene, accessibility, or safety. The children's toilets lack adequate cubicle privacy, which can cause discomfort for children as they grow older and become more aware of their personal boundaries. The nursery toilet does not fully meet the latest safety and ergonomic standards for educators, creating ongoing challenges in supporting children's toileting and hygiene routines efficiently and safely. By upgrading these facilities, MCCCC aims to create a more inclusive, child-centred, and educator-safe environment that aligns with our commitment to quality education and care.</p>	\$24,750	Refer to Confidential Attachment 2
Coburg Basketball Association Inc.	<p>Wall mounted Drinking fountain at Coburg Basketball Stadium</p> <p>Planning to install a wall mounted drinking fountain at Coburg Basketball Stadium which will be accessible to all users of the facility</p>	\$8,748	Refer to Confidential Attachment 2

## Recommendations for Future Rounds

### Assessment Criteria and Framework for Infrastructure Grants

The panel raised consistent questions throughout the deliberation meeting regarding aspects of the infrastructure grant categories. These included:

- the eligibility of applications where the proposed works would be carried out on privately owned buildings;
- the appropriateness of funding organisations with significant financial reserves; and
- whether the level of funding requested was appropriate for the community benefit the proposed works would deliver.

Providing clearer guidance to assessors on these matters would strengthen the integrity and consistency of the assessment process.

The panel process also highlighted a broader issue with how infrastructure grants are currently assessed. The infrastructure grants are fundamentally different in nature from the Community Strengthening Grant, and this is not reflected in the current assessment framework, which applies the same questions and assessment criteria across both categories. Measures of community benefit that are central to the Community Strengthening Grant – such as benefits across the broader Merri-bek community or collaboration with other organisations – are not always applicable in the same way to infrastructure projects, where the benefit may be more concentrated on a smaller group of users of a particular facility. This is no less worthwhile, but it requires a different assessment lens.

It is therefore recommended that the infrastructure grant categories be reviewed with a view to developing dedicated assessment criteria and questions that better reflect the nature and intent of these grants.

### Access to Technical Expertise

The panel would have benefited from access to a subject matter advisor with relevant building or infrastructure expertise. While the panel was fortunate to include a member with experience in solar energy systems, there were other infrastructure applications where the panel had limited contextual knowledge to draw on. It is recommended that future rounds consider appointing a non-voting technical advisor – for example, a Council officer from Building Services or an equivalent – who can provide information and context to the panel during deliberations without participating in the assessment itself.

### Panel Honorarium

Panel members demonstrated exceptional commitment throughout the process, approaching their role with rigour and care. Based on the time required for individual assessments and attendance at the deliberation meeting, it is estimated that members each contributed approximately 30 hours to the process. Members received a \$200 honorarium in recognition of this contribution. If Council wishes to continue recruiting panel members from a diverse range of community

backgrounds it is recommended that the honorarium be retained at a minimum, with consideration given to increasing it in future rounds.

## 7.3 FESTIVALS PROGRAM REFRESH

Director Community, Eamonn Fennessy

Cultural Development

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### Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Note the challenges that the current festival program is experiencing and the community's desire for increased cultural activities and events in the north of the municipality;
2. Endorse the following actions in response to those challenges:
  - a) The shift of Sydney Road Street Party and Coburg Night Market from annual to biennial events, from 2026/2027.
  - b) The reallocation of the above-mentioned festival resources into a new, multi-day festival in the northern parts of the municipality, which would retain and incorporate Fawkner Festa and Glenroy Festival;
  - c) The retention of Carols by the Lake and Brunswick Music Festival as annual events; and
  - d) An exploration into supporting community events through the development of a targeted funding pool.
3. Undertake community consultation to inform the development of a new multi-day festival in the northern parts of the municipality.

<b>REPORT</b>
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### Executive Summary

Council produces a large and successful festival program which requires a refresh to ensure that festivals and cultural programs are responsive to community needs and available more equitably across the municipality, while addressing challenges of increasing extreme weather conditions and condensed delivery timeframes in a financially responsible way.

The refreshed Council program will change the scheduling of two major events, Sydney Road Street Party and Coburg Night Market to biennial, consolidating these resources to make a new festival in the north of the municipality. This new festival will run across multiple locations and days, will significantly increase Council's investment in the North, and will be informed by community consultation and participation. The new festival will include a broad range of artforms and events, and the existing Glenroy Festival and Fawkner Festa would be retained and incorporated into the new festival.

Carols by the Lake and Brunswick Music Festival will continue annually, ensuring ongoing programming in Coburg and Brunswick. In addition, establishment of a small community event funding pool will be investigated to support more community-led events to take place across the municipality.

The community will be informed of the changes to the festival program in mid-May. Following this, community engagement is planned for late May to consult community on what they would like to see, and how they would like to participate in the new Northern festival.

### Previous Council Decisions

N/A

## 1. Policy Context

- Council Plan Item 4.8: Ensure our festival program remains financially sustainable, responsive to community needs and that opportunities to engage with events and the arts are offered equitably across the municipality, catering to diverse and changing community needs.
- 2025/2026 Council Action Plan Item 67: Refresh festival program in line with community needs.
- Arts and Culture Strategy 2023-2030 – Commitments
  - A refreshed festival program that is flexible, innovative, and more accessible across the municipality
  - Increased employment for First Nations artists
  - Increased arts and cultural programming and creative spaces in the North of the municipality
  - Increased access to spaces and funding for artists and creatives to make, collaborate and present work

## 2. Background

Council's festival program is a large, diverse and successful program with many legacy events. It currently incorporates Fawkner Festa, Glenroy Festival, Coburg Night Market, Carols by the Lake, Brunswick Music Festival and Sydney Road Street Party. All festivals take place between October – March.

The current program is heavily weighted towards Brunswick and Coburg. During the development of Council's Arts and Culture Strategy 2023-2030, the community called for a refreshed festival program, that was more accessible across the municipality. This need has been reiterated through the current Council Plan and Council Action Plan.

The current festival program has been impacted by extreme weather and climate change, has had limited opportunities for artists and community involvement, has faced increasing costs due to logistical requirements and has operational challenges due to the volume of festivals held in a short timeframe.

## 3. Issues

### **Festival challenges – the need for change**

#### **Geographic distribution and access to the arts**

Through the Arts and Culture Strategy consultation the community expressed a desire to see a more accessible and equitable festival program across the municipality, particularly focussing on increasing programming in the north.

The desire for a refreshed festival program and more activity in the north was also heard consistently from community during the Council Plan process, and through recent community consultations.

Participation in arts and cultural activity increases social cohesion and community connections and supports wellbeing.

The Merri-bek community is socio-economically diverse, so while the creative community is thriving south of Bell Street (and becoming increasingly active in North Coburg), it is important to also recognise that access to arts and culture is often connected to location and socioeconomic background. Hadfield, Glenroy and Fawkner experience significant disadvantage; those with lower incomes and reduced access to information are also less likely to participate in arts activity. The Arts and Culture Strategy holds equity at its core to ensure that everyone in Merri-bek can participate in arts and cultural activities.

Currently less than 20 per cent of the festivals budget is spent outside of Brunswick and Coburg. Due to budget and staffing limitations, there is currently no scope to increase festivals programming in the north of the municipality without a redesign of the festival program in its entirety.

The proposed festival program refresh seeks to redistribute some resources to the north of the municipality to enable a significant annual festival and increased opportunities for participation for artists and audiences.

### **Extreme weather and climate change**

Since November 2022, six events have been moved or significantly redesigned due to extreme weather including:

- 2022: Fawkner Festa and Coburg Night Market due to site flooding
- 2023: Carols by the Lake went ahead in extremely rainy conditions in a reduced format. Fawkner Festa was relocated due to site flooding.
- 2024: Music for the Mob was moved indoors due to extreme heat. Fawkner Festa was relocated indoors due to storms and rain.
- 2025: Fawkner Festa was cancelled after 2 hours due to extreme rain.

Sydney Road Street Party (held in early March) is also susceptible to extreme heat, with pre-event cancellation conversations held most years due to extreme forecasts.

The majority of the festival program takes place outdoors in Council parks or on roads during Spring and Summer. Once an event has been designed for a site, it is incredibly difficult to move, change or reschedule it for many logistical and contractual reasons. If an event is cancelled at late notice, Council is still liable for all payments.

Most outdoor events are reliant on the use of diesel generators.

The proposed festival program refresh features increased programming in indoor spaces, increased programming outside of the hottest months of the year and a reduced focus on single day events that cannot be remounted after cancellation. It will also reduce the use of fossil fuels and single use food and beverage packaging.

### **Limited opportunities for artists and community involvement**

Live music currently forms the majority of the festival programming, through Brunswick Music Festival, Sydney Road Street Party, Carols by the Lake and Coburg Night Market. While we do consider other forms of performance at these events when possible, the stage program is significant.

Officers have received consistent feedback from community members about the lack of opportunities for other performing arts.

Due to the current fixed nature of the program, there are also limited opportunities for community to engage with the planning for the events or for the festival program to be responsive to community need or arising issues.

The proposed festival program refresh will enable increased multi artform programming and a more flexible program that can be responsive to community needs and feedback.

### **Festival timing pressures**

The festival program is large and is delivered within a very short timeframe of November to March.

In addition to timing and the size of the program, in recent years the amount of compliance has also increased.

The proposed festival program refresh reduces the number of events that will require POPEs (Place of Public Entertainment occupancy permits) each season and expands the period of festival delivery to reduce risk for staff.

## **Festivals Refresh – Proposed Future Program**

The refreshed festival program has been designed to:

- retain Merri-bek's reputation for excellent festivals and free programming;
- be responsive to community needs and arising issues and opportunities and increase community participation;
- be more available across the municipality and more flexible;
- be more climate resilient and reduce fuel emissions; and
- create more opportunities for more artists.

### **A New Festival for the North**

A new annual festival in the north of the municipality will be created with redistributed resources from Sydney Road Street Party or Coburg Night Market. It will:

- Create more localised opportunities to experience arts and culture, taking place across multiple suburbs.
- Include and retain existing suburb-specific events, Glenroy Festival and Fawkner Festa.
- Activate non-traditional and under-utilised spaces and distribute programming across community venues including Council hubs, shopfronts, neighbourhood houses, schools etc.
- Feature multi artform programming, increasing opportunities for performers, dancers, writers, visual artists etc.
- Include significant community participation and collaboration in programming such as working groups, partnerships, and artists in residence at schools.
- Respond to consistent community feedback seeking increased activation in the northern suburbs of the municipality.
- Include programming of artists co-creating with students, residencies, live music in parks, creative activations, studio tours and workshops, exhibitions, new site-specific performances and more.
- Increase equity in arts and culture investment across the municipality.
- Enable better distribution of events across a year, alleviating staff pressure and the effects of hot weather with all events clustered in the warmer months as they are now.
- Address the threat of climate change related cancellations on festival program and carbon emissions of festival programming through increased indoor programming, use of existing power sources and flexibility to program on multiple days/times.

### **Some major festivals shifting to biennial delivery**

Sydney Road Street Party and Coburg Night Market will be delivered biennially, a shift away from the current annual delivery schedule.

This change will enable:

- Increased and improved programming at these events when they occur.
- Festival resources and opportunities for artists, audiences and traders to be distributed more equitably across the municipality.
- Reduction of the number of events that have significant climate impact through use of single-use packaging and diesel generators.

- The festival program to have a greater focus on opportunities for artists.

### **Brunswick Music Festival refresh**

Brunswick Music Festival will continue as an annual event and will be refreshed to include:

- Working with live music venues to ensure the festival continues to deliver visitation and economic impact.
- New and exciting free programming for the wide range of audiences that usually attend the Sydney Road Street Party.
- Increased professional development and networking opportunities for artists.
- Building deeper relationships with artists and venues, resulting in increased community-engaged programming.

### **Ongoing investment in community events**

- Carols by the Lake will continue as an annual event.
- A new funding opportunity will be investigated to support the delivery of community-led events across the municipality, responding to feedback about the need for this type of funding, particularly as event costs increase. This would be funded within existing resources.

### **Planning**

The development of the Northern festival will occur during 2026/2027 for the first presentation in late 2027. A Fawkner Festa will be delivered in late 2026. Coburg Night Market, Carols by the Lake and Brunswick Music Festival will go ahead as usual and Sydney Road Street Party will not go ahead in 2027.

### **Community impact**

The refreshed festival program will have a significant positive impact on residents in currently under serviced areas of the municipality, creating a festival centred on community participation and accessibility and driving new opportunities for social connection. Community consultation will directly inform the creation of the festival, through both the upcoming consultation in May/June and into the future through partnerships and working groups.

Artists across a diverse range of artforms will also benefit, as more opportunities are created through the new festival. The refreshed program will retain opportunities for community stallholders at events throughout the program.

### **Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications**

The refreshed festival program seeks to reduce the impact of climate hazards and manage climate risk through increased indoor programming and increasing events presented in cooler seasons of the year. Sydney Road Street Party and Coburg Night Market produce the most emissions and waste in the current festival program. Holding them every second year will greatly reduce the use of diesel generators and single use food and beverage packaging. Introducing a multi-day event to the North will mean that even if outdoor events require cancellation, there will be other festival offerings taking place.

### **Economic sustainability implications**

The refreshed program will have a positive economic impact on businesses in the North of the municipality. There may be some impact to businesses, particularly in Brunswick, which we seek to mitigate through new partnerships and programming at Brunswick Music Festival, and a focus on increasing the benefits of the Sydney Road Street Party every second year.

## **Legal and risk considerations**

The key risk for the refreshed program is community resistance to the scheduling change for Sydney Road Street Party and Coburg Night Market. This has been partially mitigated by continuing to deliver these events on a biennial basis, while ensuring annual ongoing programming in Brunswick and Coburg. In addition, these risks will be mitigated through ongoing engagement with key stakeholders.

## **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 is relevant to the right to freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of association.

## **4. Community consultation and engagement**

### **Previous engagement**

- The Arts and Culture Strategy engagement in early 2023 highlighted the need for increased programming in the North of the municipality and increased opportunities for local artists.
- Recent engagement on the Public Art Policy has received many responses calling for increased arts investment in the North of the municipality.

### **Community Engagement Plan**

- Individual meetings with most effected stakeholders, including traders' associations.
- Pop up engagements in Fawkner, Glenroy and Pascoe Vale.
- Focus group/workshop for artists and arts organisations and communities in the North.
- Briefings with Reference Groups and Advisory Committees.
- Reach into multicultural communities through community connectors.
- Online and hard copy surveys shared through an extensive communications campaign and directly with effected artists, stallholders and community members.

### **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.

The refreshed festival program will affect community members, artists, audiences and festival attendees.

### **Communications**

Part 1: The changes to the program will be communicated via media releases, Council website and social media. The key message for this campaign will be:

- We are making changes to our festival program from 2026/27 with Coburg Night Market and Sydney Road Street Party changing to biennial events
- These festival resources will be reallocated to form a new, multi-day festival in the North which will incorporate and retain the current Fawkner Festa and Glenroy Festival.
- Brunswick Music Festival and Carols by the Lake will remain as annual events.
- The first Northern festival is currently proposed for September 2027.

- Community engagement will be underway to inform the design of the new event.

Part 2: Following the initial communication campaign, the community engagement process will be communicated via Council's website, social media, posters, newsletters, community organisations and via Advisory Committees and Reference Groups. Information will be translated into Merri-bek's key languages.

Key messages for the consultation are:

- That we are seeking your help in shaping new multi-day and multi-artform festival in Merri-bek's North.
- This will be resourced by making Coburg Night Market and Sydney Road Street Party biennial.
- Glenroy Festival and Fawkner Festa will continue as part of this new festival.
- The first Northern festival is currently proposed for September 2027.
- Questions will include:
  - What activities would you like to see as part of the new Northern festival (Multiple tick boxes: music, performance, exhibitions, outdoor events, children's activities, studio tours, workshops, markets, community stalls, interactive installations or performances, other)
  - What locations would you like to see activated? (Multiple tick boxes: Parks, libraries, shops, schools, community venues, alternative spaces, other)
  - What artforms are you interested in? (Multiple tick boxes: music, dance, performance, visual art, sound, digital, writing, craft and design, other)
  - How would you like to be involved? (Multiple tick boxes: audience member, participate in workshops, artist, stallholder, other)
  - Any other comments or ideas (Open text)

## **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 is no additional resourcing required for this recommendation.

## **7. Implementation**

- Early May: briefing of key stakeholders
- 15 May: Communications regarding changes to festival program.
- June – July: Consultation period soliciting ideas for the new Northern festival.
- 13 July: Council briefing to share community feedback on Northern festival

## **Attachment/s**

There are no attachments for this report.

## 7.4 POWER POLE-MOUNTED ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGERS

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade

Sustainability and Climate

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### Officer recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes that work has been ongoing to explore opportunities to support people without off-street parking to access electric vehicle charging at home, which has included power pole-mounted electric vehicle chargers.
2. Acknowledges and thanks the community for engagement and feedback on preliminary sites for pole-mounted chargers identified.
3. Endorses the implementation of phase one of a trial street power pole-mounted electric vehicle charging proceeding at 8 selected sites.
4. Endorses phase two of a trial to proceed, including community engagement, for the installation of up to 20 further pole-mounted chargers over coming years, at sites which have been requested by community members, and reviewed and confirmed as appropriate by council officers and distribution network service providers.
5. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer in 2026 to negotiate a licence or lease with selected companies who will own and operate the pole-mounted chargers from phase one and phase two to proceed and install and operate the chargers.

## REPORT

### Executive summary

In June 2023, Council resolved to 'continue to encourage Council's electricity distributors (Jemena and CitiPower) to trial pole-mounted chargers in the municipality to give options for those without off-street parking'. Since that time work has been ongoing seeking to implement this resolution – and it has recently become possible to progress.

The increase in uptake of Electric Vehicles (EVs) demonstrates the growing pressure on the EV charging network and the need to continue to expand the portfolio of chargers with a broad range of fast and slow charges, in a range of locations and settings. This has been exacerbated by the recent fuel crisis and has also accelerated EV sales.

Council regularly receives requests from residents who wish to charge an electric vehicle (EV) at home, but do not have off-street parking. While Council provides 26 public chargers across the municipality, charging at home is more convenient. This is challenging in some areas, particularly for those without off-street parking. A larger portion of the housing stock does not have off-street parking in the southern suburbs in Merri-bek.

Power pole-mounted chargers are one approach in the broader portfolio of charging solutions responding to the increasing need for EV charging infrastructure. The pole mounted approach caters to those residents who do not have off-street parking.

Council is currently also trialling a 'home-to-street' charging, where trial participants receive approval to run a charging cable overhead on a retractable boom from their property to their EV parked on the road.

A community engagement sought feedback on a proposed trial of pole-mounted electric vehicle (EV) chargers across Merri-bek in February 2026. These chargers attach to existing power poles, are owned and operated by Charge Point Operators (CPOs) and provide a practical way to expand charging access, particularly for residents who do not have off-street parking. Some of this infrastructure rollout is funded as part of the Victorian Government's Zero Emissions Vehicle Emerging Technologies (ZEVET) program.

Potential locations have been identified in collaboration with charging providers, electricity distribution businesses and Council teams, and residents will be invited to give feedback on individual sites through a [Conversations Merri-bek](#) page. Engagement outcomes have informed the recommendations to Council on where chargers should be installed.

This trial supports delivery of the Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025–2030 and Council's goal to expand EV charging across the municipality.

Officers are now seeking to implement the suitable sites in two phases:

- Phase 1: the installation of 8 chargers and associated infrastructure that have been supported through the community engagement process.
- Phase 2: for the installation of a further 20 chargers over the coming years, where there is sufficient public support.

Community engagement was undertaken between 19 February – 3 April.

Pending approval, under delegation, negotiations will be undertaken with the companies who will own and operate the pole-mounted chargers to lease or license their operations, before the chargers are installed and become operational.

## Previous Council Decisions

### Endorsement of approach for public electric vehicle charging – June 2023

*That Council:*

1. *Introduces a price on electricity provided at fast/direct current (DC) public electric vehicle (EV) chargers of 25 c/kWh during financial year 2023/24 as per the Rates and Charges included in the draft Merri-bek Council Budget 2023-2027. Revenue will be re-invested in maintenance of existing chargers, replacement of chargers where necessary, and installation of new chargers.*
2. *Explores opportunities in financial year 2023/24 to lease public parking bays to charging operators, willing to install, operate and maintain EV chargers.*
3. *Continues to encourage Council's electricity distributors (Jemena and Citipower) to trial pole-mounted chargers in the municipality to give options for those without off-street parking.*
4. *In financial year 2023/24 explore the requirements of a permit scheme for on-street charging of EVs. This would aim to identify what would be required (e.g., switchboard upgrade, civil works, rectification deposit, risk and officer time) for Council teams and Council's insurer to approve a resident charging their EV on the road reserve using electricity from their home. Officers will provide an update at a Councillor Briefing in November 2023 with potential to refer to the budget process for 2024/25.*
5. *Installs an EV charger dedicated to a car-share bay by financial year 2024/25.*
6. *Conduct a review in June 2027 to determine if the market has changed following Council's decision to charge for electric vehicle chargers.*
7. *Seek input on siting of EV charging stations and positioning of charging equipment at EV charging stations from one or more organisations such as the Disabled Motorists Association which can advise on accessibility for drivers with mobility issues.*

## 1. Policy Context

The *Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025-2030* Community 2030 target for Merri-bek's publicly accessible Electric Vehicle (EV) charging network has expanded, aiming to achieve a ratio of 17:1 EVs to public charging bays (across Council-owned, privately owned and pole-mounted chargers). The ratio is currently around 1 public EV charging bay to 33 EVs registered in Merri-bek.

*Zero Carbon Merri-bek – 2040 Framework* sets Council's goal for the Merri-bek community to achieve 75 per cent emissions reduction by 2030 (against baseline year), net zero by 2035 and drawdown ('negative emissions') by 2040.

## 2. Background

Council regularly receives requests from residents who wish to charge an electric vehicle (EV) at home, but do not have off-street parking. While Council provides [26 public chargers across the municipality](#), charging at home is more convenient.

Pole-mounted chargers are one approach in the broader portfolio of charging solutions responding to the increasing need for EV charging infrastructure. These chargers attach to existing power poles and provide a practical way to expand charging access, particularly for residents who do not have off-street parking. Some of this infrastructure rollout is funded as part of the Victorian Government's Zero Emissions Vehicle Emerging Technologies (ZEVET) program.

Council is currently also trialling a 'home-to-street' charging, where trial participants receive approval to run a charging cable overhead on a retractable boom from their property to their EV parked on the road. The pole mounted approach caters to those residents who do not have off-street parking. However, while this trial has been successful to date, this approach does not work well for tenants, residents in heritage zones who may not receive the necessary heritage permit, or residents of those apartment blocks which cannot be retrofitted with EV charging. The pole mounted approach can provide access for charging for this cohort of residents.

A community engagement on a proposed trial of pole-mounted electric vehicle (EV) chargers was run in February and March 2026.

Potential locations have been identified in collaboration with charging providers, electricity distribution businesses and Council teams, and residents will be invited to give feedback on individual sites through a [Conversations Merri-bek](#) page. Engagement outcomes have informed the recommendations to Council on where chargers should be installed. The program will complement council's Home-to-Street Trial, providing another solution to residents who do not have off-street parking.

This paper responds to item 3 of the June 2023 Council resolution which asks that council 'continues to encourage Council's electricity distributors (Jemena and CitiPower) to trial pole-mounted chargers in the municipality to give options for those without off-street parking'.

Charge-point Operators (CPOs) have received grant funding to install 'pole-mounted chargers' from the Victorian State Government and ARENA. Pole-mounted chargers are EV chargers attached to power poles. The chargers provide 22kW AC ('slow' chargers) for two vehicles at the same time. Each charger needs two dedicated parking bays to prevent fossil fuel vehicles from blocking access.

This trial will largely be focused on homes in southern suburbs of Merri-bek where a larger portion of the housing stock does not have off-street parking (within Merri-bek this accounts for 7 per cent or 5,500 houses). Most requests for charging come from the south of the municipality.

To help meet this need, Council has long supported the deployment of pole-mounted EV chargers. These are installed, owned and operated by charge-point operators (CPOs). This approach benefits from cheap installation costs and a high number of potential installation sites.

Victoria has been slower than other jurisdictions to deploy this technology, for example at least 200 pole-mounted chargers have been installed in NSW, and funding for a further 549 has been announced. In the last year, in Victoria, approximately ten have been installed in other councils including City of Port Phillip and City of Boroondara, and chargers will shortly be installed in City of Stonnington and City of Yarra.

### 3. Issues

Council's involvement in pole-mounted EV chargers is restricted to allocation of parking bays, enforcement of parking restrictions and associated community engagement. It is legally feasible for CPOs to install pole-mounted chargers without engagement with Council, although they would not then be matched to dedicated charging bays.

Currently Council's Parking Management Policy does not consider EV charging bays. In future the policy will need to be updated to consider this need. One option would be to treat EV charging bays in the same manner as carshare bays are currently. Outcomes of this trial will be a key input to the formal Parking Management Policy review in 2027. Council authorisation is required for installation of pole mounted chargers due to the change in use of the carparking spaces.

As a comparison, Council currently receives around 20 requests per year from carshare operators, to convert bays to carshare spaces, of which 75 per cent are feasible to consider implement.

Council approval is sought for two phases of the trial. Phase One is the installation of 8 chargers and associated infrastructure that have been supported through the community engagement process. These sites include:

Site	Proposed
Donald St, Brunswick	Yes
MacFarland Street, Brunswick (1)	Yes
Maghull Street, Brunswick East (3)	Yes
Glenlyon Road, Brunswick	Yes
Shamrock Street, Brunswick West	Yes
Albert Street, Brunswick	Yes
Thistle Street, Brunswick East	Yes
Stewart Street, Brunswick	Yes
Maghull Street, Brunswick East (2)	No
North Street, Hadfield	No
MacFarland Street, Brunswick (2)	No
Collings Street, Brunswick West	No
Gray Street, Brunswick	No
Taylor Street, Fitzroy North (1)	No
Pascoe Street, Pascoe Vale	No
Cumberland Road, Pascoe Vale	No
Piera Street, Brunswick East	No
Taylor Street, Fitzroy North	No

As demand for EV charging increases, further pole-mounted chargers may be required. Council's approval is therefore sought for a Phase Two trial, which would be the installation of a maximum of 20 additional chargers in locations that have been requested by community members, reviewed and approved by council officers, and where there is sufficient public support, identified through localised/targeted community engagement. Should both Phase One and Phase Two prove successful, a further report may be brought to Council setting out potential next steps.

The proposed process is similar to the current car-share feasibility and installation process with localised engagement.

Council has not yet entered into a license agreement or similar with the CPOs. While CPOs lease pole space from electricity distributors, Council's role relates to community engagement, parking allocation and enforcement. A license agreement would address matters such as trial conditions, relocations, data sharing and termination. Pending approval for proceeding, it is recommended that Council officers be authorised to negotiate and enter into such license agreements with CPOs, based on an existing template developed by the City of Port Phillip.

### **Community impact**

While many residents have requested pole mounted chargers, some residents do have concerns regarding loss of parking for those that do not own EVs. Council needs to balance these community needs in considering requests from residents without off-street parking.

### **Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications**

This trial supports delivery of the Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025–2030 and Council goal to expand EV charging across the municipality. It will:

- Assist Council to respond to increasing Community demand for on-street EV charging options.
- Assist Council in meeting our targets relating to public EV charging and community carbon emissions.

The CPOs for this project will be required to provide electricity backed by renewable electricity certificates to the charger to ensure energy provided is clean, and renewable.

### **Economic sustainability implications**

On average EVs are 70 per cent cheaper to run than fossil fuel cars. Provision of public chargers will support residents who wish to purchase EVs but do not have access to off-street parking. Pricing at pole-mounted chargers will be set by the charge-point operators (CPOs) and will be outside the control of Council.

### **Legal and risk considerations**

Operation of the chargers will be managed by the CPOs, who will be responsible for the associated risks. Council will enter into a legal agreement with the CPOs to ensure safe operation of the chargers.

### **Human rights consideration**

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

Climate change does not affect everyone equally. People suffering from socioeconomic inequality feel the effects of climate change more than others. Our commitment is to provide strong leadership by reducing the greenhouse gas pollution that causes climate change and by proactively preparing to avoid, withstand and recover from the inevitable impacts of climate change.

## **4. Community consultation and engagement**

Community engagement was undertaken for over 6 weeks from 19 February – 3 April.

19 potential sites were proposed. The locations were based on previous requests from residents, and 125 pieces of feedback were submitted on the various sites.

The engagement process was advertised through standard social media channels, and letter-drops were carried out for the selected locations. Two proposed sites were in activity centres, and officers attempted to phone or email all the nearby businesses, as well as letter-dropping these businesses.

Respondents had the opportunity to score their support for each site, from 1 (against) to 5 (very supportive). All scores above 2.5 were further considered for a qualitative assessment. Of these 8 sites have been identified as having sufficient public support to proceed.

For the recommended 8 sites, pending approval, a follow-up letter-drop will be carried out on the affected area to notify residents that the site has been approved. Residents will have the opportunity to flag new information which will be taken into consideration prior to installation proceeding.

At each installed pole-mounted charger, a notice will be put up linking to the Conversations Merri-bek page. This will give residents and users the opportunity to provide feedback on the charger through a Conversations Merri-bek page.

### **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.

Feedback from nearby and affected persons was sought, received and included in the assessment of this trial and has informed the recommendation.

### **Communications**

There are no specific communications planned for this project outside those related to the planned engagement process.

## **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 charge-point operators delivering this project on Council's electricity distributors Assets (Jemena and CitiPower) have received grant funding to install pole-mounted chargers from the Victorian State Government and ARENA.

There are likely to be minor costs to Council for line-marking and signage for dedicated parking bays, but this would be negotiated as part of the agreement with the CPOs to reduce/negotiate cost impacts whilst delivering broader community benefit. If there is a cost, this would be covered by existing EV charging budget within the current year budget of Sustainability and Climate Branch.

## **7. Implementation**

Pending approval of this project by Council:

- Negotiations will be undertaken with the companies who will own and operate the pole-mounted chargers with a view signing an agreement and proceeding with the installation of the chargers.
- A second phase of a trial will be made available, allowing for up to a maximum of 20 further pole-mounted chargers over coming years, at sites which have been requested by the community and subsequently reviewed and deemed suitable by council officers and distribution network service providers.

## **Attachment/s**

There are no attachments for this report.

## 7.5 EVALUATION TRIAL ROAD CLOSURE - BARROW STREET, COBURG

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade

City Design and Economy

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### Officer recommendation

That Council:

1. Continues the Barrow Street road closure trial for a further 12 months to allow further development and community engagement on the Harding Street (Streets for People) concept design to address the impacts of the road closure trial on surrounding streets.
2. Implements safety modifications to the Coburg Street/Sheffield Street (Coburg) intersection.

<b>REPORT</b>
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### Executive summary

Council endorsed a 12-month trial closure of Barrow Street, following community engagement and a Hearing of Submissions. In January 2025 a trial road closure on Barrow Street commenced with the installation of four bollards and yellow line marking on the southern part of the Barrow Street/Harding Street intersection (image in Figure 1).

Traffic counts from before (March 2024) and after (March 2026) the trial road closure show a significant reduction in traffic on Barrow Street, and an increase on surrounding streets.

While daily vehicle volumes on all streets in the trial area remain well within the capacity of a local street (3,000 vehicles on average per day), Coburg Street has had a significant increase (from 1,168 to 1,790 vehicles on an average weekday). Over the past year, residents have raised concerns about vehicle volumes, speeds and noise on Coburg Street. Speed cushions were installed in mid-2025 to help mitigate this issue.

A smaller increase in traffic occurred on Patterson Street from 489 to 766 vehicles (on an average weekday). Some of this relates to St. Bernard's Primary School pick-up and drop-off traffic which has been diverted from Barrow Street. School staff have raised bus parking and traffic during peak school times as a concern. Council officers can further work with the school to address this issue.

During the trial, vehicle speeds have generally decreased across the area, making it safer for all road users. The only exception is the section of Barrow Street between Harding Street and Bell Street where speed increased from 41 km/h to 50 km/h, significantly exceeding the posted speed limit of 40 km/h. While it is likely this increase is primarily attributable to recent renewal of the road surface, the elevated speeds present a safety concern that warrants action.

The trial has cost \$19,680 so far including traffic counts, traffic management, infrastructure and construction costs. No further costs are expected at this stage.

Council officers recommend extending the road closure trial for 12 months. This would allow for further community engagement and to consider treatments for the Coburg Street/Harding Street and Patterson Street/Harding Street intersections that could reduce vehicle volumes on both streets.

## Previous Council decisions

### Barrow Street Trial Road Closure at Harding Street, Coburg – 10 July 2024

*That Council:*

1. *Considering the report from the Department of Transport and Planning and the written and verbal submissions from the public submitted under Section 223 of the Local Government Act 1989 (the Act), resolves under Clause 10, Schedule 11 of the Act to block the passage or access of vehicles, other than bicycles and pedestrians, by installing temporary barriers (bollards) to trial a road closure on Barrow Street, Coburg, from the intersection of Harding Street to a point up to 8 metres further south. The trial shall be in place for approximately 12 months starting in December 2024.*
2. *Following the trial, receives a report from Council officers in early 2026 with a recommendation on whether to proceed with consulting with the community on a permanent road closure under Section 223 of the Act.*
3. *Schedules installation of trial infrastructure to occur during the 2024/25 Summer School Holidays to allow for local schools and the community to prepare for the closure ahead of the 2025 school year.*

### Trial Road Closure – Barrow Street, Coburg – 10 April 2024

*That Council:*

1. *Approves the commencement of the process under Section 207, Schedule 11, Clause 10(1)(c) of the Local Government Act 1989 to erect temporary barriers at Barrow Street, Coburg, at the intersection with Harding Street, from Harding Street to a point up to 8 metres further south, to block the passage of vehicles other than bicycles, for the purpose of a genuine traffic diversion experiment.*
2. *Gives public notice of the traffic diversion experiment proposals and calls for submissions under Section 223 of the Local Government Act 1989 as required by Section 207A of the Act, in The Age, on Council's website and to owners and occupiers of all properties in the area as shown in Attachment 1.*
3. *Appoints the Mayor as Chair, and Councillors Conlan, Bolton and Pavlidis to a Committee to hear any submitters requesting to be heard in support of their written submission.*
4. *Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to set the date and time and location for the Hearing of Submissions Committee meeting following consultation with the appointed Councillors and submitters requesting to be heard.*
5. *Following the consultation process, receives a report outlining any submissions received, including a summary of any Hearing of Submissions Committee meeting held, in relation to the proposed traffic diversion experiment and the report from the Department of Transport and Planning on the proposal, with a recommendation on whether to proceed to the trial.*

## 1. Policy context

### Moving Around Merri-bek – Transport Strategy (2024)

The Moving Around Merri-bek Strategy was adopted at the March 2024 Council Meeting. The Strategy seeks to ensure all actions impacting council's transport network contribute to objectives aligned to the values of Safe, Accessible, Sustainable, Healthy, Liveable, and Inclusive. One tool to improve safety, liveability, health and accessibility on local roads is to restrict vehicle movement – and in some instances this could include a closure. The trial road closure contributes to achieving the following specific objectives of the draft Moving Around Merri-bek Strategy (2023):

1. Create streets where everyone feels safe.
2. Reduce the frequency and severity of crashes on our roads.

3. Create a transport system in Merri-bek that allows everyone to meet their daily needs and to fully participate in our community.
4. Reduce air and noise pollution generated from vehicles.
5. Create streets and public spaces that encourage physical activity and socialisation amongst local communities.
6. Improve access to shops, services and employment for our local community.
7. Work collaboratively with our community and stakeholders to improve our transport system.
8. Work to make our streets and public spaces are safe for all people and inclusive of all genders, backgrounds, and abilities.

### **Streets for People Plan (2025)**

The Streets for People Plan is Merri-bek's plan to create more safe, accessible, healthy, liveable and inclusive streets for everyone.

Council's Transport Strategy (2024) introduced the *Streets for People Framework* as a way to achieve more holistic and rigorous streetscape planning and design, and to create better streets for everyone.

The Streets for People Plan includes:

1. Identification of a network of Streets for People corridors that will be the focus of future improvements to the street network in Merri-bek
2. Identification of 'high priority' Streets for People projects, that will be the focus of improvements of the next 5 years
3. Examples of the types of design treatments that could be expected on Streets for People corridors
4. An outline of the process that officers will undertake to design and deliver improvements to the Streets for People corridors, including:
  - a) community engagement
  - b) use of Movement and Place and Healthy Streets frameworks in planning and design
  - c) monitoring and evaluation.

One of the high priority Streets for People projects identified is Munro/Harding Street and concept designs are currently being developed for this corridor.

A road closure is one design treatment suitable for a local street or city place in the Plan.

### **Local Government Act 1989 section 223**

There are particular legislative requirements to implement road closures. Under section 11 of the *Local Government Act 1989*, Clause 8 provides Council with power to erect and remove any works or structures. Clauses 9 and 10 provide Council with the power to block or restrict the passage or access of vehicles on a road by placing and maintaining any permanent barrier or other obstruction. Council must not exercise this power unless a report has been considered by the Head, Transport for Victoria, which triggers Council's obligation to invite submissions and engage in a formal consultation process (the Section 223 process and hearing of submissions).

Council is required to consider and resolve to progress four reports to Council to resolve that the proposal progress to each next phase. This report will represent the third Council review and decision. It outlines the evaluation of the trial and provides a recommendation to continue with the trial road closure.

## 2. Background

### Selection of Barrow Street road closure trial location

In recent years, Council has received requests from the community to make local streets safer by reducing speeds and traffic volumes and improve opportunities for walking and riding. One of these streets is Barrow Street in Coburg, a popular rat-run with year-on-year traffic growth. As part of the “East Brunswick Shimmy” bike route and the many schools and other destinations in the area, Barrow Street was shortlisted by Council officers for a potential road closure to improve safety for vulnerable road users in the area. In March 2024, Council endorsed the commencement of the process of a road closure at the intersection of Barrow Street and Harding Street under Section 207, Schedule 11.

### Objectives road closure trial

The road closure trial was expected to have the following impacts:

- Significantly lower traffic volumes on Barrow Street, and an overall safer walking and cycling environment for school children.
- A minor traffic increase to surrounding streets that is still below the recommended capacity of a local street.
- A higher uptake of walking and riding along the Barrow Street corridor.
- A minimal impact to vehicle access for parents, emergency vehicles, buses and waste trucks.

### Previous community engagement and Hearing of Submissions

In May 2024 Council engaged with the community on the proposed road closure trial. There were a range of views about the potential closure. The main concern community members raised was flow-on effect onto surrounding street. St. Bernard’s Primary School was not supportive of the project and submitted a petition and report undertaken by a private traffic consultant. Coburg High School and Merri-bek Primary School were supportive of the trial. The Hearing of Submissions was held on 6 June 2024. Representatives of St Bernard’s Primary School and Coburg High School attended along with 11 other submitters both for and against the proposal.

### Installation of trial infrastructure

The trial infrastructure was installed in January 2025. Figure 1 shows a photo of the road closure currently in place.



Figure 1: Barrow Street road closure trial

### **Monitoring the road closure trial**

Since the road closure trial has been implemented, monitoring has particularly sought to track areas of concern for residents' concerns about an increase of vehicles on their streets. Traffic counts on Coburg Street and Patterson Street in September 2025 showed a moderate increase of traffic on Patterson Street and a significant increase of traffic on Coburg Street. In response to these increases, speed cushions were put in at mid-block and on the approach to the Coburg St/Sheffield St intersection, and their impact on safety will be monitored.

## **3. Issues**

### **Traffic volume change**

Traffic counts were undertaken at 12 locations in March 2024 prior to the installation of the trial road closure, and again in March 2026. Maps showing of the relative change in traffic volumes can be found at **Attachment 1**.

The data indicates a substantial reduction in traffic volumes on Barrow Street. Average weekday volumes decreased from 1,243 vehicles prior to the trial to 248 vehicles following implementation, and traffic on the affected block is now essentially local destination movements. The road closure has also produced beneficial flow-on effects in adjacent areas. Traffic volumes behind St Bernard's Primary School have reduced by more than one-third, while Barrow Street north of Harding Street has experienced a 19 per cent decrease.

Changes in travel patterns are evident, particularly in relation to school pick-up and drop-off activity. Parents and carers accessing St Bernard's Primary School appear to have shifted to alternative routes, primarily Patterson Street and Sheffield Street. While Sheffield Street recorded an 86 per cent increase in traffic, the resulting average weekday volume of 490 vehicles remains very low for a residential street. Similarly, Patterson Street experienced a 57 per cent increase, with an average of 766 vehicles per weekday, which is also well within acceptable limits for local streets.

### **Impact on surrounding street network**

Coburg Street recorded the largest absolute increase in traffic volumes, rising from 1,168 to 1,790 vehicles per weekday. This is at the upper end of the range for local street traffic, and suggests an increase in through-traffic (rat-running). To address this, targeted traffic management measures are recommended as part of the Harding Street (Streets for People) project, as well as additional safety measures for the Sheffield/Coburg intersection.

Concept designs for Harding Street are currently in development. It is therefore recommended that community engagement is undertaken on these designs, including proposed safety treatments and improved crossing points at the Coburg/Harding intersection.

A decision on whether to make the Barrow Street road closure permanent can then be considered and informed following these further measures and subsequent community engagement.

### **Traffic speed change**

Speed is another important local road safety issue. As part of Merri-bek City Council's Safer Speed Rollout on local roads in February 2024, the speed limit on Barrow Street and surrounding streets was reduced to 40 km/h.

According to the survey data, the road closure has reduced vehicle speeds throughout the precinct. The most significant reduction occurred on the section of Barrow Street where the closure is located, with speeds decreasing from 41 km/h to 24.1 km/h. This level is considered a significant safety improvement for vulnerable road users, particularly children and is an appropriate speed for bikes to feel safe and comfortable sharing the road with motor vehicles.

However, there has been a notable increase in speeds on Barrow Street north of Harding Street. The 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed is the speed at which most drivers feel it is safe to travel under existing road conditions. North of Harding Street, the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed increased from 41 km/h to 50 km/h, significantly exceeding the posted speed limit of 40 km/h. While the exact cause is unclear, recent reconstruction may have contributed. The new asphalt surface is smoother, line marking has been refreshed, and the street's wide (13 m) and straight alignment may encourage higher driving speeds. There have been reports of drivers speeding on the street, and a recent request for additional speed humps.

It is therefore recommended that two additional speed humps are installed, with an approximate spacing of 100 metres apart.

### **Impact on active travel**

Bicycle counts were undertaken on Barrow Street and Coburg Street to assess cyclist usage and the potential benefits of the road closure for active transport. During the one-week survey period, there were 402 cycling trips on Barrow Street and 303 on Coburg Street, indicating that both routes serve as important north–south cycling connections. Although no baseline (pre-trial) bicycle data is available for comparison, the observed volumes highlight the role of Barrow Street as a key corridor for cyclists and suggest that the reduced traffic environment is likely to support safer and more attractive cycling conditions.

In February 2025, a driver hit a cyclist at the intersection of Coburg Street and Sheffield Street. Safety treatments at this intersection are recommended, including possible changes to stop sign locations and speed management devices.

### **Community feedback during trial**

Council received four messages from community members since the instalment of the road closure trial. Two of these were from residents experiencing issues on Coburg Street, one from a resident experiencing issues on Richards Street and one email was a general opposition statement to the trial. All messages mentioned additional traffic on surrounding streets as an issue as well as speeding and driving behaviour.

### **Community impact**

Overall, the trial road closure has delivered a significant reduction in traffic on Barrow Street, improved safety in the area by reducing vehicle speeds and maintained traffic volumes on surrounding streets within acceptable limits. A continuation of the trial, along with targeted mitigation measures to address increased volumes on Coburg Street, is recommended. During this time, ongoing monitoring of surrounding streets and action to address any issues that arise would continue.

### **Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications**

The recommendations for the closure of Barrow Street support the actions outlined in section three of Zero Carbon Merri-bek Climate Emergency Action Plan. The project facilitates a mode shift to active travel and protects local streets from increasing vehicle traffic (ref 3.1).

### **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 section 12 – 'right to freedom of movement.' The recommendations for the closure of Barrow Street does not limit or interfere with any Human Rights as residents will continue to have access to their properties. Additionally, the proposed road closures will contribute positively to the freedom of movement by making walking and cycling safer modes of transport.

#### **4. Community consultation and engagement**

Feedback about the trial was sought from St. Bernard's Primary School, Coburg High School and Coburg Primary School. St Bernard's Primary School indicated a range of different views across the school community, including the school's bus parking and navigating traffic on Patterson Street. Steps can be taken in collaboration with the school to ensure that bus access is maintained during an extended trial period.

#### **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**

Works to support ongoing safety improvements can be funded from Council's annual Road Safety and Amenity in Council's capital works program, up to a total cost of \$50,000. The trial has cost \$19,680 so far.

#### **7. Implementation**

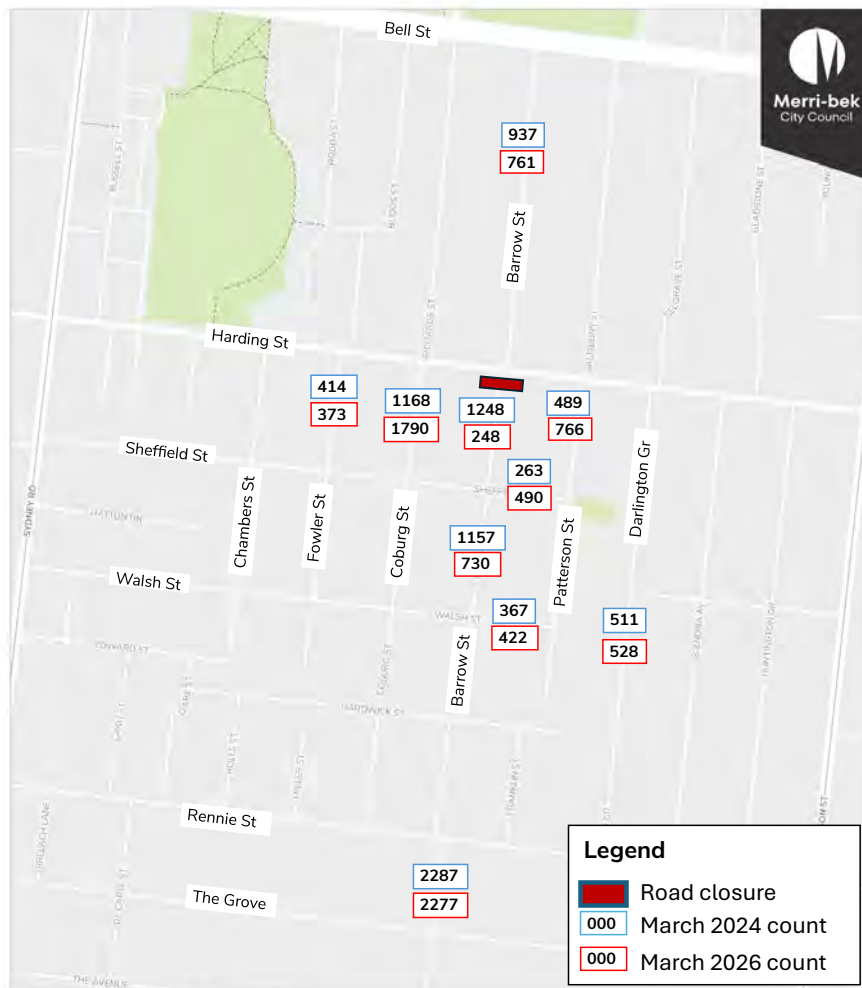
Subject to Council's decision, stop signs will be adjusted at the Coburg Street/Sheffield Street intersection and other safety treatments will be introduced.

Later this year, the community will be consulted on concept designs for the Harding Street – Streets for People project. Based on the outcomes of this consultation, proposed treatments for the Coburg Street/Harding Street and Patterson Street/Harding Street intersections will be presented to residents in the surrounding streets, along with engagement on whether the Barrow Street road closure trial should be made permanent. A final report will be submitted to Council after this engagement with a recommendation on whether the Barrow Street road closure should remain permanently.

#### **Attachment/s**

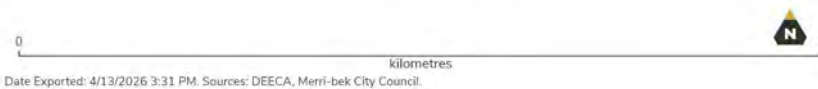
- 1 [↓](#) Maps of traffic counts in the area surrounding Barrow Street trial road closure D26/175180

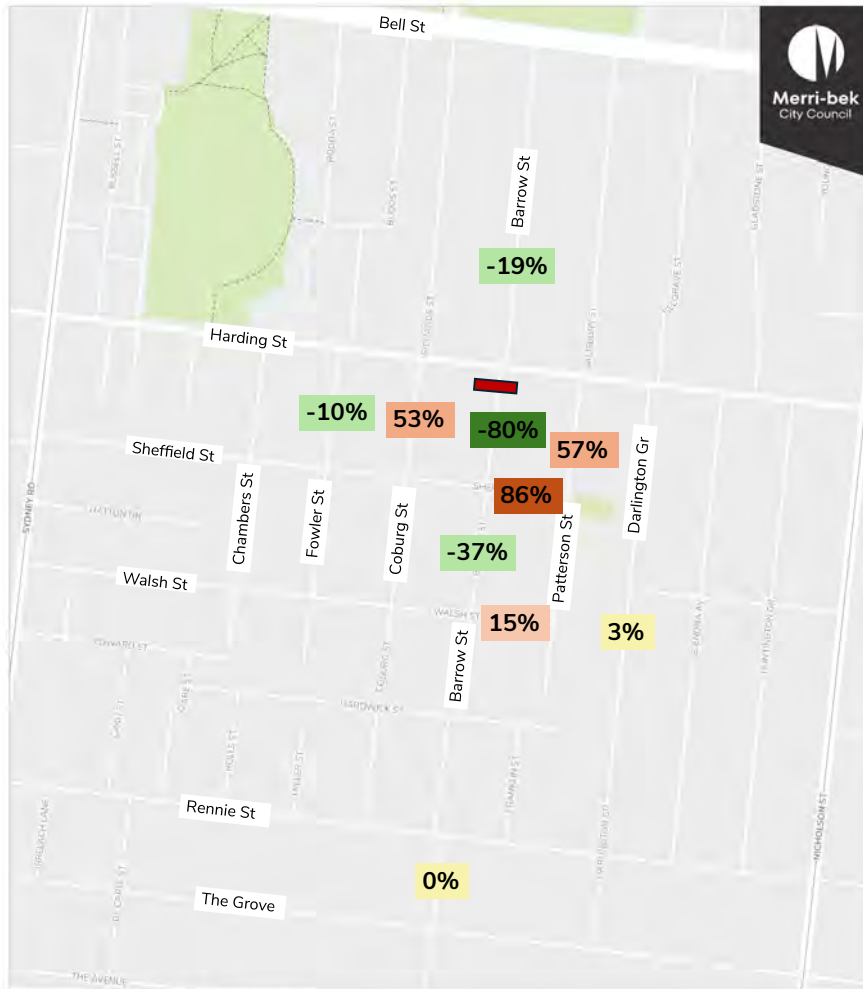
## Maps of traffic counts in the area surrounding Barrow Street trial road closure



### Tube Count Survey

In blue are the results from the March 2024 count before the road closure trial was implemented. In red are the numbers of the count undertaken in March 2026, a year after the implementation of the road closure trial. All counts are the weekday average vehicle volumes.



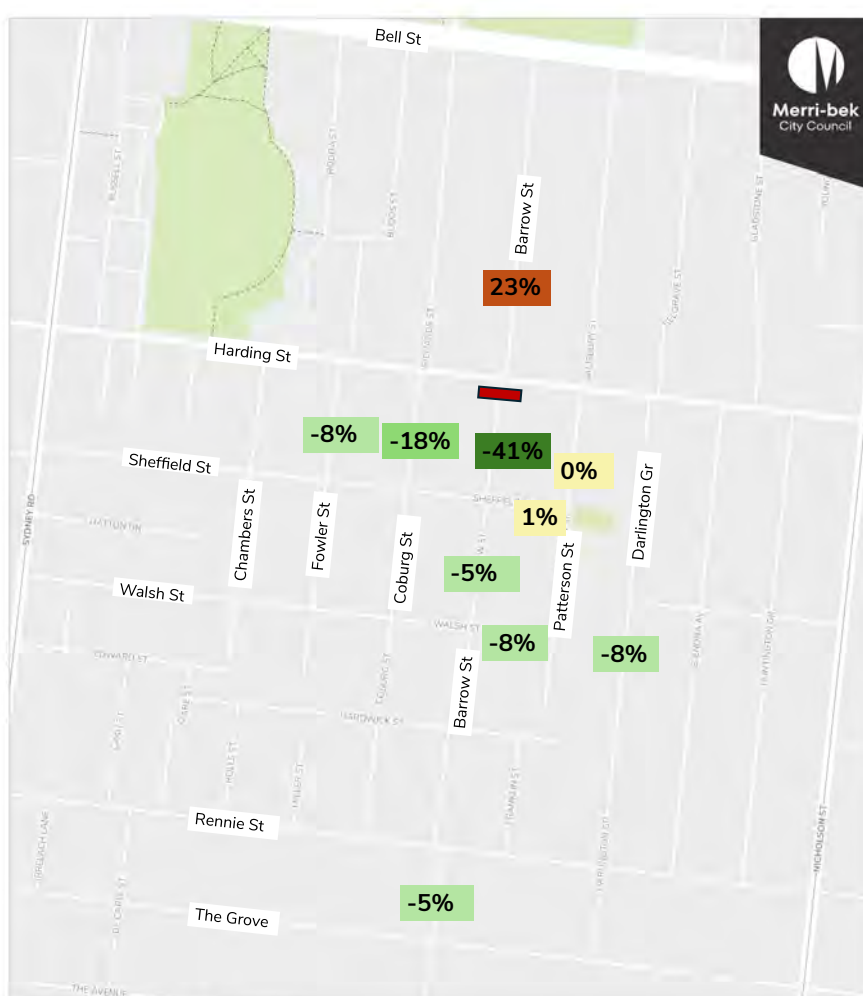


### Tube Count Survey

This map shows the relative change in traffic volumes. The traffic count results from March 2024 have been compared to the count results from March 2026. All counts are the weekday average vehicle volume.

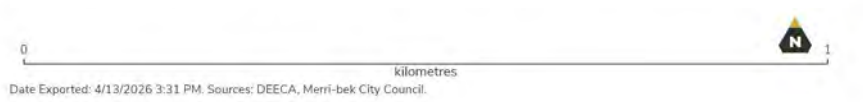


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### Tube Count Survey

This map shows the change in 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speeds, comparing the results of the March 2024 count with the March 2026 counts. The 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed is the 'operating speed' of a road, indicating the behavior of most drivers rather than the posted speed limit.



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### Cyclist Count Survey

This map shows the total number of cyclists using the street in both directions between Monday 3 March 2026 and Sunday 9 March 2026.



## 7.6 PROPOSED SALE OF LAND - REAR OF 436-442 SYDNEY ROAD, COBURG - FINAL DECISION

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade

### Property

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#### Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the feedback received in relation to the proposed sale of Council land at the rear of 436-442 Sydney Rd, Coburg.
2. Endorses the proposed sale of the land by private treaty to the owner of the neighbouring properties at 436-442 Sydney Rd, Coburg.
3. Writes to all those who provided feedback thanking them for their feedback and informing them of Council's decision.
4. Authorises the CEO or their delegate to do all things necessary to effect the sale.

### REPORT

#### Executive Summary

At its meeting on 11 March 2026, Council declared the property at the rear of 436-442 Sydney Rd, Coburg, as surplus to its needs and, in accordance with Section 114 of the Local Government Act, authorised a public notice be given of its intention to sell the site and invite feedback from the community.

Consultation was undertaken in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy 2024 from 23 March 2026 until 21 April 2026.

Nine respondents provided written feedback during the consultation period, anonymised copies of which are attached at **Attachment 1**.

Feedback varied, with the majority supporting the sale and some objecting to the sale of Council assets.

Based on the feedback received, officers are recommending that Council proceed with the sale, noting that the circumstances of this property mean limited opportunity to sell and no alternative uses are available which would benefit Council and/or the community.

#### Previous Council Decisions

##### Proposed Sale of Land rear of 436-442 Sydney Rd Coburg – 11 March 2026

*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.*

## 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 was undertaken in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy 2024.

## 2. Background

### Site Background

The relevant property is a parcel of land at the rear of the properties at 436-442 Sydney Road, Coburg, as shown below in purple on the aerial map. 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, Coburg 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).

#### Consultation process

Section 114 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires that, when considering the sale of Council land, Council must undertake community engagement in line with its policy. At its meeting on 11 March 2026, Council authorised the undertaking of the statutory engagement process.

The proposed sale was advertised on Council’s official website and feedback sought via the ‘Conversations Merri-bek’ website from 23 March 2026 until 21 April 2026. Letters were also sent to owners/occupiers in the immediate vicinity of the site regarding the proposal.

Submitters were asked to provide written feedback on the sale. Nine respondents provided written feedback during the consultation period. Anonymised copies of which are at **Attachment 1**.

### **3. Issues**

#### Feedback themes

Below is a summary of the themes raised by submitters, with considerations and commentary from officers to each:

<b>Feedback themes</b>	<b>Officer response</b>
Do not sell Council assets	<p>Responsible management of Council properties includes continual assessment of Council’s property portfolio against its current and future needs.</p> <p>The land has been assessed by internal Council stakeholders as having no obvious strategic benefit to Council given its size, the position of the abutting road and the boundaries of the neighbouring properties.</p> <p>Per Council’s Strategic Property Framework 2023:</p> <p><i>‘In some instances, property that Council owns may be considered for sale, where it is no longer delivering a community need or providing benefit to the community and Council.</i></p> <p><i>A decision to sell property needs to be made with thorough assessment that ensures the property is not required to the deliver a community service or strategic outcome for the community now, or into the future.’</i></p>
Retain for later as value might increase in the future	<p>Council’s independent valuer provided the following comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The land is a ‘sub-standard’ sized allotment and has very little market appeal, unless to the adjoining owner.</li> <li>• If the land is not sold to the adjoining owner to facilitate the subdivision of the shops, it is unlikely that any other buyer will exist.</li> </ul>

Feedback themes	Officer response
	Because of the above factors, it is unlikely to see any significant increase in value, whereas continuing to own encroached land represents a risk to Council.
Sell	Selling aligns with the Strategic Property Framework, the sale will generate revenue to enable the ongoing delivery of Council's services.

## 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

Publishing notice on Council's website and inviting feedback ensured that anyone with an interest in the property could have objected on the basis of their own interest in purchasing – no such interest was identified during the consultation process.

The location of the Property makes it unlikely to hold any interest for any other party to purchase.

### **Human rights consideration**

The engagement process has been 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 has been 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 has been achieved through providing details of the proposed sale of the Property and seeking feedback through Council's 'Conversations Merri-bek' page. The consultation period commenced on 23 March 2026 until 21 April 2026.

To ensure the consultation process was accessible, letters were also posted to owners/occupiers 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 State Government's 'Local Government Best Practice Guideline for the Sale, Exchange and Transfer of Land 2009' advises that as a general rule, sales of Council land should not be for less than market value.

The Proposed Purchaser has indicated their willingness to purchase the Property for market value, being \$184,000 as at December 2025. These funds will be directed to Council's general revenue.

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.

## **7. Implementation**

If the officer recommendations are endorsed, officers will engage Council's solicitors to commence the sale process.

### **Attachment/s**

- [1](#) Property Services - Feedback received re the proposed sale of land at the rear of 436-442 Sydney Road, Coburg D26/135522

**proposed sale of land at the rear of 436-442 Sydney Road, Coburg**

- 1 Sell it. Turn it into a tool/bike quick fix workshop
- 2 Sensible move
- 3 From the plan it is apparent that he has used it for years, so now let him have it.
- 4 Given the area is going to be redeveloped, I think it's better that the council keeps it as it could hold higher value when the time comes to sell the whole lot of properties.
- 5 There should be no sale of council land
- 6 What is the propose of selling the land, instead of giving it use. Selling is a quick way to make money, but the asset is gone forever. No extra income or benefits can be brought into the community when the asset is gone. Instead of selling, the council should use the asset.
- 7 I don't care, as long as any proposed land use doesn't impinge on public amenity.
- 8 Given the positioning of this land across the 4 shops, and the many other public spaces nearby, it would seem sensible to accept the purchase

I honestly, in good conscience, can not support the sale of the land to one owner. Merri-Bek has a sad background of demolishing its built history and architecture and unfortunately I do not have faith that ownership of the entire row of properties by one individual will result in the preservation of the buildings that are within the parameters of the sale. I can only assume, from a myriad of previous occurrences, that the shop fronts will be facaded, and without proper heritage overlay, potentially demolished or defaced so the one property owner can make more money at the expense of what is our shared built history in the Merri-Bek that we all share and are all entitled to. The historic Brunswick Bank further down Sydney Road is an egregious example of façadism that has recently been approved under the councils eye and it shouldn't be allowed to happen again. This kind of development turns the street into a soulless strip mall type centre. The only way I would support the sale of the land was if there was a clause in the sale that prohibited the façadism of the buildings and their demolition. I assume the owner likely wants to develop the properties and understand that the Merri-Bek is looking to build more homes and increase density, which I wholeheartedly support, but I would be so so disheartening to see it come at the expense of our heritage especially when there are so many spots for housing planned in the immediate vicinity already to replace carparks. The buildings in this sale were built in 1891, over 135 years old, please make it an imperative to protect our heritage buildings as they are where the community derives it's character and warmth from.

## 7.7 MERRI-BEK COMMUNITY AWARDS

Director Community, Eamonn Fennessy

### Community Wellbeing

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#### Officer Recommendation

That Council

1. Endorse the revised Merri-bek Community Award categories for 2026 as follows:
  - a) Arts and Creative Expression
  - b) Community Initiative of the Year
  - c) Diversity and Inclusion
  - d) Environmental Sustainability (in recognition of John Englart)
  - e) First Peoples Cultural Leadership (in recognition of Lisa Bellear)
  - f) Honouring Women
  - g) Merri-bek Community Police Leadership Award
  - h) Sport and Recreation Achievement
  - i) Volunteer of the Year
  - j) Youth Impact

<b>REPORT</b>
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#### Executive Summary

The Merri-bek Community Awards are an annual awards program designed to recognise and celebrate individuals, groups and organisations who have made significant contributions to the Merri-bek community over the previous 12 months. Over the years the award categories have formed with no synergy to the strategic direction of Council. It is recommended that the award categories are streamlined and aligned to the Council Plan 2025-2029 key themes:

- Care for nature and climate resilience
- Healthy and inclusive communities
- Beautiful and liveable city
- Thriving economy and culture
- Engaging and responsible Council

#### Previous Council Decisions

**Access and Inclusion Category - Moreland Community Awards – 10 April 2019**

*That Council includes the category of Access and Inclusion in the Moreland Community Awards, with the following criteria:*

1. *The nominee has made a valuable contribution towards disability access and inclusion;*
2. *The nominee has made a significant contribution towards advancing the rights and interests of people with a disability;*

3. *The nominee has provided opportunities for increased participation, access and inclusion for people with a disability; and*
4. *The nominee has created a positive change in raising awareness about important issues relating to people with a disability.*

### **Honouring Women in Moreland Awards 2017 – 10 August 2016**

*That Council receive a report in October 2016 providing an action plan detailing how we will celebrate International Women's Day in 2017, and a proposal to reinstate the Honouring Women in Moreland Awards as a separate civic event.*

### **Community Recognition Event – 8 October 2014**

*Council resolve that:*

1. *A Community Recognition event be conducted in March and November 2015 (and then annually in November) to recognise achievements and people in the community in various categories as per Option 1 of this report.*
2. *Council acknowledges the success of the Honouring Women in Moreland Awards and commits to continue this annual ceremony in conjunction with International Women's Day.*
3. *Officer's prepare a project brief for consideration at a future Council meeting which will outline the details for the Community Recognition event.*

### **Annual Moreland Mayor's Police Leadership Award - 10 August 2011**

*Council resolve:*

1. *To commemorate the outstanding achievements of a Moreland Police Officer by establishing the Annual Moreland Mayor's Police Leadership Award.*
2. *To allocate \$500 from the 2011/2012 budget.*

## **1. Policy Context**

- **Merri-bek Council 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 Council Plan 2025-2029: Priority 2: Healthy and Inclusive Communities:** To support accessible facilities, programs, services, housing that promote community wellbeing, and connection for all ages, abilities, genders, and cultures, fostering a safe, inclusive, and thriving Merri-bek community.

## **2. Background**

The Merri-bek Community Awards were established in 2015. The awards recognise people who have made a special contribution to Merri-bek.

Each year nominations are opened by Council for a period of three to four months. The awards ceremony is usually held in October where winners are announced.

To be considered submitted entries must include the following:

- A completed nomination form
- A written statement addressing a minimum of one selection criteria (200 – 500 words)
- Detailed information including how the nominee demonstrated excellence, overcame adversity or made a significant contribution to Merri-bek (make reference to any significant dates)
- Where possible a copy of any supporting attachments or documents

- Nominations can be submitted for more than one category for the same group or individual however a separate nomination form must be submitted.

Winners of the awards are announced at the annual Merri-bek Awards ceremony.

## **Nomination Process and Timing**

### **Eligibility**

Anyone who lives, works, studies, plays or volunteers in Merri-bek is eligible to be nominated.

### **Categories**

There are multiple categories that are evaluated based on specific criteria.

### **Current awards and selection criteria**

#### *Community event of the year award*

- Event is held in Merri-bek.
- Event's primary role is to engage the Merri-bek community.
- Event benefits the Merri-bek community.

#### *Contribution to arts and culture award*

- Nominee has made a valuable contribution to arts and culture in Merri-bek
- Nominee has shown commitment to the development of arts and cultural activities for the Merri-bek community.
- Nominee is a Merri-bek resident that has demonstrated significant achievement in the arts.

#### *Collaborative partnerships award*

- More than two individuals and/ or community groups working successfully in collaboration or
- partnerships.
- Creates a positive outcome in the community.
- Increases social connection, builds capacity and / or strengthens relationships.

#### *Contribution to sports award*

- Made a significant impact to the development, integrity and professionalism of sport in the community.
- Increased physical activities opportunities for all members of the community including juniors, women and girls, people with disability or CALD.
- Committed to training, recruiting and recognising volunteers and coaches.
- Made a significant contribution to sport as a leader and role model.

#### *Youth contribution award*

- Nominee must be 25 years or under on Sunday 17 September 2023.
- Nominee has made a valuable contribution to young people in the Merri-bek community.
- Nominee supports others to succeed.

#### *Volunteer of the year award*

- Ongoing contribution to the Merri-bek community.
- Supports and encourages others to succeed.

- A commitment resulting in outstanding and visible results.

*Environmental sustainability achievement award*

- Demonstrated how your project has positively contributed to the environmental sustainability of the Merri-bek community.
- Description of consultation, stakeholder or community collaboration and partnerships, which have contributed to achievement or results.
- Description of innovative practices or approaches used to overcome obstacles to deliver achievements.
- Description of how your project influenced the attitudes of others in the local Merri-bek community (and potentially beyond) regarding the environmental, social and financial sustainability in the short term or longer term.

*Lisa Bellear award for contribution to reconciliation activities*

- Nominee has made a valuable contribution to building better relationships between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander peoples in Merri-bek.
- Nominee has shown commitment to create positive change by encouraging community awareness about reconciliation between wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Merri-bek.

*Honouring women in Merri-bek award*

- Please describe the activity of the individual or group and how they have advanced gender equality through one or more of the following:
- Encouraging participation and leadership.
- Improving health, wellbeing or human rights outcomes.
- Providing opportunities or inclusion and social cohesion in the community.

*Access and inclusion*

- The nominee has made a valuable contribution towards disability access and inclusion;
- The nominee has made a significant contribution towards advancing the rights and interests of people with a disability;
- The nominee has provided opportunities for increased participation, access and inclusion for people with a disability; and
- The nominee has created a positive change in raising awareness about important issues relating to people with a disability.

*Merri-bek Community Police Leadership Award*

- It is the intent that this award be presented to a police officer working in the City of Merri-bek who has shown excellence in their field.
- Be nominated by the Officer In Charge of a police station or work unit and then forwarded via the Local Area Commander and Divisional Commander for consideration;
- The Police Officer must have a minimum two (2) years of service in the Police Service Area of Merri-bek;
- Be any rank below that of Inspector and a member of any local unit;

- Have demonstrated outstanding service to the Merri-bek community, with particular emphasis weighted to the following:
  - Victoria Police Force Values of Flexibility, Leadership, Integrity, Respect, Professionalism, Support; and
  - The member's overall work ethic and contribution to the work environment and the community.

#### 4. Issues

The need for a Community Awards review was identified in 2025.

There are a number of categories that had not been receiving sufficient nominations in order to enable broad representation; community feedback indicated that the focus of some award categories were unclear. The award categories also did not align with the Human Rights priority groups.

The revised Merri-bek Community Award categories have been structured to align with Council Plan themes, ensuring an awards program that recognises contributions that support Council's strategic directions while also celebrating the breadth of community impact across Merri-bek.

Organised by Council Plan theme, the proposed Merri-bek Community Awards categories are:

##### **Care for Nature and Climate Resilience**

- *Environmental Sustainability Award (in recognition of John Englart)* acknowledges individuals or groups demonstrating leadership in sustainability, climate action, biodiversity, circular economy initiatives and environmental advocacy. This Award is named in honour of John Englart, recognising his enduring contribution and dedication to climate action, environmental advocacy, and the protection of biodiversity within the Merri-bek community.

##### **Healthy and Inclusive Communities**

- *Volunteer of the Year Award* recognises outstanding formal and informal volunteering that enhances community wellbeing. The Youth Impact Award celebrates young people aged 12–25 making meaningful contributions across areas such as community wellbeing, arts, environment, advocacy, sport and social impact. The Honouring Women Award recognises leadership and advocacy advancing gender equity and community wellbeing.
- *Diversity & Inclusion Award* acknowledges leadership that fosters equity, inclusion and belonging, including LGBTIQ+ inclusion, disability access, cultural safety and anti-racism.
- *Sport & Recreation Achievement Award* recognises individuals or groups who promote participation, inclusion and community sport, including athletes whose achievements inspire the Merri-bek community.

##### **Beautiful and Liveable City**

- *Community Initiative of the Year Award* recognises local initiatives that strengthen neighbourhood connection, reduce isolation, and build social cohesion, including through partnerships and local collaboration.

##### **Thriving Economy and Culture**

- *Arts & Creative Expression Award* recognises individuals or groups who enrich Merri-bek's creative, cultural and artistic life.

## **Engaging and Responsible Council**

- *First Peoples Cultural Leadership Award (in recognition of Lisa Bellear)* honours First Nations leadership, cultural strength, advocacy and community impact.
- *Merri-bek Community Police Leadership Award*, established in 2011, continues to recognise a police officer working within Merri-bek who has demonstrated excellence in their field and outstanding service to the community. Nominations are submitted through Victoria Police command structures, and eligibility requires a minimum of two years' service within the Merri-bek Police Service Area, a rank below Inspector, and demonstrated alignment with Victoria Police values, alongside a strong contribution to both the workplace and the broader community.

Collectively, these categories ensure the awards program remains contemporary, inclusive and reflective of the diverse contributions that strengthen the Merri-bek community.

### **Community impact**

This is an opportunity to recognise and celebrate the work of individuals, groups and organisations that live, work, volunteer or study in the Merri-bek community.

### **Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications**

The Merri-bek Community Awards will maintain a category that supports Council's climate emergency and environmental sustainability directions.

### **Economic sustainability implications**

The Merri-bek Community Awards will maintain a category that supports Council's economic sustainability directions.

### **Legal and risk considerations**

The Merri-bek Community Awards are assessed by a panel of Councillors appointed to the Merri-bek Community Recognition Committee (Merri-bek Awards). Appointments are made annually as part of the Councillor Portfolio and Representatives on Committees. The *Local Government Act 2020* empowers Councils with the authority to establish committees as needed to support their governance functions.

### **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 award categories are in accordance with the Charter.

## **4. Community consultation and engagement**

The intention of this review is to ensure that the Merri-bek Community Awards are strategically aligned with the Council Plan 2025-29, which has undergone extensive community consultation.

Council sought feedback from the First Peoples Advisory Committee in regard to the *First Peoples Cultural Leadership (in recognition of Lisa Bellear)*, of which there was support to change the name of this award.

### **Affected persons rights and interests**

There are no adverse impacts on the rights and interests of affected persons in relation to this report.

## **Communications**

There will be rebranding of the Merri-bek Community Awards for 2026 to revitalise the program, focussing on creating a fresh, engaging identity that highlights and promotes the introduction of the new award categories. This will include developing updated branding materials and the implementation of a strategic marketing campaign to raise awareness and generate excitement around the revamped program.

Additionally, there will be collaboration with stakeholders to develop inclusive communication strategies that address cultural, language and accessibility needs. This may include creating accessible and multilingual materials, using culturally relevant messaging and leveraging diverse channels to ensure the new categories are clearly understood and accessible to a broad and varied audience. The rebrand and refreshed approach to marketing and communications aims to attract a diverse range of participants, increase engagement and elevate the prestige of the event.

## **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**

Any additional resourcing required for the change to categories will be incorporated into the existing budget for the Merri-bek Community Awards.

## **7. Implementation**

The endorsed categories will be incorporated into the 2026 Merri-bek Community Awards. The Merri-bek Community Award criteria will be established in accordance with a framework and terms of reference determined by the Chief Executive Officer that at a minimum will prescribe:

- clear, purpose-aligned, measurable and inclusive criteria that define specific, observable contributions; and
- an output of one of the 5 Council Plan themes.

## **Attachment/s**

There are no attachments for this report.

## **7.8 RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION - MAKING SYDNEY ROAD SAFER, GREENER, AND MORE ACCESSIBLE**

**Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade**

**City Design and Economy**

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### **Officer recommendation**

That Council:

1. Notes the officer assessment of three study options in response to the Notice of Motion regarding options to advocate to make Sydney Road safer, greener and more accessible.
2. Endorses Option 3 – focused corridor upgrade study as Council’s preferred response to the Notice of Motion, comprising a 12-month program focused on:
  - a) Presenting all available data gathered through recent studies and datasets relevant to Sydney Road, such as parking sensor and usage data, traffic data from internal and state government data sets, economic data such as business surveys, vacancy surveys and spendmapp data.
  - b) Assessing barriers to previous revitalisation and upgrade efforts.
  - c) Assessing enabling changes to incremental upgrades such as clearway, traffic, parking, outdoor dining, loading zones and other kerbside implications from infrastructure improvements.
  - d) Considering preferred tram stop designs in different movement and place contexts.
  - e) Identifying priority tram stop locations on Sydney Road through targeted engagement.
  - f) Engaging directly with the Department of Transport and Planning and Yarra Trams.
3. Notes that funding in the order of \$200,000 would be required to resource Option 3.
4. Refers the funding required for Option 3 to the 2026-27 budget process for consideration.
5. Notes that the higher-cost alternative study options assessed by officers are not recommended but may be more suitable as projects delivered at a later stage in partnership with the state government should the project progress to detailed design and development stages. These options include a full new study (which could cost in the range of \$1.5-2.0 million), or a synthesis of previous studies with targeted new work (which could cost in the range of \$0.5-1.0 million).

<b>REPORT</b>
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### **Executive summary**

This report responds to Council’s 11 February 2026 Council Resolution requesting advice on the scope it would take to refresh Council’s advocacy to make Sydney Road safer, greener and more accessible. It comes in the context of many years of advocacy, community campaigning and technical investigations on Sydney Road, with limited on-ground change delivered to date.

Officers have assessed three possible responses and recommend a focused corridor upgrade study as the most appropriate option for addressing the points in the Council Resolution. This approach focuses on identifying barriers and opportunities and preparing for enabling changes required to support upgrades such as accessible tram stops, greening and safety treatments, as well as the advocacy actions needed to progress delivery with State stakeholders.

The preferred option is narrower in scope than a full corridor visioning study. Officers consider it the most practical and cost-effective response resulting in meaningful research and options to resolve barriers and begin to progress early upgrades to Sydney Road. It is estimated to cost roughly \$200,000 over 12 months, which would need to be referred to the 2026-207 budget for consideration alongside other priorities. The full upgrade of Sydney Road is a long term program, and further much more detailed work will be needed before full change can be realised. The proposed option is an appropriate next step to firm up the form and location of potential accessible tram stops and potentially facilitate early initiatives.

## **Previous council decisions**

### **Notice of Motion – Sydney Road – 11 February 2026**

*That Council receives a report to its May 2026 Council Meeting exploring options for how Council can strengthen its advocacy on making Sydney Road safer, greener and more accessible for everyone, including options for:*

1. *Collecting data from local residents, patrons and traders on:*
  - a) *What changes people want to see along Sydney Road to make it safer, greener and a better experience;*
  - b) *Experiences of how accessible Sydney Road is for them;*
  - c) *Who is visiting local shops, cafes, bars and restaurants and the proportion of local residents and visitors from outside Merri-bek;*
  - d) *Who would visit Sydney Road more if it were safer, greener and more accessible;*
  - e) *How customers/patrons are getting to/from their destination on Sydney Road; and*
  - f) *Any other relevant questions as deemed by Council Officers.*
2. *Completing analysis on current availability and usage of car parks, including:*
  - a) *How much parking is currently along Sydney Road;*
  - b) *How much parking is currently within walking distance to Sydney Road;*
  - c) *Existing parking management arrangements for the above areas and whether these are appropriate for current and predicted future land uses; and*
  - d) *Any other relevant factors to consider on parking.*
3. *Resourcing options to ensure advocating for a safer, greener and more accessible Sydney Road remains a priority for Council.*

### **Accessible tram stops for Sydney Road – 10 April 2024**

*That Council:*

1. *Endorses the Community Rally/event for Accessible Tram Stops on Sydney Road that is to take place on Saturday 22 June at 11am.*

2. *Supports the Community Rally/event up to the amount of \$5000 to:*
  - a) *Assist with publicity, including printing of leaflets and posters, and distribution of information about the event to early childhood centres, maternal and child health services, reference and advisory groups, Seniors' groups, disability groups, neighbourhood houses, libraries and using Council web sites, social media channels and Council's electronic newsletter to promote the community rally/event.*
  - b) *Assist with the provision of face masks to ensure a safe community rally for people who are vulnerable if they catch Covid.*

**Cycling Options on Sydney Road - Advocacy Options - Response to Notice of Motion**  
 – 13 November 2019

**Resolution**

*That Council:*

1. *Notes its endorsed submission to the Department of Transport Sydney Road Improvement Project was made by the due date and included a request for a six-month trial of physically separated bicycle lanes (among other changes) on Sydney Road between Brunswick Road and Glenlyon Road, and the use of physically separated bicycle lanes on Sydney Road to provide a detour around disruption to the Upfield Shared Path caused by Level Crossing Removal Project (LXRP) works.*
2. *Notes the Department of Transport response to Council at Attachment 1 to this report, declining to implement the trial requested by Council and noting the project is on hold until after Level Crossing Removal Project works on the Upfield railway line.*
3. *Notes the Department of Transport response to Council at Attachment 1 to this report, does not confirm whether physically separated bicycle lanes will be provided as a cyclist detour around LXRP works.*
4. *Notes this report, detailing how Council has sought to minimise disruption to and provide detour routes for users of the Upfield Shared Path.*
5. *Directs the Director City Futures to write to David Teague, Acting Regional Director Metropolitan North West Region – Department of Transport to:*
  - a) *Express its appreciation for the improvements to cycling that have been delivered so far on Sydney Road;*
  - b) *Express concerns regarding the detour provided for cyclists and the resulting safety of local cyclists commuting along Sydney Road and the Upfield bike path corridors during the construction of State Government projects in our city; and*
  - c) *Note that Moreland has 12 times the state average of cyclists and a very specific goal of creating a mode shift towards sustainable modes of transport during the current Council term.*

**1. Policy context**

**Council Plan 2025-2029:**

Creating safer, greener and more accessible streets and activity centres aligns with all pillars of the Council Plan 2025-2029. Of most relevance are the following priorities:

1. Care for nature and climate resilience
  - Adding more trees and plants to make our streets and parks greener and cooler.
2. Healthy and inclusive communities
  - Providing accessible spaces, facilities, and programs that support community health and safety.

3. Beautiful and liveable city
  - Keeping public places, spaces, and areas well maintained, safe, and inviting for community use.
  - Fixing and improving streets and footpaths to make them more friendly for walking and riding.
  - Making it easier and safer to use public transport to move around.
4. Thriving economy and culture
  - Developing busy shopping and activity areas that are attractive, green and inviting.
5. Engaging and responsible council
  - Working with other levels of government to advocate for community priorities.

### **Moving Around Merri-bek Strategy**

Moving Around Merri-bek is Council's long-term transport strategy. It commits Council to advocating to the Victorian Government for improvements to public transport infrastructure, including making public transport fully accessible, and recognises that improvements on State roads and public transport networks are dependent on State Government prioritisation and funding. It also references Council's Reshaping Brunswick position paper as a collaborative approach to improving transport infrastructure and amenity along the Upfield Line and Sydney Road corridor.

### **Moving Around Merri-bek Action Plan 2025-29:**

This work directly supports Action 3.3 of the Action Plan, which seeks to develop a shared community vision for the revitalisation of Sydney Road and other tram activity corridors, and to advocate to the State Government to fund and deliver that vision.

### **Reshaping Brunswick – level crossing removal position paper:**

Council's broader advocacy in Brunswick has also emphasised accessibility, safety, climate-responsive design, placemaking and a stronger public realm outcome associated with transport change. The Reshaping Brunswick position paper calls for a long-term shared vision for the revitalisation of Sydney Road and specifically identifies improving tram accessibility and broader public realm amenity as key priorities.

### **Melbourne's Tram Plan:**

Melbourne's Tram Plan sets out the State Government's strategic intent to increase accessibility, improve safety, integrate tram stops into surrounding place contexts, and expedite the delivery of a safe and accessible tram network. These objectives align strongly with Council's advocacy position on Sydney Road and other tram corridors.

### **Merri-bek Advocacy Priorities**

One of Council's key 2026 State Election Advocacy Priorities is investment in accessible tram stops along the Sydney Road Route 19 tram line, reinforcing the strategic relevance and timeliness of the recommended option.

## **Victorian State Government Train and Tram Zone Activity Centres Program**

The Victorian Government's Train and Tram Zone Activity Centres Program is a major planning initiative intended to direct more housing growth to locations close to high-capacity public transport, jobs and services. In Merri-bek, the two designated train and tram zone activity centres are Brunswick and Coburg, both of which are centred on the Upfield Line and the Route 19 tram corridor along Sydney Road. This reinforces that Brunswick and Coburg are expected to accommodate additional growth, and that the future of the precincts depends on high-quality, safe and accessible public transport. It strengthens the case for ensuring Sydney Road's tram services and stops are not treated as a secondary issue, but as core infrastructure needed to support the State's own activity centre planning objectives.

## **Disability Discrimination Act and Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport**

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* makes discrimination unlawful in access to public transport, while the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (DSAPT) set the national accessibility requirements for public transport services and infrastructure. Commonwealth guidance states that the Standards apply to tram services and to associated infrastructure, including tram and light rail stops. The compliance target date was the end of calendar year 2022. This is directly relevant to Sydney Road because inaccessible tram stops continue to operate as a physical barrier to independent travel for many people, and Council's advocacy for accessible stops is aligned with the national statutory framework governing public transport accessibility. The Standards also emphasise the importance of the whole journey, including the interface between stops and the broader built environment, reinforcing the need to consider stop accessibility together with wider streetscape conditions.

## **2. Background**

Making Sydney Road safer, greener and more accessible aligns with Action 3.3 of the Moving Around Merri-bek Action Plan 2025–2029. The Notice of Motion passed at the February 2026 Council Meeting requested officers to explore options for how Council can strengthen its advocacy, including options for data collection, parking analysis and resourcing.

Merri-bek City Council and the community have advocated for improvements to Sydney Road for decades. In the most recent decade, multiple initiatives have sought to improve the corridor, including:

- VicRoads / State Government investigations (mid-2010s) into tram stop accessibility and corridor function
- Ongoing Council advocacy for accessible tram stops
- Community-led campaigns such as Revitalise Sydney Road, calling for safer and more people-friendly streets
- Street cleansing and presentation projects such as Love Sydney Road
- Multiple Council-led studies (e.g. Elevating Brunswick LXP position paper, Brunswick Built Form Framework, accessibility audits and parking capacity analysis in Brunswick and Coburg)

Despite this sustained effort, no significant corridor-wide transformation has occurred, and the only accessible tram stop along Route 19 within Merri-bek is the terminus stop at Bakers Road in Coburg North. Progress has been limited by:

- Lack of alignment between stakeholders (Council, DTP, Yarra Trams)
- Unresolved trade-offs (e.g. clearways, parking vs access)
- Absence of a clear, agreed pathway from strategy to delivery

- Tendency for work to focus on broad visioning without resolving implementation constraints

This context highlights the need for an approach that not only defines a community vision but also addresses the barriers that have historically prevented the delivery of previous visioning work.

### 3. Issues

#### Officer assessment of three study options

Officers developed and assessed three study options. All three were designed to respond to the Notice of Motion, but they differ materially in cost, scope and likelihood of progressing tangible outcomes, as outlined below:

- **Option 1 – full new study:** a comprehensive consultant-led corridor study with new data collection and extensive engagement;
- **Option 2 – synthesis of previous studies and targeted gap filling:** consolidation of existing evidence from previous studies on and around the Sydney Road corridor and targeted additional analysis where needed; and
- **Option 3 – focused corridor upgrade study:** a targeted study focused on assessing available data, barriers and opportunities, tram corridor and accessible stop priorities, enabling changes, and advocacy actions needed to progress upgrades to Sydney Road.

Option 3 is recommended as it would facilitate a pathway to implementation, as a precursor to more detailed and costly work that will be needed at a later time.

A fuller description of each option, including calculation of indicative costs, is provided in **Attachment 1** (cost assumptions note).

#### What has not worked previously

Previous work on Sydney Road has repeatedly identified similar issues but has not progressed implementation. This includes:

- broad corridor-wide visioning without resolving delivery constraints;
- insufficient clarity about trade-offs, including parking, clearways, traffic and accessibility; and
- limited early alignment with State Government stakeholders.

#### What is needed to progress delivery

Considerations to strengthen Council's advocacy and build towards a long-term successful outcome include:

- a clear definition of preferred accessible tram stop typologies;
- understanding how those typologies suit different streetscape contexts;
- identification of the enabling changes needed to support delivery, such as kerbside and clearway changes;
- early testing and alignment with DTP and Yarra Trams; and
- focus on priority locations with the highest impact.

#### Recommended option

Option 3 (a focused corridor upgrade study) is recommended as the preferred way forward to implement Council's February decision.

Option 3 is materially different from the other options. It is not a corridor visioning study led by a team of consultants. Instead, it is a focused program that uses Sydney Road as a test case to progress a scalable approach to Sydney Road. It would include:

- Presenting all available data gathered through recent studies and datasets relevant to Sydney Road, such as parking sensor and usage data, traffic data from Council and state government datasets, economic data such as business surveys, vacancy surveys and spendmapp data.
- Assessing barriers to previous revitalisation and upgrade efforts.
- Identifying and assessing potential incremental and enabling upgrades such as clearway, traffic, parking, outdoor dining, loading zones and other kerbside implications from infrastructure improvements.
- Identifying potential preferred tram stop designs and priority tram stop locations on Sydney Road through targeted engagement.
- Engaging directly with DTP and Yarra Trams.

This approach would learn from previous work and is more likely than the other options to progress a practical advocacy position tied to near-term delivery barriers, while still supporting the broader intent of Action 3.3 in the Moving Around Merri-bek Action Plan. It also avoids significant duplication of earlier consultant-led work and is deliverable at a substantially lower cost than the two alternatives.

### **Community impact**

The recommended option has the potential to deliver a clearer and more practical advocacy pathway toward safer, greener and more accessible outcomes on Sydney Road, especially for people with disability, older people, parents with prams, and others who experience current tram stop infrastructure as a barrier. It also creates a stronger basis for Council to advocate for improvements that support local traders and activity centre vitality through better access and a higher quality public realm.

A limitation of the preferred option is that it is narrower than a full corridor vision. It is focused on accessible tram stop upgrades and enabling changes, rather than a comprehensive end-to-end reimaging of Sydney Road (which would also require detailed analysis of traffic flows on neighbouring arterial roads). However, it is proportionate to the current challenge which is to work towards unlocking a pathway to delivery.

### **Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications**

Improving accessibility and attractiveness of tram travel gives people better alternatives to driving and aligns with Council's climate emergency objectives. The recommended option also provides an opportunity to identify complementary public realm and greening improvements associated with future stop upgrades, although these would be explored at a high level and not designed in detail as part of this work.

### **Economic sustainability implications**

Sydney Road is one of Merri-bek's most significant activity centres. Improving accessibility and public realm quality has the potential to strengthen the corridor's attractiveness, support visitation, and improve the experience of traders, customers and visitors. The recommended option supports economic sustainability by focusing on practical improvements that can strengthen Council's advocacy for future State investment.

## **Legal and risk considerations**

The principal legal and governance risk is that Council could commit to a scope that is not financially realistic or is unlikely to influence delivery. Officers consider the recommended option materially reduces this risk by aligning scope to Council's internal capability and focusing on advocacy for State-controlled infrastructure rather than implying that Council can directly deliver accessible tram stops on its own.

A further risk is stakeholder expectation. Community members may interpret the report as committing Council to delivery of accessible tram stops, whereas actual delivery remains dependent on State Government decisions, funding and approvals. Clear communications will therefore be important.

## **Human Rights consideration**

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. Inaccessible tram stops are a physical barrier to freedom of movement and equitable participation in public life for people with disability and reduced mobility. The recommended option supports Council's advocacy for more accessible infrastructure, while recognising that the Victorian Government is the responsible delivery agency for tram stop upgrades.

## **4. Community consultation and engagement**

### **Affected persons rights and interests**

The rights and interests of local residents, traders, visitors, and especially people with disability and reduced mobility are directly affected by current conditions on Sydney Road. The recommended option includes targeted community engagement to identify 6 to 8 priority stop locations on Sydney Road and to inform Council's advocacy position at those locations. It also includes engagement with DTP and Yarra Trams, whose cooperation is critical to implementation.

### **Communications**

A detailed communications plan would be prepared if Council adopts the recommendation. Key messages might include:

- Council is undertaking this work to consider the long term implementation of upgrades.
- A key element which needs to be confirmed is the priority locations and the preferred form for potential accessible trams stops along Sydney Road.
- The delivery of tram stop upgrades remains a State Government responsibility.
- Council is seeking to move from repeated visioning toward a more implementation-focused advocacy approach.

## **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 financial implications of the three assessed options are set out in the Cost Assumptions Note. That note identifies materially different cost envelopes depending on the level of consultant involvement. Option 1 is estimated at \$1.4-1.8 million; Option 2 could be \$0.5-1.0 million, while the recommended option is in the order of \$0.2 million.

Given existing work in train, the recommended option could not be delivered by existing staff without reprioritisation of other transport initiatives. The \$0.2 million budget would cover the cost of an additional staff member and some targeted external / technical inputs. It is currently unbudgeted and would need to be referred to and funded through the 2026-2027 budget process.

## **7. Implementation**

Subject to Council's decision and successful consideration through the 2026-27 budget process, the next steps would be:

1. confirm project governance and resourcing process;
2. prepare a background report consolidating relevant evidence and confirming the assumptions to be applied;
3. undertake targeted community engagement to identify opportunities and priority tram stop locations on Sydney Road;
4. assess enabling changes at those locations, including kerbside and clearway implications;
5. engage with DTP and Yarra Trams on feasibility and advocacy priorities; and
6. prepare a further report or advocacy package setting out priority stop locations, enabling changes and recommended State advocacy actions.

### **Attachment/s**

- 1 [↓](#) Sydney Road NOM Response - cost assumptions D26/203645

## **Attachment:**

### **Sydney Road NOM response – cost assumptions**

This Cost Assumptions Note provides a brief estimate of the additional costs to deliver the potential study requested. Estimates are informed by recent Merri-bek procurement data.

#### **Option 1 – full new study**

A comprehensive, consultant-led corridor study including new data collection, scenario development, and a full shared community vision. Key costs would include new data and research such as comprehensive traffic and parking studies for the corridor. It is estimated this would cost in the order of \$1.5 million or more. Elements would include:

1. Core urban design and place strategy – movement and place, streetscape framework and masterplan / vision.
2. Transport and movement analysis – traffic and intersections, parking and kerbside assessment, number plate travel pattern analysis.
3. Community and stakeholder engagement
4. Scenario testing and visualisation – corridor scenarios, concept layouts and cross-sections.
5. Project management

#### **Option 2 – synthesis of previous studies and targeted gap filling**

A synthesis of data and research from previous Council studies on and around Sydney Road, with targeted additional data collection to address key gaps. This option would cost between \$0.5-1.0 million and develop technical studies to inform and justify opportunities and actions with key elements including:

1. Desktop synthesis and strategy refinement
2. Targeted technical inputs such as traffic analysis, intersection testing, parking and kerbside assessment, number plate travel pattern analysis, targeted intercept surveys, and high-level transport modelling inputs
3. Targeted engagement
4. Project management

#### **Option 3 – focused corridor upgrade study**

A focused approach targeting delivery barriers to Sydney Road upgrades, including assessing current available data and research, and taking a network-wide lens across tram corridors in Merri-bek. The cost is estimated to be \$0.2 million which would include:

1. Consolidation of existing data
2. Determining preferred accessible tram stop locations and designs.

3. Consideration of other enabling changes (eg, clearways, kerbside reallocation)
5. Very targeted community engagement around tram stop locations.

## 7.9 DRAFT FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICY

Acting Director Business Transformation, Yvonne Callanan

### Financial Services

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#### Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Adopts the Finance Management Policy (provided as Attachment 1 to this report)
2. Subject to point (1) approval, revokes the following policies which are now incorporated into the Finance Management Policy:
  - a) Investment Policy
  - b) Loan and Borrowing Policy
  - c) Financial Reserves and Capital Management Policy
3. Notes that a report on the Fossil Fuel Divestment Strategy that accounts for the Finance Management Policy will be brought to Council before the end of 2026.

### REPORT

#### Executive Summary

The Financial Management Policy (The Policy) provides a single, overarching framework for the responsible, transparent and accountable management of Council's financial resources. It consolidates key financial governance principles and controls previously contained across multiple policies into a consistent and streamlined approach.

The Policy gives effect to the principles of sound financial management under the *Local Government Act 2020* and supports compliance with Council's statutory obligations for financial planning, reporting, revenue, assets, investments and borrowings. It strengthens governance, internal controls, oversight and decision-making across all financial operations.

The Policy supports Council's long-term financial sustainability by embedding responsible investment, sustainable borrowing and integrated financial planning principles, and aligns financial decision-making with Council's strategic and budgetary frameworks.

Adoption of the Policy formalises existing practices and:

- Establishes a clear governance and control framework for the management of Council's finances, including revenue, expenditure, assets, liabilities, investments and borrowings.
- Gives effect to the principles of sound financial management required under section 101 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.
- Supports Council's long-term financial sustainability, transparency and accountability.
- Ensures compliance with legislative, regulatory and reporting obligations.
- Strengthens internal controls, oversight and consistency across all financial operations.
- Aligns financial decision-making with Council's strategic, budgetary and long-term financial planning frameworks.

#### Previous Council Decisions

##### Financial Reserves and Capital Management Policy – 12 April 2023

*That Council adopts the revised Financial Reserves and Capital Management Policy, at Attachment 1 to this report.*

## **Investment Policy – 12 October 2022**

*That Council adopts the revised Investment Policy, at Attachment 1 to this report.*

## **Loan and Borrowing Policy – 8 June 2022**

*That Council adopts the revised Loans and Borrowing Policy, at Attachment 1 to this report.*

## **Fossil Fuel Divestment Strategy Action Plan 2019-2021 – 12 December 2018**

*That Council:*

- 1. Adopts the Investment Policy 2018, as endorsed by the Audit and Risk Management Committee in September 2018, at Attachment 1 to this report.*
- 2. Adopts the three-year Fossil Fuel Divestment Strategy Action Plan 2019-2021 at Attachment 2 to this report.*

## **Adoption of the Moreland City Council Fossil Fuel Divestment Strategy – 7 October 2015**

*Council resolve:*

- 1. That having received and considered submissions on the Draft Fossil Fuel Divestment Strategy, to adopt the Moreland City Council Fossil Fuel Divestment Strategy as detailed in Attachment 1.*

### **1. Policy Context**

This report supports Council's continuing commitment to open and accountable management of the financial resources of Merri-bek on behalf of its ratepayers as well as Council's financial responsibilities under the *Local Government Act 2020*.

### **2. Background**

Council manages significant public funds and assets and must do so in a way that is financially sustainable, transparent, accountable and compliant with legislation. Council's financial responsibilities are primarily set out in the *Local Government Act 2020*, which establishes the principles of sound financial management, including stewardship of public resources, long-term sustainability, integrated planning, responsible management of assets and liabilities, and informed decision-making.

The Policy has been developed as a single, overarching framework to guide how Council manages its finances. It brings together key principles and governance requirements that previously sat across multiple financial policies, covering areas such as financial reporting, revenue, assets, investments and borrowings.

Key strategic elements from existing policies have been included in the Policy and items of an operational nature will be supported by detailed internal procedures approved internally with a regular review. Over time, when other financial-related policies are due for review, the additional key strategic requirements will be incorporated into this Policy and supported through formal procedures, creating a more streamlined and consistent financial governance framework.

The Policy operates alongside Council's broader strategic and financial documents, including the Council Plan, Financial Plan, Annual Budget, Revenue and Rating Plan and Asset Plan.

### **3. Issues**

Adoption of the Policy will provide a formal, contemporary foundation for Council's financial governance and will enable consistent, responsible and sustainable management of public resources across all service areas. Adoption of this Policy formalises Council's commitment to responsible and accountable financial management and provides a clear, consistent framework for governing Council's financial activities. **Attachment 2** provides a listing of key elements from existing policies and the corresponding mapping to strategic policy or operational procedural.

### **Strengthening financial governance and accountability**

The Financial Management Policy establishes a clear governance framework for the management of Council's finances, including defined roles, internal controls, monitoring and reporting mechanisms. This supports transparency, accountability and compliance across all financial activities.

### **Legislative compliance and risk management**

The Policy gives effect to the principles of sound financial management under the *Local Government Act 2020* and supports compliance with statutory requirements for budgeting, reporting, revenue, asset, investment and borrowing management. It reduces financial and regulatory risk through clear controls and approval pathways.

### **Supporting long-term financial sustainability**

The Policy embeds long-term financial planning, responsible investment and sustainable borrowing principles, ensuring that financial decisions consider affordability, intergenerational equity, cash flow capacity and risk.

### **Consistency across Council operations**

By providing a single, overarching framework, the Policy promotes consistent financial practices across all service areas and ensures that supporting procedures (e.g. borrowing and investment) are applied in a standard and auditable manner.

### **Improved transparency and decision-making**

The Policy strengthens financial reporting and monitoring arrangements, enabling informed decision-making by Council and management and providing assurance that public funds are being managed responsibly.

### **Development Contributions Plan (DCP) Administration Policy**

The DCP Administration Policy was developed to cover the current DCP which ended on 30/06/2026. It is recommended to revoke this policy with a view to establishing a new policy once DCP 2 has been received ministerial approval.

### **Fossil Fuel Divestment Strategy**

The Fossil Fuel Divestment Strategy was due for review in October 2025. Recognising that the goals and objectives of the strategy have now been embedded in investment elements of the Finance Management Policy as well as Council's procurement policy it is recommended that officers undertake a further review of the current strategy and provide a further update to Council by the end of 2026.

### **Community impact**

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 consolidated 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.

### **Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications**

The policy implications in relation to the climate emergency and environmental sustainability are included throughout the Draft Policy as well as the Procurement Policy.

### **Economic sustainability implications**

There are no economic sustainability implications associated with this report.

### **Legal and risk considerations**

The Financial Management 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 internal organisational operations community engagement is not required. Therefore, as this draft policy has a negligible impact on the community more broadly, nor can the policy be influenced significantly by the community; community engagement has not been undertaken.

### **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**

There are no direct financial or resource implications associated with this policy. Limiting investments to 'green' options may result in an opportunity cost, as it reduces the range of institutions available to Council and may constrain the ability to explore and negotiate more favourable interest rates.

## **7. Implementation**

Subject to Council's decision, when endorsed, the policy will be uploaded to the internet as a public policy and communicated to all Council officers.

## **Attachment/s**

<a href="#">1</a>	Draft Financial Management Policy 2026	D26/152571
<a href="#">2</a>	Change Map	D26/152612



<b>Date Authorised by Chief Executive Officer or Council:</b>	<Type text here>
<b>Commencement Date:</b>	1 July 2026
<b>Review Date (4 years from authorised date):</b>	30 June 2028
<b>Responsible Department</b>	Business Transformation

This Policy has been authorised.

XXXX  
Chief Executive Officer  
<Insert Date signed here>

## 1. Introduction

The Financial Management Policy establishes the framework for how Council manages its finances to support long-term financial sustainability, while providing stability, transparency and predictability in the financial impacts on the municipal community.

This is achieved by combining strategic direction and guidance across core financial management functions (including investments, borrowings, cash handling, financial reserves, and capitalisation of salaries) into a single, integrated financial management framework.

## 2. Context

This Policy operates within the legislative, regulatory and governance framework applicable to Local Government and guides the responsible management of public resources. Financial management is primarily governed by the Local Government Act 2020 (The Act) and associated regulations and is required to be undertaken in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards. This Policy is to be read in conjunction with Council's Council Plan, Financial Plan, Annual Budget, Revenue and Rating Plan, Asset Plan and other relevant policies and procedures.

This Policy supports Council's compliance with the financial management principles set out in the Act, including prudent and sustainable financial management, responsible management of assets and liabilities, integrated strategic planning and reporting, and informed decision-making that considers financial risk and long-term impacts.

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with Council's broader governance and financial framework, including the Council Plan, Financial Plan, Annual Budget, and other relevant policies and procedures.

## 3. Objectives

The objectives of this Policy are to ensure that Council:

- Maintains effective financial management systems, internal controls and processes that comply with legislative requirements, accounting standards, and Council policies,
- Manages financial and personal information securely and confidentially,
- Provides clear and accessible financial policies, procedures and guidance to support consistent financial administration,
- Ensures payments and financial transactions are accurate, efficient, timely and appropriately recorded,
- Undertakes revenue collection in a fair, transparent and consistent manner,
- Maintains effective controls for cash handling and banking to safeguard Council funds and reduce fraud risk,
- Manages the recognition, disposal and transfer of Council-owned assets in accordance with applicable accounting and reporting requirements,
- Capitalises directly attributable salary costs to capital projects consistently and in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards,

- Manages investments prudently to balance risk, return, liquidity and sustainability objectives,
- Undertakes borrowings only for appropriate long-term purposes and within Council's capacity to service debt sustainably, in line with the adopted Annual Budget and 10-Year Financial Plan,
- Manages financial reserves through clear classifications, appropriate cash backing and transparent approval and reporting,
- Prepares and adopts an Annual Budget, Revenue and Rating Plan and 10-Year Financial Plan that support long-term financial sustainability,
- Prepares complete, accurate and timely financial reports in accordance with legislative requirements, and
- Provides fair and responsible payment and hardship relief arrangements for debtors

This Policy gives effect to section 101 of the Local Government Act 2020, which requires Council's revenue, expenses, assets, liabilities, investments and financial transactions to be managed in accordance with Council's financial policies and strategic plans.

#### **4. Policy details**

##### **4.1. Financial Reporting and Accountability**

Council is committed to maintaining accurate, complete and compliant financial records. Under 'The Act' the Principal Accounting Officer is responsible for ensuring that proper accounts and records are kept for all financial transactions and affairs of Council, and relevant disclosures are made in the Annual Report where required.

##### **4.2. Revenue Management**

Council will prepare and adopt a Revenue and Rating Plan in accordance with 'The Act' by June 30 following a general election. The Plan will cover a minimum period of four financial years, setting out the principles and approach for raising rates and other revenue and will align to Council's broader strategic planning and reporting framework.

##### **4.3. Asset Management (Including Capitalisation of Salaries)**

Council will develop, adopt and maintain an Asset Plan covering at least ten financial years in accordance with 'The Act' by June 30 following a general election. The Asset Plan will include information relating to the maintenance, renewal, acquisition, expansion, upgrade, disposal and decommissioning of Council's infrastructure assets and will be integrated with the 10-Year Financial Plan and Annual Budget.

Consistent with Australian Accounting Standards (AASB 116), the capital works program budgets should be prepared ensuring salary costs that are directly attributable to the delivery or construction of the asset(s) are included. Consistent principles and methodologies will be applied to allocate eligible salary costs from operating expenditure to individual capital works projects ensuring compliance with the standard. These expenses form part of the cost of the asset when the asset is recognised (i.e. capitalised).

#### **4.4. Loan and Borrowing Management**

Council may borrow money in accordance with the Local Government Act 2020 and must not borrow unless the proposed borrowings are included in the adopted Annual Budget or a revised Annual Budget. Borrowing decisions must be made in accordance with the principles of sound financial management, including long-term financial sustainability, risk management, and intergenerational equity.

##### **4.4.1 Borrowing Principles**

Borrowings are undertaken to support strategic objectives by:

- Providing an alternative financing option for capital works projects of strategic significance,
- Ensuring total borrowings are sustainable having regard to repayment capacity, budget constraints and prudential ratios,
- Ensuring funds are available at the appropriate time to support strategic priorities,
- Maintaining a borrowing structure that balances predictability and flexibility while minimising borrowing costs,
- Considering the optimum time to borrow having regard to interest rates, construction cost inflation and economic conditions,
- Managing all risks associated with borrowings prudently and transparently, and
- Minimising the cost of borrowings over the long term.

##### **4.4.2 Strategic Parameters**

Council's borrowings are to be managed in accordance with the following:

- Borrowings will be used only for capital projects or other approved long-term obligations and will not be used to fund operating expenditure, except where permitted by legislation (e.g., defined benefit superannuation calls).
- Borrowings must be linked to an identified project and drawn down in line with project commencement and cashflow need.
- Loan duration will not exceed the lesser of 10 years or the expected useful life of the asset being funded, unless related to defined benefit superannuation obligations.
- Council will consider intergenerational equity when determining funding mechanisms for capital expenditure, while ensuring decisions remain consistent with sound financial management.
- Borrowings will be structured to constrain risk and minimise interest costs without introducing undue volatility; the balance between fixed/variable rates and refinancing flexibility will reflect the purpose of the borrowing.
- Council will seek borrowings from Treasury Corporation of Victoria (TCV) unless Council approves an alternative within legislative settings.

- Council will monitor borrowing sustainability and prudential indicators (including internal financing and indebtedness measures) and report through the budget, 10-year financial plan and annual report.

#### 4.5. Investment Management

Council may invest money only in authorised manners permitted by the Local Government Act 2020 and relevant regulations as well as comply with applicable Australian Accounting Standards.

##### 4.5.1 Investment Principles

Council's investment strategy aims to deliver enhanced returns while ensuring security, adequate liquidity and ethical, sustainable outcomes. In order of importance, Council's investment objectives are:

- Preservation of capital,
- Ensuring sufficient liquidity is maintained, and
- Maximising the return on cash balances.

##### 4.5.2 Strategic Parameters

Council's investment portfolio is to be managed in accordance with the following:

- Permitted investment instruments include term deposits and cash at call. Other investment types require specific Council resolution and demonstrate compliance with legislative requirements.
- Investments must be managed to safeguard the portfolio, including management of credit and interest rate risk within approved thresholds.
- The portfolio must maintain sufficient liquidity to meet reasonably anticipated cash flow requirements as they fall due, with at least \$20 million convertible to cash within 60 days. The maximum maturity permitted is 5 years.
- Council will retain a cash and cash equivalent balance equal to the total of holding deposits plus cash backed reserves plus one month of operational expenditure (cash equivalents include term deposits maturing in 90 days or less).
- Investments are limited to products denominated in Australian dollars and issued by an Australian-owned or an Australian-based financial institution with a registered ABN and regional office in Australia.
- Diversification will be maintained through an upper exposure limit of 35% of total funds invested with any one institution (including subsidiaries).
- A minimum of 70% of Council's short and long-term investments will be held in investments meeting Council's approved green, sustainable criteria.
- Investments must maintain the following minimum credit rating standards:

	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Short Term Rating	A-2 (S&P), or P-2 (Moody's)	A-1+ (S&P), or P-1 (Moody's)

	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Long Term Rating	AA-(S&P), or Aa3 (Moody's)	AAA(S&P), or Aaa (Moody's)

- Council will not invest for speculative purposes and prohibits derivative-based investments, principal only or nil cashflow securities, foreign currency securities, and Collateralised Debt Obligations (CDO) products.
- Investment decision-making will consider ethical and sustainability factors, including minimising exposure to the fossil fuel industry and aligning with Council's Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) procurement considerations.

#### 4.6. Financial Reserves Management

Council manages cash balances and financial reserves through a consistent and transparent approach to the identification, creation, administration and usage of externally and internally restricted reserve accounts.

Financial reserves are created where surplus operating cash and/or income from specific sources is allocated for committed future expenditure. The purpose of financial reserves is to stratify monies held by Council that are linked to statutory requirements and long-term organisational objectives and strategies. A listing and description of each reserve is included in section 8.

##### 4.6.1 Strategic Parameters

Council's financial reserves are to be managed in accordance with the following:

- Clear classification of reserves including Asset Revaluation Reserves, Externally Restricted Reserves, and Internally Restricted Reserves.
- Externally Restricted Reserves are required to be 100% cash backed; Internally Restricted Reserves are required to be 50% cash backed unless Council resolves otherwise (e.g., borrowing from an internal reserve for a significant capital project).
- Reserve transfers out of reserves should be planned through the adopted 4-year budget (and approved annually), with Council approval required for transfers not approved or materially varied.
- Reserves are established and closed through Council resolution and are reviewed at least annually through the budget process.

##### 4.6.2 Establishment of Financial Reserves

- **Externally restricted reserves** - A reserve will be established for any value if there is a legal requirement or a requirement under the Australian Accounting Standards.
- **Internally Restricted Reserves** – A reserve may be created when it is anticipated that extensive works will require funding over a period of time or funds are collected specifically for a particular capital works project(s). Internally restricted reserves would not be created for a purpose where it is expected that the balance of the reserve would not reach \$500,000.

#### **4.7. Cash Handling and Banking**

Council maintains an internal control framework for cash handling and banking to ensure cash from all sources is completely and accurately identified, collected, safeguarded, banked and recorded. Cash handling is an area of inherent fraud risk; Council's controls are designed to reduce risk of misappropriation and maintain an auditable trail.

##### **4.7.1 Strategic Parameters**

Council's cash handling is to be managed in accordance with the following:

- Segregation of duties is maintained wherever practical across receipting, banking, and reconciliation functions; where not possible, verification is performed by an alternate staff member from another team.
- Original supporting documents relating to receipts, deposits, handovers and transfers are retained securely for seven years in accordance with recordkeeping requirements.
- Cash and associated documentation are secured at designated sites (i.e. locked drawers or safes, restricted access, and secure packaging for transfer).
- Cash discrepancies are investigated and reported promptly.
- Any report or suspicion of fraud or corruption must be immediately reported to the Manager Governance and Strategy, the Principal Conduct Officer.

#### **4.8. Financial Hardship (Non-Rates related)**

Council recognises that some debtors may experience genuine financial hardship that affects their ability to meet non-rates related financial obligations.

Financial hardship may be temporary or ongoing and can arise from circumstances such as loss of employment, illness, family violence or breakdown, or death of a family member. A business may be in hardship where it is facing closure, disconnection of utilities, repossession of essential assets, or imminent legal action for non-payment. The hardship must be capable of remedy through a change to payment arrangements.

Council's approach is based on fairness, transparency, equity, efficiency and capacity to pay. Early engagement is encouraged, information about support options will be accessible, and a range of assistance measures may be applied depending on the level of difficulty. Legal recovery action will be used only as a last resort.

Debtors having trouble are encouraged to contact Council's Finance Unit to discuss available options. Where appropriate, Council may require an independent financial counsellor's assessment to support an application.

Where hardship support is approved, the debtor must enter and maintain an agreed payment arrangement. If the arrangement is not maintained, hardship support may be withdrawn, and recovery action may recommence.

## 5. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Council	Approve financial matters through adoption of Council policies, Annual Budgets and revised Annual Budgets, including borrowings, reserve establishment/closure and material transfers, and any non-standard investment instruments.
Chief Executive Officer	Accountable for overall governance and ensuring Council's financial management framework operates effectively.
Manager Capital Works and Delivery	Ensuring that capital works project budgets include an allowance for all salary costs that are directly attributable to the delivery of each project.
Chief Financial Officer	Strategic financial oversight, establishes internal controls, and reports to the Audit and Risk Committee and/or Council as required as well as ensuring new borrowings are included in the 4-year budget. Responsible for approving the operating procedures that underpin this policy.
Unit Manager Finance	Implements this Policy, approves assessments within delegation, and ongoing monitoring across applications including investment, borrowing, reserves, cash controls and debt levels.
Financial Accounting Coordinator	Operational monitoring of compliance with this Policy, including maintenance of key financial registers and records (investment, loan and reserve registers; bank reconciliations). Develop and maintain operating procedures for Capitalisation of Salaries, Borrowing and Investment Management, Financial Reserves and cash handling).

## 6. Monitoring, Evaluating and Review

This Policy will be monitored to ensure it remains effective, compliant with legislative requirements, and aligned with Council's strategic and financial objectives. Monitoring will be undertaken through ongoing financial management activities, internal controls, and reporting processes. Material issues, non-compliance, or emerging financial risks will be escalated through management and governance channels.

The Policy will be reviewed at least once every two years, or earlier where required due to legislative change, audit findings, material changes to Council's financial framework, or emerging risks.

## 7. Definitions

Term	Definition
Asset Revaluation Reserve	Reserves required by the Australian Accounting Standards and are not cash backed

Term	Definition
Collateralised Debt Obligations	A Collateralized Debt Obligation (CDO) is a complex financial product that bundles various debt, such as mortgages, car loans, or corporate bonds, into a single pool. Investors buy tranches with different risk and return exposure.
Intergenerational Equity	The principle that the cost of services and infrastructure is shared fairly between current and future ratepayers who benefit from them.
Internally Restricted Reserve	A discretionary reserve established to set aside funds for future strategic priorities or a specific purpose and typically requiring partial cash backing.
Externally Restricted Reserve	A statutory reserve established to govern the use of funds with legal usage requirements and requiring full cash backing.
Moody's	Moody's is one of the world's three major credit-rating agencies, responsible for assessing the financial strength of governments, companies, and bonds
Principal Accounting Officer (Chief Financial Officer)	The officer designated under the Local Government Act 2020 as responsible for ensuring that proper accounts and records of Council's financial transactions and affairs are maintained.
Prudential Ratios	Financial indicators used to assess Council's financial sustainability, risk and capacity to meet obligations. E.g. internal financing and indebtedness.
Segregation of Duties	Segregation of duties is a key principle in financial control, aiming to reduce the risk of fraud and error. It involves breaking down processes so that no single person is responsible for every stage in a process.
Sound Financial Management	The prudent, sustainable and accountable management of Council's financial resources, having regard to long-term viability, risk and legislative obligations.
Standard & Poor's (S&P)	Standard & Poor's (S&P) is one of the world's three major credit-rating agencies, responsible for evaluating the creditworthiness of governments, companies, and financial products.

## 8. Financial Reserves

### 8.1. Externally Restricted Reserves

Reserve	Description
Developer Contribution	This reserve holds funds received from developers under Council's Developer Contribution Plan (DCP), as required by the Planning and Environment Act 1987. These contributions are levied to ensure that new developments help fund the infrastructure needed by the future communities they create.

Reserve	Description
	These funds can only be used to deliver approved community infrastructure projects that directly service the specific developments from which the contributions were collected.
Public Resort & Recreation Land Fund	Established to hold Public Open Space Contributions, which must be paid by developers before a statement of compliance is issued for residential subdivisions. The funds are dedicated to creating new open space and recreation assets, or upgrading and expanding existing ones, with the intention that the works occur in the vicinity of the developments that generated the contributions.
Waste Charge Reserve	This reserve is used to manage any annual over or underspend arising from recoupment of waste charge expenses from waste charge fees. Funds are used to support strategic waste-related initiatives, including compliance activities, long-term planning, and major projects for Council's landfills, and broader waste management operations.

### 8.2. Internally Restricted Reserves

Reserve	Description
Aquatics & Leisure	These funds are allocated from a portion of the annual return for the purpose of aquatics and leisure spend in alignment with the Aquatics strategy. The funds can be used for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unplanned works that come up throughout the year that impact service delivery.</li> <li>Unplanned repairs and maintenance works throughout the year.</li> <li>Significant infrastructure spend that aligns with Aquatics strategy.</li> </ul>
Carry Forward	Established to hold unspent operating and capital works funds that have been approved to be carried into the next financial year. It ensures that funding for incomplete projects is preserved and available to deliver the remaining works without requiring new budget allocations.
Defined Benefits Superannuation	The reserve provides financial capacity for Council respond to any future funding calls arising from shortfalls in the defined benefit superannuation scheme.
Significant Projects	Established to hold funds set aside from operating surpluses to support the development of major Council assets. This ensures that sufficient funds are available to construct new infrastructure or expand existing community assets that are needed to meet population growth by reducing reliance on future borrowings.
Social & Affordable Housing Strategy	These funds support enhanced access to affordable and secure accommodation within the municipality and other social housing initiatives by contributing to the acquisition, development or support of housing projects.

**9. Associated Documents**

- Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-29
- 10-Year Financial Plan
- Annual 4-Yearly Budget
- Revenue and Rating Plan
- Asset Plan and Capital Works Plan
- Procurement Policy 2025-2029
- Rates Hardship Policy
- Employee Code of Conduct
- Fraud and Corruption Control Policy and Procedures
- Capitalisation of Salaries Procedures
- Borrowing Management Procedures
- Investment Management Procedures
- Financial Reserves Procedures
- Cash Handling Procedures
- Hardship Management Procedures

## Attachment 2 – Change Map

Current Policy/Function	Existing Policy Section	Draft Policy/Procedure Reference
<b>Capitalisation of Salaries</b>	4. The cost of employee benefits of those Council staff directly delivering or project managing capital works projects should be recorded as part of the cost of capital works project delivery as per the Australian Accounting Standard AASB 116 Property, Plant and Equipment.	Covered in Policy - Asset Management & Operating Procedure
	<b>4.1 Overview</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff costs directly delivering or project managing capital works must be recorded as part of the capital works project cost.</li> <li>• Costs capitalised must align with AASB 116 requirements.</li> <li>• Directly attributable costs include employee benefits, site preparation, installation, delivery, testing, and professional fees.</li> </ul>	Covered in Policy - Asset Management & Operating Procedure
	<b>4.2 Guidance on Asset-Related Expenditure</b> Operating Expenditure includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities before decision to proceed with investment (strategic planning, feasibility studies).</li> <li>• Maintenance, repairs, and all post-commissioning activities.</li> </ul> Capital Expenditure includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities after approval to proceed (planning approvals, design, site preparation).</li> <li>• Construction, professional fees, materials, supervision, staff wages, plant hire, installation, assembly, testing.</li> <li>• Project management and costs associated with dismantling/restoration.</li> </ul>	Covered in Operating Procedure
	<b>4.3 Transfer of Cost of Employee Benefits to Work in Progress</b> 4.3.1 Managers delivering capital works projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide Finance with monthly information for staff whose salary costs are to be transferred:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Operating business unit</li> <li>○ Capital works project details</li> <li>○ Hours worked or time allocation percentage per project</li> </ul> </li> </ul> 4.3.2 Finance business partner	Covered in Operating Procedure

Current Policy/Function	Existing Policy Section	Draft Policy/Procedure Reference
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and process journals transferring salary costs from operating to capital work-in-progress using manager-provided data and payroll reports.</li> </ul> <p>4.3.3 Asset accountant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capitalise project costs onto assets in accordance with:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Asset recognition rules</li> <li>○ Capitalisation thresholds</li> <li>○ Corporate asset register requirements</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>Loans and Borrowings Management</b>	<p><b>Legislative Framework</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Government Act 2020 grants Councils borrowing powers.</li> <li>• Borrowings must be included in approved budgets.</li> <li>• Reporting obligations exist through LGPRF indicators.</li> </ul>	Covered in Policy - Context and Objectives
	<p><b>Borrowing Principles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borrowings only used for activities aligned to policy objectives.</li> <li>• Must be linked to an identified project and only drawn when the project commences.</li> <li>• New borrowings prohibited if they shift Council into a high-risk category.</li> <li>• Borrowing sustainability ratios cannot be exceeded.</li> <li>• Projects with high returns relative to repayments prioritised.</li> <li>• Loan duration capped at the lower of 10 years or asset life (except Defined Benefits Superannuation Calls).</li> <li>• No borrowings for operating expenses (except Defined Benefit Calls) or renewal works.</li> <li>• Council will aim to reduce interest payable.</li> <li>• Principal repayment funds must be reserved over the life of the loan.</li> </ul> <p>Borrowing structure must balance interest rate exposure and refinancing flexibility.</p>	Covered in Policy – Objectives and Loans and Borrowing Management
	<p><b>Intergenerational Equity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intergenerational equity must be considered when funding long-term community assets.</li> <li>• Debt levels should be minimised to preserve future borrowing capacity.</li> </ul>	Covered in Policy – Loan & Borrowing Management

Current Policy/Function	Existing Policy Section	Draft Policy/Procedure Reference
	<p><b>Borrowing Ratios and Limits</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councils must report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Internal Financing Ratio (Net operating cashflow / net capital expenditure)</li> <li>○ Indebtedness Ratio (Non-current liabilities / own-source revenue)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Risk thresholds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Internal financing low risk &gt;100%, medium 75–100%, high &lt;75%</li> <li>○ Indebtedness low &lt;40%, medium 40–60%, high &gt;60%</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Covered in Policy - Loan &amp; Borrowing Management Risk Thresholds – Outdated VAGO thresholds and not specified in policy.</p>
	<p><b>Borrowing Arrangements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council will only borrow from the Treasury Corporation of Victoria.</li> <li>• Loan tenure cannot exceed asset useful life (except Defined Benefit Calls).</li> <li>• Repayment schedules may be quarterly, semi-annual or otherwise optimised.</li> </ul>	<p>Covered in Policy - Loan &amp; Borrowing Management &amp; Operating Procedure Procedure</p>
<b>Investment Management</b>	<p><b>General Investment Criteria</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permitted: term deposits and cash at call (others require Council resolution).</li> <li>• Must ensure security and manage credit/interest rate risk.</li> <li>• Maintain liquidity to meet cash flow needs.</li> <li>• Achieve market-average returns aligned with risk tolerance.</li> <li>• Long-term investments must prioritise ethical and sustainable outcomes.</li> <li>• Investments must be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Issued by Australian-owned or Australian-based institutions with ABN and regional office.</li> <li>○ Denominated in AUD.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Exposure limit: max 35% of total funds per institution.</li> <li>• Liquidity requirement: at least \$20m convertible to cash within 60 days.</li> <li>• Minimum 70% of investments must be green.</li> <li>• Must comply with credit rating thresholds (A-1+/P-1 to A-2/P-2 short-term; AAA/Aaa to AA-/Aa3 long-term).</li> </ul>	<p>Covered in Policy – Investment Management</p>
	<p><b>4.1 Prohibited Investments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No speculative investments, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Derivatives.</li> <li>○ Principal-only or nil-cash-flow securities.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Covered in Policy – Investment Management</p>

Current Policy/Function	Existing Policy Section	Draft Policy/Procedure Reference
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Securities with futures/options/swaps.</li> <li>○ Non-AUD securities.</li> <li>○ CDO-type products.</li> <li>• Ethical screening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Negative screening excludes harmful industries.</li> <li>○ Positive screening favours socially/environmentally responsible companies.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Excludes companies involved in fossil fuel production, coal mining, and electronic gaming machines.</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>4.2 Transactional Banking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain minimum at-call balance for operational needs.</li> <li>• Weekly cash recall to avoid overdraft.</li> <li>• Annual upper limit set for long-term investments.</li> <li>• Transfers require two authorised signatories.</li> <li>• Interest from rollovers must be credited to general bank account.</li> </ul>	<p>Covered in Policy – Investment Management and Operating Procedure</p> <p>Weekly cash recall and annual upper limit for long-term investments – removed from draft policy and procedure</p>
	<p><b>4.3 Interest Rate</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aim for best return with minimal risk.</li> <li>• Consider transfer fees.</li> <li>• Maximum investment maturity: 5 years.</li> </ul>	<p>Covered in A Operating Procedure</p>
	<p><b>4.4 Ethics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutions must demonstrate integrity, trust, customer service, and strong CSR.</li> </ul> <p><b>4.5 Sustainability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preference for institutions with community involvement and sustainability initiatives.</li> </ul>	<p>Covered in Policy – Investment Management</p>
	<p><b>4.6 Term to Maturity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investments may range from at-call to 5 years.</li> <li>• At least \$20m must be convertible to cash within 60 days</li> </ul>	<p>Covered in Operating Procedure</p>

Current Policy/Function	Existing Policy Section	Draft Policy/Procedure Reference
	<b>4.7 Quotation on Investments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum three quotes required for new investments.</li> <li>• Best value quote selected.</li> <li>• No quotes required for reinvestment of existing funds.</li> </ul>	Covered in Operating Procedure
	<b>4.8 Maximisation for Investment Return</b> Aim to exceed Bank Bill Swap Rate (BBSW) without compromising security.	Covered in Policy – Investment Management
	<b>4.9 Investment Assessment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unit Manager Finance must approve documented risk assessment before investment.</li> <li>• Assessment includes:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Product type, term, risks, uncertainties, credit rating, liquidity, penalties.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> Funds must be released by a separate authorised staff member.	Covered in Operating Procedure
	<b>4.10 Investment Rating Downgrades</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinator Financial Accounting prepares report if rating falls below policy threshold.</li> <li>• Report covers downgrade details, significance, maturity, penalties, and comparable ratings.</li> </ul> Unit Manager Finance decides whether to redeem early.	Covered in Operating Procedure
<b>Financial Reserves Management</b>	<b>4.1 Cash Reserves</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Externally restricted reserves: 100% cash backed</li> <li>• Internally restricted reserves: 50% cash backed (unless Council resolves otherwise)</li> </ul> Maintain cash/equivalents to cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holding deposits</li> <li>• Cash-backed reserves</li> <li>• One month of operational expenditure</li> <li>• Close reserves at end of useful life through Council resolution.</li> </ul>	Covered in Policy – Financial Reserves Management

Current Policy/Function	Existing Policy Section	Draft Policy/Procedure Reference
	<p><b>4.2 Reserve Categories</b></p> <p><b>4.2.1 Asset Revaluation Reserves</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Required under Australian Accounting Standards.</li> <li>• Record increases or decreases in asset values from revaluation.</li> <li>• Cannot be used for any other purpose.</li> </ul> <p><b>4.2.2 Externally Restricted Reserves</b></p> <p>Criteria: subject to legal requirements or statutory restrictions.</p> <p><b>Developer Contribution Reserves</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold contributions under the Developer Contribution Plan (DCP).</li> <li>• Must be used for infrastructure benefiting the development areas.</li> </ul> <p><b>Public Resort &amp; Recreation Land Fund</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holds Public Open Space contributions.</li> <li>• Used for development or upgrade of open space/assets near contributing developments.</li> </ul> <p><b>Waste Charge Reserve</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holds surplus/underspend from kerbside waste charges.</li> <li>• Used for strategic waste projects, compliance and long-term planning.</li> </ul> <p><b>4.2.3 Internally Restricted Reserves</b></p> <p>Criteria: not legally restricted and created for internal strategic purposes.</p> <p><b>Significant Projects Reserve</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports major asset development to minimise future borrowing.</li> <li>• Funds major redevelopment projects (e.g., Fawkner Leisure Centre, Glenroy Community Hub).</li> </ul> <p><b>Financial Instrument Reserve (LGFV)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holds funds to repay Local Government Funding Vehicle financial bonds.</li> <li>• Used when interest-only loan schedules require principal set-asides.</li> </ul> <p><b>Defined Benefits Superannuation Reserve</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holds funds for potential future defined benefit superannuation calls.</li> </ul> <p><b>Social &amp; Affordable Housing Strategy Reserve</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports community housing and other housing initiatives.</li> </ul> <p><b>Carry Forward Reserve</b></p>	<p>Covered in Policy – Financial Reserves Management</p>

Current Policy/Function	Existing Policy Section	Draft Policy/Procedure Reference
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holds unspent operating or capital works funds carried into the next financial year.</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>4.3 Establishment of Reserves</b></p> <p>4.3.1 Externally Restricted Reserves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established whenever legally required or required by accounting standards.</li> </ul> <p>4.3.2 Internally Restricted Reserves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established when extensive multi-year works require funding, or funds are collected for specific projects.</li> <li>• Generally not established for reserves expected to remain below \$300,000.</li> </ul> <p>4.3.3 Process for Establishment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New reserves approved by Council via:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Recommendation through quarterly financial reports (internal reserves), or Internal communication for external reserves</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Covered in Policy – Financial Reserves Management and Operating Procedure</p>
	<p><b>4.4 Transfer of funds into Financial Reserves</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transfers managed as follows:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Asset revaluation reserves: transfers occur end of financial year per accounting standards.</li> <li>○ External reserves: transfers monthly (except waste charge reserve – annually).</li> <li>○ Internal reserves: transfers only for stated purpose and require Council approval via budget or resolution.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• All transfers reviewed annually during budget preparation.</li> </ul>	<p>Covered Operating Procedure</p>
	<p><b>4.5 Transfer of funds out of Reserves</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of reserves must align with the reserve’s stated purpose.</li> <li>• All transfers reported in Quarterly Financial Management Reports and the Annual Financial Report.</li> </ul> <p><b>4.5.1 Transfers approved in Annual Budget</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• project funding proposal is then approved by Council as part of the Annual 4-year Budget process.</li> </ul>	<p>Covered Operating Procedure</p>

Current Policy/Function	Existing Policy Section	Draft Policy/Procedure Reference
	<p><b>4.5.2 Transfers Exceeding Approved Annual Budget</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If higher reserve funding is needed than budgeted, Council resolution is required.</li> </ul> <p><b>4.5.3 Transfers not approved in Annual Budget</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For unbudgeted transfers or variances exceeding 10%, Council approval is required.</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>4.6 Capital Management</b> Council may commit extra funds to a project only if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4.1 conditions are not breached</li> <li>• Existing reserve requirements are reviewed</li> <li>• A payback plan is established</li> </ul>	<p>Covered Operating Procedure</p> <p>Requires Council approval</p>
<b>Cash Handling</b>	<p><b>4.1 Segregation of Duties</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No individual should perform more than one of the following:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Receipting cash / issuing receipts</li> <li>○ Banking functions</li> <li>○ Verifying totals / account reconciliations</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Daily banking reports must be reviewed and countersigned by a second officer.</li> <li>• If segregation is not possible, cash must be verified by a staff member from another team (e.g., Finance).</li> </ul>	<p>Covered in Policy – Cash Handling and Banking and Operating Procedure</p>
	<p><b>4.2 Auditable Evidence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All evidence of receipts, deposits, transfers must be stored securely for 7 years.</li> <li>• Receipts must be issued sequentially to all customers paying in person.</li> <li>• Cheques received must be appropriately receipted and secured.</li> <li>• End-of-day reconciliation required at every site, including EFTPOS.</li> <li>• All funds must be processed daily and locked in a safe until banked.</li> </ul> <p>Refunds, Banked &amp; Reversed Transactions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must include supporting documentation:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Transaction date</li> <li>○ Customer contact details and signature</li> <li>○ Original receipt (if available)</li> <li>○ Reason for transaction</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Covered in Policy – Cash Handling and Banking and Operating Procedure</p>

Current Policy/Function	Existing Policy Section	Draft Policy/Procedure Reference
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Amount and payment method</li> <li>○ Supervisor approval signature</li> </ul> <p>Banking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Daily banking sheets must be completed, signed, verified, and provided to Finance the same day.</li> <li>● Cash discrepancies over \$20 must be reported to the Financial Accounting Coordinator and entered in the Incident Register.</li> </ul> <p>Suspected breaches of the policy must be reported to the Unit Manager Finance.</p>	
	<p><b>4.3 Security of sites and safeguarding of cash</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cash and all supporting documentation must be kept securely locked in a drawer, container, or safe; cash must never be left unattended.</li> <li>● Overnight cash limits apply and must comply with the maximum amounts set for each designated site in the Cash Handling Procedure.</li> <li>● A register of security codes and keys for secured storage must be maintained by the responsible staff member.</li> <li>● Borrowing or using float cash for personal purposes is strictly prohibited.</li> <li>● Cash on hand or in transit must be physically secured, with access limited to authorised staff only.</li> <li>● Cash banking transfers must be placed in a secure package before transfer or collection.</li> <li>● Staff at designated sites must use individual logins for Council’s electronic receipting system.</li> </ul>	<p>Covered in Policy – Cash Handling and Banking and Operating Procedure</p>
	<p><b>4.4 Threshold of cash transactions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Staff will only be allowed to accept a maximum of \$3,000 cash per transaction.</li> </ul>	<p>Covered in Policy – Cash Handling and Banking and Operating Procedure</p>
	<p><b>4.5 Failure to Comply with Policy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All staff responsible for handling cash must be trained in cash procedures by their supervisor during induction.</li> <li>● Non-compliance with the Cash Handling Policy will result in disciplinary action.</li> <li>● Disciplinary process:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● First instance: verbal warning.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Covered in Operating Procedure</p>

Current Policy/Function	Existing Policy Section	Draft Policy/Procedure Reference
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Second instance: written warning.</li> <li>• Third instance: formal disciplinary action.</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>4.6 Suspected Theft and/or Fraud</b> Theft of Council funds is considered fraud. When fraud or corrupt behaviour is detected or suspected, Council will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate and determine appropriate actions based on investigation outcomes.</li> <li>• Meet mandatory IBAC Act 2001 reporting obligations.</li> <li>• Comply with Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012 where applicable, following the required disclosure procedures.</li> </ul> <p>Any report or suspicion of fraud or corruption must be immediately reported to the Manager Governance and Strategy, the Principal Conduct Officer. The Manager Governance and Strategy, with the Human Resources Manager, will determine recommendations to the CEO regarding next steps. Depending on severity and investigation outcomes, actions may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disciplinary action, overseen by Manager People and Safety in line with Council's disciplinary procedures.</li> <li>• Reporting to Victoria Police, coordinated by the Manager Governance and Strategy.</li> <li>• Civil action to recover losses, also coordinated by the Manager Governance and Strategy.</li> </ul>	Covered in Policy – Cash Handling and Banking and Operating Procedure
	<p><b>4.7 Security</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to finance, receipting, and related systems must be restricted to authorised users only.</li> <li>• Officers must follow the code of conduct when using these systems.</li> <li>• Officers must maintain strict security over passwords and logins, ensuring they are not shared or compromised.</li> </ul>	Covered in Operating Procedure
<b>Hardship Policy</b>	<p><b>4.1 Payment Terms</b> 28 Days from document date</p>	Covered in Operating Procedure

Current Policy/Function	Existing Policy Section	Draft Policy/Procedure Reference
	<p><b>4.2 Payment arrangements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debtors experiencing difficulty paying are encouraged to contact Council's Finance Unit to arrange a manageable payment plan.</li> <li>• Some services may not commence until the related debt is fully paid.</li> </ul> <p>Payment plans may be administered by an external collection agency appointed by Council.</p>	<p>Covered in Policy and Operating Procedure</p> <p>(Non-rates sundry debtors only)</p>
	<p><b>4.3 Continuation of Services</b></p> <p>Council may continue supplying some services even when debts are outstanding. For discretionary services (e.g., sports ground hire) not governed by specific regulation, service must stop if the debt is more than 60 days old and no payment arrangement is in place.</p>	<p>Covered in Operating Procedure</p> <p>(Non-rates sundry debtors only)</p>
	<p><b>4.4 Debt Recovery</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No recovery action while an active payment arrangement is in place.</li> <li>• Council may renegotiate or cancel arrangements if repayment timeframe becomes unreasonable.</li> <li>• Accounts without arrangements may be referred to debt collection.</li> <li>• Debtor liable for legal costs.</li> </ul>	<p>Covered in Policy and Operating Procedure</p> <p>(Non-rates sundry debtors only)</p>
	<p><b>4.5 Interest on Overdue Rates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest charged per s172 Local Government Act 1989 at minister-set rate. Interest suspended when compliant payment plan/deferral is active</li> </ul>	<p>Not covered – relates to rates debt only</p>
	<p><b>4.6 Legal Process</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accounts may be sent to collection agent if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Debtor uncontactable OR notified in writing of options, AND</li> <li>◦ 24 months have passed without payment plan or deferral.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• (Does not apply to infringement recovery.)</li> </ul> <p>Agent will contact debtor with details and instructions</p>	<p>High level covered in Policy with detail covered in Operating Procedure</p> <p>(Non-rates sundry debtors only)</p>
	<p><b>4.7 Financial Hardship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hardship may be temporary or ongoing (e.g., illness, unemployment, family violence, business closure risk).</li> </ul> <p>Hardship must be capable of remedy with changed payment arrangements</p>	<p>Covered in Policy and Operating Procedure</p> <p>(Non-rates sundry debtors only)</p>

Current Policy/Function	Existing Policy Section	Draft Policy/Procedure Reference
	<p><b>4.8 Financial Hardship Principles</b> Principles include early identification, accessible information, multiple assistance types, proportional support, counselling encouragement, and legal action as last resort.</p>	<p>Covered in Policy and Operating Procedure  (Non-rates sundry debtors only)</p>
	<p><b>4.9 Application Process</b> Debtors struggling to pay are encouraged to contact Council's Finance Unit directly or via the late payments form. If experiencing financial hardship, Council will discuss available application options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Payment Plan (Rate Special Payment Arrangement):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Negotiated where financial stress is evident.</li> <li>○ Aim to recover arrears within 12 months to avoid falling further behind.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>3-Month Deferral (Rate Special Payment Arrangement – Deferral):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Considered where financial stress is demonstrated.</li> <li>○ Deferral period cannot exceed 3 months.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Financial Hardship Application:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Debtor referred to an independent financial counsellor.</li> <li>○ Counsellor provides a written report on the debtor's financial situation and recommended relief measures.</li> <li>○ Unit Manager Finance assesses the report and issues an approval or rejection letter detailing relief measures.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Exceptional Circumstances Application:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Relief or deferral may be granted where applying standard rules would be unjust.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Payment plans must ensure current rates and charges are kept up to date to prevent further arrears.</li> <li>• Longer-term arrangements may be approved for extenuating circumstances (e.g., long-term illness or unemployment) with recommendation from the Team Leader, Rates.</li> <li>• If a debtor cannot maintain arrangements or needs further deferral, Council will offer a hardship assessment referral.</li> </ul>	<p>High level covered in Policy with detail covered in Operating Procedure  (Non-rates sundry debtors only)</p>

Current Policy/Function	Existing Policy Section	Draft Policy/Procedure Reference
	If the ratepayer declines a hardship referral, interest will continue to apply regardless of amount or timeframe.	
	<p><b>4.10 Assessment Process</b>            Factors considered when assessing a financial hardship application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previous payment history with Council.</li> <li>• Overall debtor payment history.</li> <li>• Severity of financial hardship (temporary financial stress vs. long-term hardship).</li> <li>• Independent financial counsellor’s written report.</li> </ul> <p>Circumstances where financial hardship will NOT be granted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The application does not relate to the ratepayer’s principal place of residence.</li> <li>• The application is not for a residential property.</li> <li>• Rates apply to vacant land.</li> <li>• The debtor owns multiple properties (inside or outside Moreland).</li> <li>• The application is not supported by the financial counsellor</li> </ul>	Covered in Operating Procedure  (Non-rates sundry debtors only)
	<p><b>4.11 Hardship Relief</b>            Relief to a debtor experiencing hardship may include legal action recovery being suspended, interest being placed on hold, an interest waiver, waiver of legal fees incurred or a rates payment deferral.</p>	Covered in Operating Procedure  (Non-rates sundry debtors only)
	<p><b>4.12 Debtor Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If financial hardship is approved, the debtor must enter a regular payment arrangement to clear all outstanding debt within a reasonable timeframe.</li> <li>• If the debtor does not maintain the agreed payment arrangement, their financial hardship status will be revoked.</li> <li>• Once hardship status is revoked, normal debt recovery actions will resume.</li> </ul>	Covered in Policy – Financial Hardship (Non-Rates related)  (Non-rates sundry debtors only)
	<p><b>4.13 Waiver of Rates &amp; Charges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council does not permit waivers of rates or charges except in exceptional circumstances.</li> <li>• This protects other ratepayers from being unfairly impacted by hardship assistance given to one group.</li> </ul>	Not covered – relates to rates debt only

Current Policy/Function	Existing Policy Section	Draft Policy/Procedure Reference
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A waiver is only considered when a person's circumstances make applying the standard rules unjust and clearly different from those of other ratepayers.</li><li>• All exceptional-circumstance waiver applications are reviewed by the Chief Financial Officer (CFO).</li><li>• The CFO may refer the application to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for final approval.</li></ul> The Fire Services Levy generally cannot be waived.	

## 7.10 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

Acting Director Business Transformation, Yvonne Callanan  
Financial Services

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### Officer Recommendation

That Council notes the Financial Management Report for the period ending 31 March 2026 included as Attachment 1 to this report.

## REPORT

### Executive Summary

This report presents the Financial Management Report for the financial year to date period ending 31 March 2026. A detailed financial review was undertaken across the organisation at the end of February 2026. The results of this review are included in this report as the Annual Forecast.

For the nine months ended 31 March 2026 an operating surplus of \$74.9 million was achieved, which is \$0.7 million (1%) lower than the year-to-date (YTD) budget of \$75.6 million. 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 \$37.3 million on capital expenditure, which is tracking below the YTD budget of \$58.7 million. After the detailed review of the program undertaken at the end of February, a total program of \$68.9 million is forecast, with \$31.5 million remaining.

### Previous Council Decisions

#### 2025-26 Third Quarter Financial Report – 8 April 2026

*That Council:*

1. *Notes the 2025-26 Third Quarter Financial Report for the period ending 28 February 2026, 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 \$285.0 million, operating expenditure of \$250.5 million and an accounting surplus of \$34.5 million arising from the Third Quarter Financial Review.*
4. *Endorses the full-year capital expenditure forecast of \$68.9 million, arising from the 2025-26 Third Quarter Financial Review.*
5. *Carries forward the following capital project funding to the 2026-27 Capital Works Program (\$11.7 million):*
  - a) *Fully or partially grant (or external) funded projects to be carried forward if the funding is secured and received this financial year:*
    - *Oak Park Sports and Aquatic – Electrification - \$1,293,194*
    - *Glenroy Activity Centre Upgrade – Wheatsheaf Rd - \$917,861*
    - *Mitchell Parade Retaining Wall - \$828,947*
    - *Kendall/Harding Footbridge over Merri Creek - \$780,000*
  - b) *Reserve funded projects:*
    - *Balam Balam Place North West Building – Phoenix Street - \$289,118*
    - *Park Renewal, Volga Street/Middle Street (Design) - \$100,000*

- *Park Renewal, Calder Reserve (Design and Construct) - \$52,700*
  - *Park Renewal, Gordon St – Minor Works - \$50,000*
  - *Coburg Library and Piazza Redevelopment - \$40,000*
- c) *Rates funded projects:*
- *Dunstan Reserve Childcare - \$1,600,000*
  - *Heavy Vehicles Replacement Program - \$1,270,000*
  - *Wheeler Street - Retaining Wall - \$915,000*
  - *Road Reconstruction, OHea Street from Lonsdale St to Clifton Grove - \$700,000*
  - *Light Vehicles Replacement Program - \$666,603*
  - *Road Reconstruction, Northumberland Rd from Crowley To Rhodes - \$600,000*
  - *Drainage, Moama Crescent and Jhonson Street - Hot Spot No 21 - \$266,650*
  - *Electricity Capacity Upgrades at Hadfield Depot - \$200,000*
  - *McBryde St Reserve (Moomba Park) - Social Room Amenities & Kitchen - \$200,000*
  - *Footpath & Bikepath Renewals - \$200,000*
  - *Wombat Crossing - West Street - \$200,000*
  - *Merri Trail - Flood Mitigation - Bridge to Darebin - \$150,000*
  - *Holbrook Reserve Pavilion and Gender Inclusive Change Rooms - \$139,538*
  - *Glenroy Movement and Place Plan - \$80,000*
  - *McBryde St Reserve (Moomba Park) - Pavillion Gender Inclusive Facilities - \$50,000*
  - *Corporate Carbon Reduction - \$50,000*
  - *Sylvester St Oak Park Land Slide - \$47,291*
  - *Balfe Park Sportsfield Redevelopment - \$30,000*
  - *DeChene Reserve – Gender Inclusive Facilities - \$28,460*
6. *Approves funding for the following new projects in the 2025-26 Capital Works Program (\$0.8 million):*
- *Merri Creek Trail Realignment – Bowden Reserve - \$300,000*
  - *Oak Park Pool – Blanket Replacement - \$180,000*
  - *Stormwater Rectification - \$110,000*
  - *Coburg Leisure Centre – Locker Replacement - \$70,000*
  - *Council Chambers Artwork Restoration - \$50,000*
  - *ATC Cook Reserve – Off-street Carpark - \$25,000*
  - *Body Worn Cameras & Radios - \$23,039*
7. *Approves additional funding for the following existing projects in the 2025-26 Capital Works Program (\$1.4 million):*
- *Allard Park Sportsfield Redevelopment - \$329,459*
  - *Forward Road Design - \$224,645*
  - *Road Reconstruction, Devon Street from View to Oak - \$221,493*
  - *Road Reconstruction, Jersey St from Ohea to Gaffney – Both Carriageways - \$89,000*
  - *Road Reconstruction, Fowler Street from Walsh to Dead End - \$70,274*
  - *Road Safety and Amenity Improvements Program - \$64,000*
  - *Minor Park – Tate Reserve (Removal) - \$50,903*
  - *Brunswick Early Years Hub - \$50,691*
  - *York Street Park Close to Home - \$43,387*
  - *Business Transformation – mobile phone purchases - \$41,625*
  - *Edgars Creek Corridor Connection Project - \$32,034*

- Coburg North Sports Hub Upgrades - \$31,500
  - Shore Reserve – Football & Cricket - \$30,000
  - Victoria Street Brunswick West MCHC - \$27,979
  - City Infrastructure – mobile phone purchases - \$20,317
  - Coburg Bluestone Cottage Complex Redevelopment - \$18,681
  - Municipal Art Collection - \$18,000
  - Glenroy College – Open Space - \$10,000
  - Gowanbrae Dog Park - \$9,624
  - Road Reconstruction, Herbert Street from Pascoe Vale to Dead End - \$5,599
  - Community – mobile phone purchases - \$4,679
  - Place & Environment – mobile phone purchases - \$2,772
  - Public Art Program Across Merri-bek - \$1,369
  - Richards Reserve Natural Turf Renewal - \$783
  - Fawkner Transport Study Projects - \$5,763
8. Notes savings realised from the following existing projects in the 2025-26 Capital Works Program (\$ 1.7 million):
- Road Reconstruction, Northumberland Rd from Arndt to Crowley - \$757,571
  - Road Reconstruction, Grandview Ave from Brearley to Princes - \$231,657
  - Road Reconstruction, Baxter Street from Sydney Kerb Line to Railway Kerb Line - \$197,576
  - Alva Gr from Urquhart to Bell, Road Reconstruction - \$189,683
  - Merri Trail - Flood Mitigation - Bridge to Darebin 1 - \$100,000
  - Kent Road - Separated Bike Lane Trial - \$87,585
  - Hosken Reserve Stage 3 Football Pitches - \$66,181
  - De Carle Street from Donald to Davies Road Reconstruction - \$53,108
  - Balfe Parks Sports Field Lights - \$44,550
  - Batman Avenue Shared Path - Upfield Shared Path - \$305

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## **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

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### **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.*

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**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.

Under s181G of the Local Government Act 1989, the CEO is required to prepare a statement every quarter under section 138 which provides details and payment status of new and ongoing environmental upgrade agreements.

## 2. Background

The Financial Management Report at Attachment 1 provides Council's financial statements for the year to date (YTD) period ended 31 March 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 nine months ended 31 March 2026, an operating surplus \$74.9 million was recorded, which is \$0.7 million (1%) less than the year to date (YTD) budget of \$75.6 million. This comprises total revenue of \$256.6 million which is \$6.7 million (3%) more than the YTD budget of \$249.9 million and total expenditure of \$181.7 million which is \$7.4 million (4%) more than the YTD budget of \$174.3 million.

Further details on the year-to-date result are included in **Attachment 1**.

#### *Forecast Year End Result (Q3 result)*

Council adopted the 2025-26 budget projecting an accounting surplus of \$43.3 million in June 2025, which has now been revised to \$34.5 million following the Q3 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, Q2 and Q3) are included in **Attachment 1**.

### Capital Performance Summary

#### *Year to Date Result*

Council has spent \$37.3 million on capital expenditure YTD which is \$21.3 million (36%) lower than YTD budget of \$58.7 million. After the detailed review of the program undertaken at the end of February a total program of \$68.9 million is forecast, with \$31.5 million remaining.

#### *Forecast Year End Result*

Following the Q3 review the program is forecast to decrease by \$25.0 million from the adopted budget. This consists of additional carry forwards from 2024-25 of \$8.4 million, 85 additional projects costing \$14.7 million, 6 projects with \$0.6 million brought forward from future years, \$38.3 million due to 26-27 carry forwards and project savings of \$10.4 million.

### Financial Position Summary

#### *Year to Date Result*

Council is still showing a strong balance sheet position, with YTD cash assets at \$114.6 million. This is a \$18.5 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 (Q3 result)*

The forecast financial position for 30 June 2026 is a cash and investment position of \$91.7 million (an increase of \$18.5 million compared to budget) and net current assets of \$81.3 million (an increase of \$18.3 compared to budget). These increases are primarily due to the increase in cash resulting from the forecast decrease in rates funded capital works of \$8.6 million in 2025-26.

## Environmental Upgrade Agreements

Environmental Upgrade Agreements are contracts that Council has entered into with local businesses to fund and install sustainability upgrades to non-residential buildings upfront, with the business to repay Council quarterly over a ten-year term.

A quarterly report from the CEO is required providing specific details. These are listed in the table alongside a status report for the quarter.

Reporting requirement of <i>Local Government Act 1989</i>		Status report for 1 January 2026 to 31 March 2026 quarter at Merri-bek
<b>a</b>	Environmental upgrade agreements entered into in the last quarter	No new Environmental Upgrade Agreements were approved in the quarter
<b>b</b>	The value of each environmental upgrade charge approved for those agreements	The table below contains details of the value of each environmental upgrade charge
<b>c</b>	The total number of environmental upgrade charges in operation in the last quarter	There are currently three agreements in operation, listed in the table below.
<b>d</b>	The total value of environmental upgrade charge payments that have fallen due and remain unpaid	No payments are due that remain unpaid
<b>e</b>	The total value of environmental upgrade charge payments that have not yet fallen due	The total value of Environmental Upgrade Agreement payments that have not yet fallen due is \$122,540

Address	Agreement total value	Expiry	Remaining balance
<b>1 Cross Street, Brunswick East 3057</b>	50,296.68	30/09/2027	7,479
<b>96 Bakers Road, Coburg North 3058</b>	163,295.48	30/11/2028	44,236
<b>47-97 Glenroy Road, Glenroy</b>	188,866.00	30/11/2029	70,825
<b>Total</b>	<b>402,458.16</b>		<b>122,540</b>

### 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 2.3. 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.

### **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 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 - March 2026 D26/166206



# **Council Monthly Financial Management Report**

**9 Months Ended March 2026**

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## Executive Summary

### Operating Performance

For the nine months ended 31 March 2026, Council recorded an operating surplus of \$74.9 million which is \$0.7 million (1%) less than the year to date (YTD) budget of \$75.6 million. This comprises total revenue of \$256.6 million which is \$6.7 million (3%) more than the YTD budget of \$249.9 million and total expenditure of \$181.7 million which is \$7.4 million (4%) unfavourable compared to the YTD budget of \$174.3 million.

Income Statement	YTD Actuals \$'000	YTD Budget \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	YTD Variance %	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
Total Revenue	256,638	249,936	6,701	3%	281,292	285,010	3,719
Total Expenses	181,697	174,291	(7,405)	(4%)	237,964	250,533	(12,570)
<b>Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<b>74,941</b>	<b>75,645</b>	<b>(704)</b>	<b>(1%)</b>	<b>43,328</b>	<b>34,477</b>	<b>(8,851)</b>

Adopted budget - YTD favourable variance in revenue is primarily driven by Grants - Capital (\$3.1 million) and Supplementary Rates (\$1.9 million). YTD unfavourable variance in expenses is due to Net Loss on Disposal of Assets which generate nil proceeds like footpaths, roads, kerb & channel (\$4.0 million), employee leave provisions (\$2.4 million) and building contractors (\$0.4 million). Annual Forecast - The Q3 financial review is projecting a surplus of \$34.5 million, which is an unfavourable movement of \$8.9 million from adopted budget. The Q3 financial review also forecasts an adjusted underlying surplus of \$18.2 million which is \$3.9 million less than adopted budget.

### Capital Works Program

YTD - Council has spent \$37.3 million on capital expenditure to 31 March 2026, which is \$21.3 million (36%) less than YTD adopted budget, with \$56.6 million (60.2%) of the full year budget remaining. The variance is driven by underspends in Recreational, Leisure & Community Facilities projects (\$7.2 million), Roads projects (\$6.3 million), Plant, Machinery & Equipment (\$1.9 million), Parks, Open Space & Streetscapes projects (\$1.5 million), Buildings (\$1.4 million), Building Improvements (\$1.3 million) and Drainage (\$0.7 million). There will be ongoing underspends to the adopted budget.

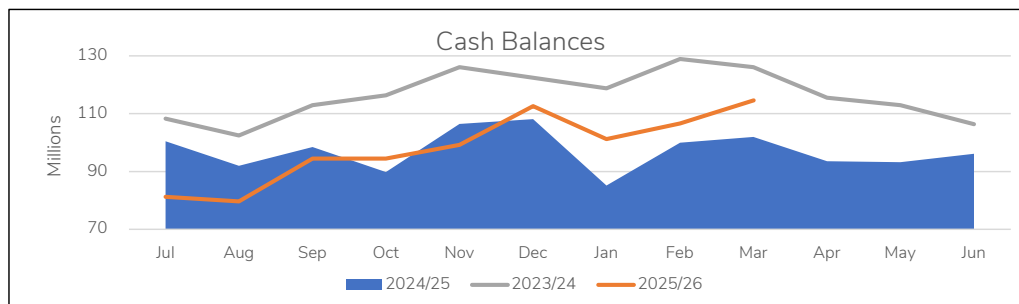
Annual Forecast - The capital works program is forecast to decrease by \$11.2 million from the Q2 forecast of \$80.1 million as a result of \$11.7 million of carry forwards, \$2.0 million of savings and 32 projects requiring additional funding of \$2.4 million.

Financial Results Summary	YTD Actuals \$'000	YTD Budget \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	YTD Variance %	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
New asset expenditure	3,742	5,831	2,089	36%	12,345	8,479	3,867
Asset renewal expenditure	24,264	39,336	15,072	38%	60,648	43,088	17,560
Asset upgrade expenditure	9,327	13,497	4,170	31%	20,894	17,315	3,580
<b>Total capital works expenditure</b>	<b>37,332</b>	<b>58,664</b>	<b>21,332</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>93,887</b>	<b>68,881</b>	<b>25,006</b>

### Cash & Investments

Cash assets are \$114.6 million as at 31 March 2026. This is an increase of \$18.5 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 \$114.6 million cash assets, \$94.6 million is convertible to cash in less than 60 days and \$82.0 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
<b>Revenue</b>								
Rates and charges	1	204,333	202,453	▲ 1,881	1%	202,778	204,529	▲ 1,750
Statutory fees and fines	2	15,561	14,583	▲ 978	7%	19,323	19,886	▲ 563
User Fees	3	7,186	6,514	▲ 672	10%	8,899	9,637	▲ 738
Contributions - Monetary		5,796	6,379	▼ (583)	(9%)	8,232	8,700	▲ 467
Grants - Operating	4	13,722	14,252	▼ (531)	(4%)	21,205	21,741	▲ 536
Grants - Capital	5	3,145	-	▲ 3,145	100%	12,964	11,525	▼ (1,439)
Other Revenue	6	6,869	5,729	▲ 1,140	20%	7,797	8,901	▲ 1,103
Asset Sales		26	26	0	0%	92	92	0
<b>Total Revenue</b>		<b>256,638</b>	<b>249,936</b>	<b>▲ 6,701</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>281,292</b>	<b>285,010</b>	<b>▲ 3,719</b>
<b>Expenses</b>								
Employee Benefits	7	87,612	83,869	▼ (3,743)	(4%)	116,144	118,949	▼ (2,805)
Contracts, Materials & Services	8	55,373	53,935	▼ (1,438)	(3%)	73,199	80,439	▼ (7,240)
Depreciation	9	30,630	32,715	▲ 2,085	6%	43,621	41,767	▲ 1,854
Amortisation		268	264	▲ (4)	(2%)	236	352	▲ (116)
Bad and doubtful debts		2,716	2,368	▲ (348)	(15%)	3,153	3,476	▲ (323)
Net loss on disposal of assets	10	3,995	-	▼ (3,995)	(100%)	-	3,994	▼ (3,994)
Finance Costs		606	607	▲ 1	0%	820	824	▲ (4)
Other Expenses		497	533	▲ 36	7%	790	733	▲ 57
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b>181,697</b>	<b>174,291</b>	<b>▼ (7,405)</b>	<b>(4%)</b>	<b>237,965</b>	<b>250,533</b>	<b>▼ (12,570)</b>
<b>Net Result</b>		<b>74,941</b>	<b>75,645</b>	<b>▼ (704)</b>	<b>(1%)</b>	<b>43,329</b>	<b>34,477</b>	<b>▼ (8,851)</b>

### Year to Date Result

#### Revenue

**3. User Fees** ended \$0.7 million (10%) favourable due to extension of meals provision contract (budgeted to end Sept 2025) for another Council (\$0.4 million) and better than budgeted revenue for the aquatics & leisure contract (\$0.2 million).

**5. Grants - Capital** ended \$3.1 million (100%) favourable due to recognition of funding for a variety of different capital projects phased for June 2026.

**6. Other Revenue** ended \$1.1 million (20%) favourable to receiving a greater return on investments than anticipated (\$0.7 million) and recognition of contribution relating to Kendall/Harding Footbridge (\$0.1 million).

#### Expenses

**10. Net loss on disposal of assets** ended \$4.0 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 \$1.8 million due to greater than anticipated supplementary rating revenue (\$0.8 million) and more interest on rates (\$0.6 million).

**2. Statutory Fees and Fines** are forecast to increase by \$0.6 million primarily due to higher than anticipated parking infringements (\$0.5 million favourable).

**3. User Fees** are forecast to increase by \$0.7 million primarily as a result of an increase in Meals on Wheels (MOWs) with other Councils (\$0.5 million) and also an increase in the aquatics & leisure contract (\$0.2 million).

**4. Grants - Operating** are forecast to increase by \$0.5 million primarily as a result of new a Food Systems grant (\$0.2 million) and Maternal Child Health grant (\$0.3 million).

**5. Grants - Capital** are forecast to decrease by \$1.4 million due to a grant for AG Gillon Stormwater Harvesting being carried forward into FY26-27 (\$1.0 million) and a grant for Oak Park Sports and Aquatic - Electrification being carried forward into FY26-27 (\$0.3 million).

**6. Other Revenue** are forecast to increase by \$1.1 million primarily as a result of receiving a greater return on investments than anticipated (\$0.5 million).

**Expenses**

**7. Employee Benefits** are forecast to increase by \$2.8 million primarily due to an increase in leave provisions and higher than anticipated parental leave payments.

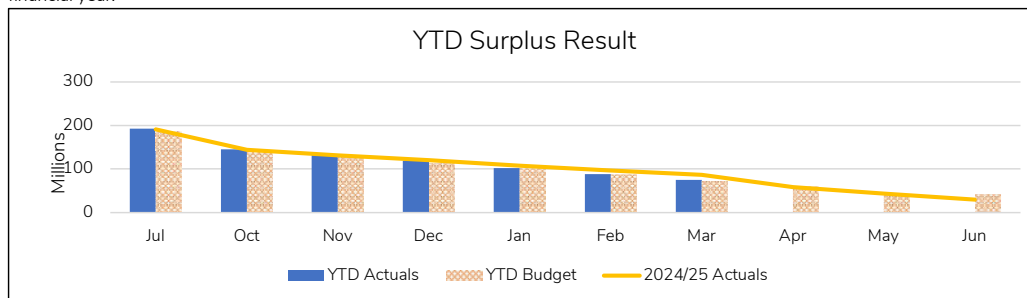
**8. Contracts, Materials & Services** are forecast to increase by \$7.2 million primarily due to earlier than anticipated lifecycle project expenditure for Elevate (\$2.5 million) and increased project delivery costs for Coburg Central (\$0.7 million), as well as increased service delivery costs relating to waste collection (\$0.6 million), building maintenance (\$0.5 million) and IT applications (\$0.2 million).

**9. Depreciation** is forecast to decrease by \$1.9 million due to delays in project completion and capitalisation.

**10. Net Loss on Disposal of Assets** is forecast to increase by \$4.0 million due to the process of disposal of existing assets when they are replaced with new assets.

**YTD Operating Result**

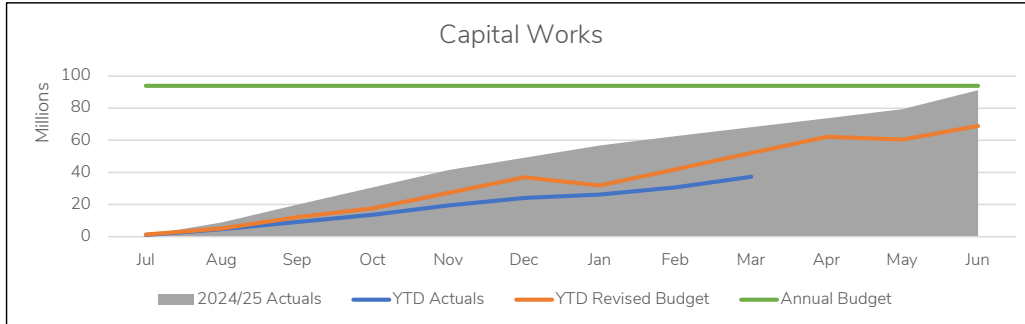
YTD surplus result is impacted by total rates being recognised in July and the surplus will reduce progressively over the course of the financial year.



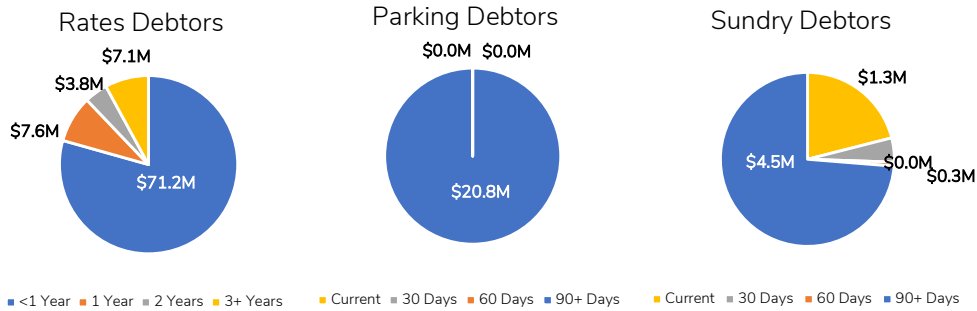
**Capital Works**

YTD - Council has spent \$37.3 million on capital expenditure to 31 March 2026 which is \$21.3 million (36%) lower than the YTD budget, with \$56.6 million (60%) of the full year budget remaining.

Annual Forecast - The capital works program is forecast to decrease by \$11.2 million from the Q2 forecast of \$80.1 million as a result of \$11.7 million of carry forwards, \$2.0 million of savings and 32 projects requiring additional funding of \$2.4 million.

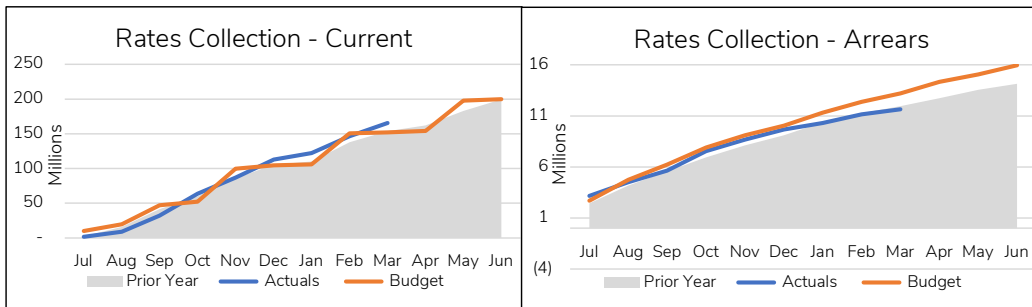


**Debtors**



**Rates Collection**

Rates cash collections are on budget and will be monitored over the upcoming months for impact on the forecast cash balances.



### Investments

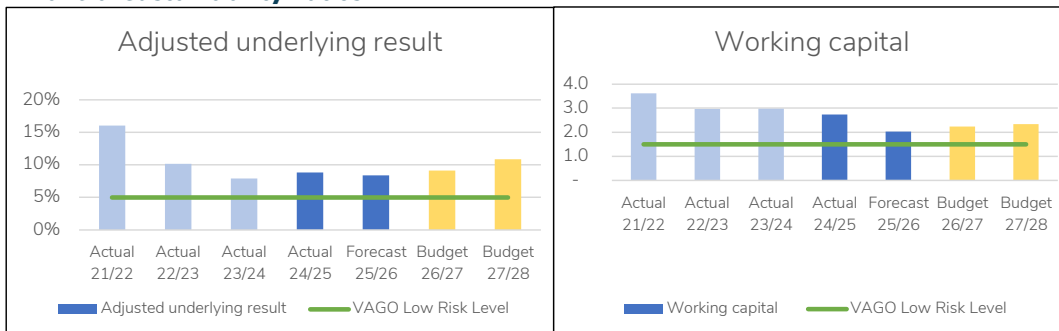
Of the \$114.6 million cash assets, \$94.6 million is convertible to cash in less than 60 days and \$82.0 million (100%) of term deposit investments are held in green investments. The portfolio is in compliance with Council policy which requires at least \$20.0 million to be convertible to cash and green 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	111	
Westpac	N/A		4.20%	A-1+	22,343	
Westpac	N/A		4.30%	A-1+	10,121	
ME Bank - 2	18/05/2026	100%	4.30%	A-2	5,000	
ME Bank - 2	30/06/2026	100%	4.60%	A-2	5,000	20.7%
ME Bank - 2	18/05/2026	100%	4.30%	A-2	7,000	
Bendigo Bank - 2	23/06/2026	100%	4.65%	A-2	5,000	
Bendigo Bank - 2	20/05/2026	100%	4.25%	A-2	5,000	18.3%
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	12.2%
IMB - 3	8/04/2026	100%	4.10%	A-2	10,000	24.4%
IMB - 3	27/05/2026	100%	4.40%	A-2	10,000	
Westpac - 6	10/04/2026	100%	4.17%	A-1+	4,000	
Westpac - 6	4/06/2026	100%	4.32%	A-1+	10,000	24.4%
Westpac - 6	23/06/2026	100%	4.44%	A-1+	6,000	
<b>Total</b>		100%			<b>114,575</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Green</b>					<b>82,000</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\* Minor cash includes NAB holding account and Petty Cash

## Financial Sustainability

### Financial Sustainability Ratios

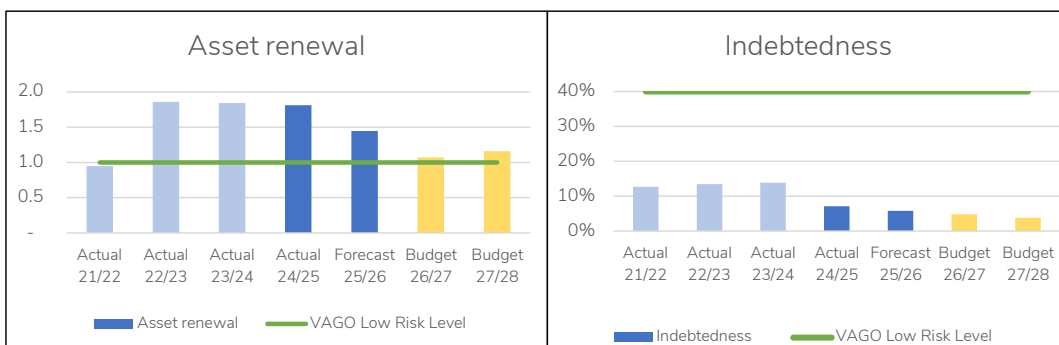


#### Adjusted underlying surplus (deficit) / adjusted underlying revenue

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	▲ 89
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
<b>Revenue</b>						
Rates and charges	204,333	202,453	1,881	202,778	204,529	1,750
Statutory fees and fines	15,561	14,583	978	19,323	19,886	563
User Fees	7,186	6,514	672	8,899	9,637	738
Contributions - Monetary	5,796	6,379	(583)	8,232	8,700	467
Grants - Operating	13,722	14,252	(531)	21,205	21,741	536
Grants - Capital	3,145	-	3,145	12,964	11,525	(1,439)
Other Revenue	6,869	5,729	1,140	7,797	8,901	1,103
Asset Sales	26	26	0	92	92	0
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>256,638</b>	<b>249,936</b>	<b>6,701</b>	<b>281,292</b>	<b>285,010</b>	<b>3,719</b>
<b>Expenses</b>						
Employee Benefits	87,612	83,869	(3,743)	116,144	118,949	(2,805)
Contracts, Materials & Services	55,373	53,935	(1,438)	73,199	80,439	(7,240)
Depreciation	30,630	32,715	2,085	43,621	41,767	1,854
Amortisation	268	264	(4)	236	352	(116)
Bad and doubtful debts	2,716	2,368	(348)	3,153	3,476	(323)
Net loss on disposal of assets	3,995	-	(3,995)	-	3,994	(3,994)
Finance Costs	606	607	1	820	824	(4)
Other Expenses	497	533	36	790	733	57
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>181,697</b>	<b>174,291</b>	<b>(7,405)</b>	<b>237,964</b>	<b>250,533</b>	<b>(12,570)</b>
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for the year</b>	<b>74,941</b>	<b>75,645</b>	<b>(704)</b>	<b>43,328</b>	<b>34,477</b>	<b>(8,851)</b>

Underlying Result	YTD Actuals \$'000	YTD Budget \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
<b>Surplus for the Year</b>	<b>74,941</b>	<b>75,645</b>	<b>(704)</b>	<b>43,328</b>	<b>34,477</b>	<b>(8,851)</b>
<b>Other Comprehensive Income</b>						
Net asset revaluation	-	-	-	49,206	49,206	-
<b>Total Comprehensive Result</b>	<b>74,941</b>	<b>75,645</b>	<b>(704)</b>	<b>92,534</b>	<b>83,683</b>	<b>(8,851)</b>
<b>Non Operating Income and Expenditure</b>						
Net loss on disposal of assets	3,969	(26)	3,995	(92)	3,901	3,994
Contributions Capital (cash & non-monetary)	(234)	(32)	(202)	(32)	(213)	(181)
Grants - Capital	(3,145)	-	(3,145)	(12,964)	(11,525)	1,439
PRRLF Reserve	(5,336)	(5,208)	(128)	(8,200)	(8,270)	(70)
DCP Reserve	(226)	(216)	(9)	-	(216)	(216)
Net asset revaluation	-	-	-	(49,206)	(49,206)	-
<b>Total Capital Income</b>	<b>(4,972)</b>	<b>(5,483)</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>(21,289)</b>	<b>(16,324)</b>	<b>4,965</b>
<b>Underlying Result</b>	<b>69,969</b>	<b>70,161</b>	<b>(192)</b>	<b>22,040</b>	<b>18,154</b>	<b>(3,886)</b>
<b>Less</b>						
Loan Principal Repayments	1,573	1,573	-	14,212	14,209	3
Additional Rates Funded CAPEX	(8,565)	(8,565)	-	13,041	(11,420)	24,461
Transfers to Reserves - Operating	226	5,837	5,612	7,783	7,783	(0)
Transfers from Reserves - Operating	-	-	-	(13,500)	(16,640)	3,140
Carry Forwards processed into FY27	23,737	23,737	-	-	23,737	(23,737)
<b>Total Transfers &amp; Other</b>	<b>16,971</b>	<b>22,582</b>	<b>5,612</b>	<b>21,536</b>	<b>17,669</b>	<b>3,867</b>
<b>Unrestricted Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<b>52,998</b>	<b>47,578</b>	<b>5,420</b>	<b>504</b>	<b>484</b>	<b>(19)</b>

**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
<b>Current assets</b>						
Cash and cash equivalents	32,575	36,116	(3,541)	89	24,108	24,019
Trade and other receivables	101,092	41,679	59,413	45,793	45,891	99
Other financial assets	82,000	60,000	22,000	73,107	67,607	(5,500)
Inventories	690	690	-	659	659	-
Prepayments	3,484	3,160	325	2,429	2,429	-
Non-current assets classified as held for sale	25,153	22,975	2,178	-	-	-
Other assets	4,866	4,156	711	2,208	2,208	-
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>249,861</b>	<b>168,776</b>	<b>81,086</b>	<b>124,284</b>	<b>142,902</b>	<b>18,618</b>
<b>Non-current assets</b>						
Unlisted Shares	2	2	-	2	2	-
Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	2,635,475	2,635,161	314	2,983,191	2,956,045	(27,146)
Right-of-use assets	722	813	-	128	128	-
Investments	38,650	37,232	1,418	36,024	36,024	-
<b>Total non-current assets</b>	<b>2,674,848</b>	<b>2,673,207</b>	<b>1,732</b>	<b>3,019,345</b>	<b>2,992,199</b>	<b>(27,146)</b>
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>2,924,710</b>	<b>2,841,983</b>	<b>82,818</b>	<b>3,143,629</b>	<b>3,135,101</b>	<b>(8,528)</b>
<b>Current liabilities</b>						
Payables						
Payables	29,731	20,543	9,188	18,753	18,753	-
Revenue Received in Advance	3,662	2,302	1,360	6,898	6,898	-
Provisions	21,947	20,923	1,024	27,110	27,433	323
Interest Bearing Loans and Borrowings	14,209	14,209	-	2,172	2,172	-
Trust Funds & Deposits	1,186	5,822	(4,636)	6,384	6,384	-
Lease liabilities	41	121	(80)	-	-	-
<b>Total current liabilities</b>	<b>70,776</b>	<b>63,920</b>	<b>6,856</b>	<b>61,318</b>	<b>61,640</b>	<b>323</b>
<b>Non-current liabilities</b>						
Provisions	2,872	2,510	362	2,603	2,603	-
Interest-bearing liabilities	12,093	12,961	(868)	11,437	11,437	-
Lease liabilities	465	457	9	-	-	-
Trust Funds & Deposits	706	706	-	-	-	-
<b>Total non-current liabilities</b>	<b>16,136</b>	<b>16,633</b>	<b>(498)</b>	<b>14,040</b>	<b>14,040</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>86,912</b>	<b>80,554</b>	<b>6,358</b>	<b>75,358</b>	<b>75,681</b>	<b>323</b>
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>2,837,798</b>	<b>2,761,430</b>	<b>76,368</b>	<b>3,068,272</b>	<b>3,059,421</b>	<b>(8,851)</b>
<b>Equity</b>						
Asset revaluation reserves	1,871,468	1,871,459	9	-	-	-
Other reserves	51,599	66,701	(15,102)	2,151,921	2,172,986	21,065
Accumulated surplus	914,731	823,270	91,461	916,351	886,435	(29,916)
<b>Total equity</b>	<b>2,837,798</b>	<b>2,761,430</b>	<b>76,368</b>	<b>3,068,272</b>	<b>3,059,421</b>	<b>(8,851)</b>

**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)
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>				
Rates and charges	143,960	199,737	201,399	1,663
Statutory fees and fines	13,428	18,357	18,908	552
User fees	2,941	8,721	9,459	738
Grants - operating	13,722	21,205	21,741	536
Grants - capital	4,504	12,964	11,525	(1,439)
Contributions - monetary	5,798	8,232	8,700	467
Interest received	3,846	-	879	879
Trust funds and deposits taken	36,353	41,524	41,524	-
Other receipts	5,946	7,797	8,021	224
Net GST refund/(payment)	932	-	-	-
Payments to Employees	(88,790)	(113,670)	(116,475)	(2,805)
Payments to Suppliers	(59,915)	(73,167)	(80,407)	(7,240)
Trust funds and deposits repaid	(25,009)	(41,414)	(41,414)	-
Other payments	(539)	(790)	(733)	57
<b>Net cash (used in) / provided by operating activities</b>	<b>57,175</b>	<b>89,497</b>	<b>83,129</b>	<b>(6,368)</b>
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>				
Payments for property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	(36,862)	(93,886)	(68,880)	25,006
Proceeds from sale of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	397	92	92	0
Payments/(Proceeds) for investments	(22,000)	4,993	4,993	-
<b>Net cash used in investing activities</b>	<b>(58,465)</b>	<b>(88,801)</b>	<b>(63,795)</b>	<b>25,006</b>
<b>Cash flows from financing activities</b>				
Finance costs	(597)	(816)	(820)	(4)
Repayment of borrowings	(1,574)	(14,212)	(14,209)	3
Interest paid - lease liability	(9)	-	-	-
Repayment of lease liabilities	(71)	(20)	(20)	-
<b>Net cash used in financing activities</b>	<b>(2,251)</b>	<b>(15,048)</b>	<b>(15,049)</b>	<b>(1)</b>
<b>Net increase/(decrease) in cash held</b>	<b>(3,541)</b>	<b>(14,352)</b>	<b>4,285</b>	<b>18,638</b>
Cash at beginning of period	36,116	14,441	36,116	21,675
<b>Cash at end of period</b>	<b>32,575</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>40,402</b>	<b>40,313</b>
<b>Cash Position</b>				
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)
<b>Cash &amp; cash equivalents at beginning of financial year</b>	<b>96,116</b>	<b>92,541</b>	<b>96,116</b>	<b>3,575</b>
Non-restricted Cash at end of financial period	32,575	89	24,108	24,019
Other Financial Assets at end of financial period	82,000	73,107	67,607	(5,500)
<b>Cash &amp; cash equivalents at end of financial period</b>	<b>114,575</b>	<b>73,196</b>	<b>91,715</b>	<b>18,519</b>

**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
<b>Property</b>						
Land	18	-	(18)	-	-	-
Buildings	2,229	3,635	1,407	8,910	3,919	4,991
Building Improvements	3,200	4,544	1,343	7,535	6,966	569
<b>Total property</b>	<b>5,447</b>	<b>8,179</b>	<b>2,732</b>	<b>16,445</b>	<b>10,885</b>	<b>5,560</b>
<b>Plant and equipment</b>						
Plant, machinery and equipment	1,565	3,473	1,908	5,877	3,324	2,553
Fixtures, Fittings and Furniture	57	112	55	171	176	(4)
Computers and telecommunications	923	872	(52)	1,125	1,113	12
Artworks	41	47	5	47	131	(84)
Library books	720	835	115	1,082	1,082	0
<b>Total plant and equipment</b>	<b>3,307</b>	<b>5,338</b>	<b>2,031</b>	<b>8,302</b>	<b>5,825</b>	<b>2,477</b>
<b>Infrastructure</b>						
Roads	12,379	18,678	6,298	27,223	23,616	3,607
Bridges	182	547	365	3,334	339	2,995
Footpaths and cycleways	2,748	3,253	504	6,662	5,045	1,617
Drainage	1,136	1,857	721	2,946	1,461	1,485
Recreational, leisure & community facilities	4,803	11,962	7,159	14,025	9,972	4,053
Waste management	172	230	58	2,183	269	1,914
Parks, open space and streetscapes	7,159	8,622	1,463	12,767	11,469	1,298
<b>Total infrastructure</b>	<b>28,579</b>	<b>45,147</b>	<b>16,569</b>	<b>69,140</b>	<b>52,171</b>	<b>16,969</b>
<b>Total capital works expenditure</b>	<b>37,332</b>	<b>58,664</b>	<b>21,332</b>	<b>93,887</b>	<b>68,881</b>	<b>25,006</b>
<b>Represented by:</b>						
New asset expenditure	3,742	5,831	2,089	12,345	8,479	3,867
Asset renewal expenditure	24,264	39,336	15,072	60,648	43,088	17,560
Asset upgrade expenditure	9,327	13,497	4,170	20,894	17,315	3,580
<b>Total capital works expenditure</b>	<b>37,332</b>	<b>58,664</b>	<b>21,332</b>	<b>93,887</b>	<b>68,881</b>	<b>25,006</b>

## 7.11 YEAR 1 COUNCIL ACTION PLAN 2025-26 - THIRD QUARTER PERFORMANCE REPORT

Acting Director Business Transformation, Yvonne Callanan

### Governance and Strategy

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#### Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Receives and notes the Year 1 Council Action Plan 2025-26 – Third Quarter Performance Report (provided as Attachment 1).
2. Notes that Action 68 - Redesign grants program to support more opportunities to create, learn and connect is currently behind schedule.
3. Endorses withdrawal of Action 12, (relating to expanding Council's practice to ensure Council buildings and infrastructure are environmentally sustainable) noting that this action is proposed to be replaced by two specific actions in the proposed Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2026-2027 to improve clarity and strengthen intended outcomes.

### REPORT

#### Executive Summary

The Third Quarter Performance Report (Attachment 1) provides an overview of Council's performance in delivering the Council Plan 2025–2029, with a specific focus on implementation of the Year 1 Council Action Plan 2025–26.

The report highlights key achievements and progress across initiatives supporting Council's strategic objectives, and provides a status update on the 79 actions, as follows:

- 6% (5 actions) achieved
- 90% (71 actions) in progress and on track
- 1% (1 action) off track
- 3% (2 actions) on hold or proposed for withdrawal

Overall, 96% of actions are either achieved or on track, reflecting strong progress in delivering the action plan.

One action is currently progressing behind target: Action 68 – *Redesign grants program to support more opportunities to create, learn and connect*. A further action is proposed to be withdrawn from ongoing reporting and replaced in the Year 2 Council Action Plan 2026–27 with two new actions. Further detail is outlined in the Issues section of this report.

#### Previous Council Decisions

**Year 1 Council Action Plan 2025–26 - Second Quarter Performance Report – 11**  
February 2026

*That Council:*

1. *Receives and notes the Year 1 Council Action Plan 2025-26 – Second Quarter Performance Report (provided as Attachment 1).*
2. *Endorses to place on hold Action 53 - Deliver the Wheatshaf Road Glenroy streetscape improvement project.*

## **Adoption of the Merri-bek Community Vision 2025–2035, Merri-bek Council Plan 2025–2029 and Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2025–2026 – 10 September 2025**

*That Council:*

- 1. Adopted the Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035 (provided as Attachment 1) in accordance with legislative requirements of the Local Government Act 2020.*
- 2. Adopted the Merri-bek Council Plan 2025–2029 (provided as Attachment 1) in accordance with legislative requirements of the Local Government Act 2020 and the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, noting that it incorporates the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029.*
- 3. Adopted Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2025-2026 (provided as Attachment 2) as the first year of actions to deliver against the Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029, with an additional action to be added under Theme 2: Healthy and Inclusive Communities, at initiative 2.9. to read: “Explore, including through partnership arrangements, ways to improve health, access and inclusiveness in public & private spaces for people in precarious housing such as access to toilets and bathrooms, seating under shelter, showers, lockers and a place to heat food as well as improved access to services.”*
- 4. Authorised the Director Business Transformation to finalise the Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035, Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029 and Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2025-2026, including any minor administrative changes, professional design of the documents and online versions, for distribution and implementation.*
- 5. Advised submitters that Council has considered their submissions relating to the Draft Council Plan 2025-2029 and that the submitters be advised of the outcome of the consideration, as it relates to their specific submission through this council report (provided as Attachment 3), and they be thanked for their contributions.*
- 6. Thanked, the members of the Community Panel and Community Youth Panel for their contribution and advise them in writing of the outcome of Council’s decision.*

### **1. Policy Context**

In accordance with sections 88 and 90 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council adopted its revised Community Vision 2025-2035 and a new Council Plan 2025-2029 in September 2025.

The Year 1 Council Action Plan 2025-26 supports the implementation of the Council Plan 2025-2029 for the first financial year of the 4-year period and includes specific actions to be undertaken, resourced through the 2025-26 annual budget (included in the 2025-2029 budget).

This report demonstrates Council’s continuing commitment to manage funds sustainably, equitably and transparently on behalf of ratepayers, key stakeholders and the broader community.

### **2. Background**

This third-quarter performance report provides a status update on the delivery of the Year 1 Council Action Plan 2025–26 as at 31 March 2026, marking a key milestone in the first year of implementation of the Council Plan 2025–29.

### **3. Issues**

Of the 79 actions committed for the year, 71 (90%) are currently in progress and on track for delivery. Five actions (6%) have been completed. One action (1%) is off track, and two actions (3%) are recommended to be withdrawn or have previously been endorsed to be on hold. No actions are currently classified as critical.

A summary of key highlights is provided below, with detailed third-quarter performance updates included in **Attachment 1**.

## **Theme 1: Care for nature and climate resilience**

Work is progressing well to create a greener and more climate resilient Merri-bek, with a focus on practical delivery and community involvement.

Work is well advanced to expand tree canopy and cool neighbourhoods, with priority sites now designed and ready for planting from May. This builds on extensive preparation already completed and will deliver more shade and greener public spaces across the municipality.

Investment in water-sensitive infrastructure is also progressing, with several major projects moving through detailed design and key feasibility work completed. These projects are being refined to respond to updated flood modelling, helping to protect communities and strengthen long-term resilience.

Community uptake of climate programs is accelerating. More than 50 households have already expressed interest in home energy upgrades, while a targeted campaign has driven a 1,137% increase in online engagement and more than 200 solar quote requests — showing strong demand for practical climate action.

Council has also strengthened its climate resilience work through better public access to information and shared learning. A Climate Resilience Communications Plan has been endorsed, a new web-based resource is being prepared, and around 60 people attended the Urban Heat Forum in March to explore practical ways to reduce heat and protect people and places.

## **Theme 2: Healthy and inclusive communities**

Council continued to strengthen healthy and inclusive communities, with actions focused on improving access to services, supporting participation and building connection.

Practical support continued to reach those who needed it most, with 74 outdoor garden jobs completed and a further 51 approved. The Age Well team also provided one-on-one support to 56 people and reached a further 146 through outreach activities.

Young people were actively engaged through targeted programs, including a five-week leadership initiative at Coburg High School focused on respectful relationships and gender equality, with further planning underway to expand youth drop-in services and family engagement programs.

Community connection and inclusion were strengthened through a range of events and partnerships. Around 50 community members participated in an interfaith bus tour, alongside two well-attended community forums focused on women's safety, access to support services, and promoting inclusion and economic participation for women and gender-diverse people.

Access to food, housing and support services also improved. New initiatives included fresh food programs, outreach to people experiencing disadvantage, and progress toward 106 new affordable homes in Coburg.

## **Theme 3: Beautiful and liveable city**

Council continued to progress a range of initiatives to create a more beautiful, liveable and connected Merri-bek, with a focus on improving public spaces, supporting active travel and managing growth.

Planning and design work advanced across several key public space projects. Two new locations were identified for future design and engagement, while a new park at 568 Sydney Road moved from community engagement to a Council-endorsed schematic design, with further community input planned.

Improvements to local parks also progressed, with funding committed to upgrades at seven reserves following a six-month pilot of dog walking initiatives, including improvements at Gilpin Dog Park. Streets for People projects continued to move forward, with designs completed for some streets and others nearing construction.

Support for active and sustainable transport continued, with programs delivered across five schools and planning underway for further improvements. The electric vehicle charging network also expanded, with 15 new installations completed and additional sites in progress.

Council also continued to manage development and growth, with multiple major planning applications considered and ongoing work to ensure the planning framework supports well-designed and appropriate development.

#### **Theme 4: Thriving economy and culture**

A range of initiatives progressed to support a thriving local economy and vibrant cultural life, strengthening local businesses and activating key places across Merri-bek.

Local business support remained a key focus, with nearly 50 permit concierge services delivered and 27 commercial priority planning applications supported. This was complemented by 30 business workshops and networking events, as well as investment and revitalisation initiatives.

Activity centres and shopping strips continued to be improved. Construction commenced on the West Street streetscape upgrade, while planning progressed for future improvements through the draft Places for People Plan, informed by community feedback.

Creative industries and cultural expression were also strengthened. Planning for Melbourne Design Week 2026 progressed, with 12 local studios engaged, and more than 100 creative spaces mapped across the Brunswick Design District.

Public art outcomes were also delivered, including murals at Fleming Park in East Brunswick, celebrating Treaty, and at Shirley Robertson Children's Centre in Coburg, co-designed with children. Additional murals are currently in design for Oxygen Youth Space, Union Street and Glenroy Community Hub.

Major cultural infrastructure has also advanced, with a concept design selected for the Coburg Library and Piazza through a competitive design process, creating a new civic and cultural hub for the community.

#### **Theme 5: Engaging and responsible council**

Council continued to build stronger connections with the community, while improving service delivery and advocating for local needs.

Advocacy remained a key focus, with ongoing engagement across all levels of government and regional partners. Advocacy focused on priorities such as housing, transport, climate resilience and planning reform, supported by formal submissions and targeted roundtables.

Engagement with multicultural communities was a priority, with strong participation through the Community Connectors network. Community Budget Ideas generated 1,945 in-language page views and 160 submissions, with nearly two-thirds from people who speak a language other than English at home. Multiple engagement formats helped improve access to information and participation in decision-making.

Service improvements also progressed, including continued use of online booking systems and development of a Customer Experience Strategy. Work also progressed on risk management, planning frameworks and development contributions.

Detailed updates for second quarter performance are shown in **Attachment 1**.

### Completed actions (Achieved)

Since the Second Quarter Report presented February 2026, the following three actions have since been completed or achieved under the Year 1 Council Action Plan 2025–26.

Action #	Action Description and Update	Directorate
48	<p><b>Adopt a new Road Management Plan and implement the changes resulting from its review</b></p> <p>The Road Management Plan was reviewed in time to meet the statutory deadline of 31 October and was subsequently endorsed by Council at the October Council meeting. The changes have now been implemented and embedded into ongoing operations.</p>	City Infrastructure
62	<p><b>Develop a Public Art Policy</b></p> <p>The Public Art Policy was adopted by Council in February 2026, with the associated budget referred to the 2026-27 budget process.</p>	Community
70	<p><b>Undertake design competition for the Coburg Library and Piazza concept design</b></p> <p>The design competition for the Coburg Library and Piazza has been completed, with a winning concept design selected through a two-stage process led by an independent jury of design experts.</p> <p>The competition attracted multidisciplinary design teams and resulted in a contemporary concept featuring a new four-storey library integrated with a public piazza, designed to support cultural, community, and learning activities while creating a central gathering space for Coburg.</p> <p>The endorsed concept design will inform the next stage of project development, including Council consideration and community engagement.</p>	Community

### In Progress (On Track)

A total of 71 actions (90%) are on track to deliver against the outcomes of the Year 1 Council Action Plan 2025–26 as at the end of the third quarter. Detailed performance updates are provided in **Attachment 1**.

### Off Track (Behind Target)

One action (1%) is currently classified as 'Off Track' under the Year 1 Council Action Plan 2025–26. Further detail is provided in the table below. It should be noted that this action has not been proposed for inclusion in the Year 2 Council Action Plan 2026–27.

Action #	Action Description and Update	Directorate
68	<p><b>Redesign grants program to support more opportunities to create, learn and connect</b></p> <p><b>Action Update:</b></p> <p>Internal consultation of the redesigned Grants Guidelines has not yet commenced and is now scheduled to begin in June 2026.</p>	Community

## Recommended for withdrawal (On hold or remove)

Two actions (3%) fall within this category as follows:

Action #	Action Description and Update	Directorate
53	<p><b>Deliver the W heatsheaf Road Glenroy streetscape improvement project (over two years)</b></p> <p>This action was placed on hold for the remainder of the financial year, as resolved by Council at the February 2026 Council meeting.</p>	Place and Environment
12	<p><b>Expand Council's practice to ensure Council buildings and infrastructure are environmentally sustainable in their planning, design, and implementation. In the first year, focus on tangible increases to recycled content.</b></p> <p><b>Over four years work towards new buildings and infrastructure that is 100% renewably powered, lower carbon, reflect circular economy principles, consider ways to be more climate resilient and adapted and work is prioritised to reflect greatest need.</b></p> <p><b>Action Update:</b></p> <p>This action is proposed to be withdrawn and replaced with two more specific actions as proposed in the Year 2 Council Action Plan (2026–27) to improve clarity and strengthen intended outcomes. The proposed new actions are:</p> <p><b>NEW:</b> Deliver climate vulnerability improvements to the following Council owned facilities; Fawkner Maternal Child Health, Yooralla Community Hub and Newlands Senior Citizens Centre.</p> <p>and;</p> <p><b>NEW:</b> Develop and implement a whole-of-program capital works prioritisation framework that integrates asset condition, service need, climate vulnerability, and social, economic and environmental considerations.</p>	City Infrastructure

### Community impact

Community impact is addressed throughout the Council Plan 2025-2029 but primarily under strategic objective 5: Engaging and Responsible Council - A responsive and engaged Merri-bek that prioritises excellent service, embraces engaging communication methods, advocates community needs, and continues to uphold sustainable financial management and accountable governance that builds trust and collaboration with the community.

### Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability considerations are embedded throughout the Council Plan 2025–29. These objectives are proactively addressed under strategic objective 1: Care for Nature and Climate Resilience - To create a flourishing and climate resilient Merri-bek by improving wildlife and nature connectivity, greening and cooling for healthier streets and public realm, and engaging the community in meaningful climate action. In addition, there are broader climate, health and environmental implications reflected across the plan as a whole.

### **Economic sustainability implications**

Economic sustainability is addressed across the Council Plan 2025–29, with key focus under strategic objective 4: Thriving Economy and Culture - A lively and inclusive Merri-bek where the economy supports local business and industry growth, celebrates artistic and creative expression, and connects the community through vibrant cultural experiences; and strategic objective 5: Engaging and Responsible Council. These objectives together promote economic resilience by supporting local economic activity while maintaining strong governance, financial sustainability, and accountability in Council decision-making.

### **Legal and risk considerations**

The Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-35 and Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029 and processes associated with the development of these documents have been undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2020 and the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008.

### **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**

Community consultation and engagement was not required for this report as it reflects the performance against the Council Plan 2025-2029.

### **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 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**

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

## **7. Implementation**

The Year 1 Council Action Plan 2025-26 third quarter performance results will be made available on Council's website.

### **Attachment/s**

- 1 [Council Action Plan Report 2025-26 Q3](#) D26/163148



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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Merri-bek City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways in the area now known as Merri-bek. We pay respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging, as well as to all First Nations communities who significantly contribute to the life of the area.

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## Executive Summary






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

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

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

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

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







Number	Percentage	Status	Definition	Traffic Light
5	6%	Achieved	Completed, achieved	
71	90%	In Progress	On track	
1	1%	Off Track	Behind Target	
0	0%	Critical	Action is significantly delayed	
2	3%	Withdrawn	On hold or removed	

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

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

**Theme 1: Care for nature and climate resilience**

**Strategic Objective 1: To create a flourishing and climate resilient Merri-bek by improving wildlife and nature connectivity, greening and cooling for healthier streets and public realm, and engaging the community in meaningful climate action.**

Action No.	Action	Status	Directorate	Comments
1	Plant and nurture suitable trees in tricky places, parks, and streets		City Infrastructure	<p>This quarter, work focused on the technical design of future greening sites and the strategic optimisation of our tree maintenance programs.</p> <p>Detailed site design is underway to integrate new tree plots and permeable surfaces into Wallace Reserve car park as part of the tricky spaces tree planting program.</p> <p>Planning and site preparation have commenced for the 2026 planting season, scheduled to begin in May. This upcoming program will predominantly focus on increasing canopy cover and shade within our parks.</p>
2	Investigate opportunities to reduce impacts of urban heat and increasing heatwaves by collaborating to get more shade trees in places like schools, retirement villages, and backyards		Place and Environment	Partners have been identified for the pilot of the Tree for Me program. Planning has started for community engagement and communications.
3	Facilitate native understorey planting trial project		City Infrastructure	All native understorey planting sites are currently being prepared and mulched prior to planting. Community planting days are planned for a selection of sites in 2026.
4	Commence the biodiversity and climate change resilience top-up research grant program		City Infrastructure	Following an approach refinement, Council has shifted to a model in which selected universities will manage the delivery of the biodiversity and climate change resilience top-up research grant program. Universities will play a central role in administering the program and delivering research outcomes. The program is expected to launch later in 2026, following finalisation of guidelines and targeted stakeholder engagement.
5	Facilitate the Lizards with bikes: revitalising the Coburg Velodrome underpass project		City Infrastructure	All minor landscape works have been completed in preparation for planting works, which will be coordinated as a Community Planting Day. An artist has been engaged to paint a mural on site, and interpretive signage is currently being designed.
6	Deliver key stormwater harvesting and wetland projects as outlined in the Integrated Water Management Action Plan		Place and Environment	The Upper Moonee Ponds Creek wetland detailed design is in progress, with community engagement now completed, additionally the following has been undertaken.

Merri-Bek Council Action Plan 2025-26 - Quarterly Report: Q3

Action No.	Action	Status	Directorate	Comments
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Austin Crescent ephemeral swale detailed design is in progress, with community engagement now completed.</li> <li>A feasibility study for the Martin Reserve stormwater harvesting diversion pit has been completed.</li> <li>Further refinement of the A.G. Gillon and Reaburn Reserve stormwater harvesting detailed design is underway to ensure alignment with recently updated flood modelling.</li> </ul>
7	Deliver outcome-focused Integrated Water Management planning for the Coburg and Brunswick activity centres to enhance liveability, manage stormwater and flood, support water efficiency, and build climate resilience	●	Place and Environment	<p>Contribution to Integrated Water Management outcomes within Coburg and Brunswick</p> <p>Contributions to Integrated Water Management (IWM) outcomes within Coburg and Brunswick have been progressed through the following initiatives:</p> <p>The draft Integrated Water Management Roadmap has been prepared by Melbourne Water in partnership with Merri-bek, in collaboration with IWM Forum members led by Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA). Integrated Water Management considerations were incorporated into Merri-bek's submission to Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) for the Built Form Overlay for the Merri-bek cluster (Brunswick and Coburg), supporting alignment with broader water-sensitive urban design outcomes.</p> <p>Integrated Water Management principles were embedded in the Coburg Central IWM Plan as part of the 'Coburg is Here' concept, through the provision of subject matter expertise via the project working group.</p>
8	Promote and support an inclusive energy transition, including solar and thermal subsidies for low-income households	●	Place and Environment	<p>Delivery partners have been appointed for Merri-bek's Home Energy Subsidy Program (solar and thermal), with 51 expressions of interest received to date, 16 households confirmed eligible, and 5 progressing to accepted quotes.</p> <p>A renters' draught-proofing workshop was delivered in March, including provision of take-home DIY packs, with a further workshop scheduled for May.</p> <p>A summer efficient electrification campaign was delivered across outdoor advertising, organic and paid social media, supported by a new video featuring a Fawkner resident. This resulted in a 1,137% increase in visits to the Go Electric landing page and 214 Solar Savers quote requests.</p>

Merri-Bek Council Action Plan 2025-26 - Quarterly Report: Q3

Action No.	Action	Status	Directorate	Comments
9	Deliver circular economy community initiatives and trial a fortnightly rubbish service	●	Place and Environment	The Circular Economy initiatives included a Detox Your Home drop-off event in March, and zero waste workshops on cloth nappies and basic mending skills. A collaboration with Fashion Revolution Australia was initiated to host an event at Coburg Library for Mend in Public Day. Circular Campus to Community activities with RMIT were progressed, and Hands-in-Hanger weekly mending events were promoted from April. Additionally, the fortnightly rubbish trial evaluation and reporting were completed, and community engagement on the municipal-wide roll-out, subject to Council decision, commenced on 1 March.
10	Increase awareness and capacity of the Merri-bek community on heat and flood risks to support resilience building	●	Place and Environment	The Climate Resilience Integration Board endorsed the Climate Resilience Communications Plan. A web-based site is being prepared to consolidate climate risk information for easy public access. An Urban Heat Forum, attended by around 60 participants from councils and various community groups, took place on 27 March. The Forum brought together community members, Council, researchers, government, industry and local organisations to share experiences, build a common understanding, and explore practical solutions to reduce heat and protect people and places.
11	Commence Oak Park Sports and Aquatic Electrification and Plant Room Renewal Project	●	Community	Detailed design and permits completed. Works to commence at the conclusion of the summer season, 1 May 2026.
12	Expand Council's practice to ensure Council buildings and infrastructure are environmentally sustainable in their planning, design, and implementation.  In the first year, focus on tangible increases to recycled content.  Over four years work towards new buildings and infrastructure that is 100% renewably powered, lower carbon, reflect circular economy principles, consider ways to be more climate resilient and adapted and work is prioritised to reflect greatest need.	●	City Infrastructure	This action is proposed to be withdrawn and replaced with two more specific actions as proposed in the Year 2 Council Action Plan (2026–27) to improve clarity and strengthen intended outcomes. The proposed new actions are listed below.  NEW: Deliver climate vulnerability improvements to the following Council owned facilities; Fawkner Maternal Child Health, Yooralla Community Hub and Newlands Senior Citizens Centre.  and;  NEW: Develop and implement a whole-of-program capital works prioritisation framework that integrates asset condition, service need, climate vulnerability, and social, economic and environmental considerations.
13	Continue reducing carbon emissions of Council's fleet	●	City Infrastructure	Merri-bek City Council continues to reduce carbon emissions from its fleet, which includes light vehicles (passenger and commercial), heavy vehicles, major plant and minor plant.  This quarter saw the delivery of new zero-emissions light commercial vans and a

Merri-Bek Council Action Plan 2025-26 - Quarterly Report: Q3





Action No.	Action	Status	Directorate	Comments
				compact sweeper. Further work is underway to support fleet electrification, with ongoing evaluation of zero-emissions options for trucks, light commercial vehicles and minor plant.  In addition, procurement is in progress for the replacement of the first waste compactor trucks with zero-emissions alternatives, targeting the replacement of heavily polluting vehicles nearing end of life.
14	Continue to advocate for Environmentally Sustainable Design outcomes in the planning scheme to State Government	●	Place and Environment	Merri-bek is a member of the Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE) and works closely with other member councils to provide feedback and undertake advocacy throughout the year. The past year has been particularly busy, with significant state reform and a strong focus on retaining Environmentally Sustainable Development (ESD) standards within the planning process. CASBE meets periodically with the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) to advocate for these outcomes and will continue to do so as required.  Other advocacy activities since last quarter include:  Joint submission with Greenhouse Alliances to the Inquiry into Renewable and Affordable Energy for Apartments. Proactive development of advocacy relating to Clause 55 data, demonstrating a significant decline in ESD outcomes since its introduction in March 2025.  At recent Future Focus member meetings, advocacy was identified as the top priority across all council groups for CASBE to continue progressing.
15	Promote the delivery of more climate resilient, less carbon intensive and more nature-inclusive private developments through providing clearer guidance for environmentally responsive design, promoting, and negotiating improved outcomes through the planning permit application process and subsequent proactive enforcement of planning conditions	●	Place and Environment	Environmentally sustainable development outcomes continue to be progressed in line with planning reforms. This includes on-site stormwater management measures such as rainwater tanks, raingardens and permeable paving, as well as external shading to protect north-facing windows from summer heat and support the installation of solar panels in new developments.  The proactive enforcement program for environmentally sustainable development also continues, with a focus on improving on-site outcomes, including the delivery of larger raingardens near creeks. Officers are also exploring opportunities to improve the overall design and quality of new buildings, including sustainability outcomes, through pre-application meetings and a trial with a local developer.

**Theme 2: Healthy and inclusive communities**

**Strategic Objective 2: To support accessible facilities, programs, services, housing that promote community wellbeing, and connection for all ages, abilities, genders, and cultures, fostering a safe, inclusive, and thriving Merri-bek community.**

Action No.	Action	Status	Directorate	Comments
16	Investigate possibility for renewal of Pascoe Vale Outdoor Pool	●	Community	This action forms part of the broader Aquatic and Leisure Strategy 2018-2038 review, which is currently underway. Consultant engagement and high-level costing options are being undertaken.
17	Review progress of the 20 years Aquatic and Leisure Strategy	●	Community	Further information to be collected, analysed and presented to Council following the conclusion of the summer season to inform ongoing investment required to maintain Council's six aquatic and leisure centres and to inform future capital works budgets.
18	Facilitate support for the Youth Holistic Outreach Program	●	Community	The program is being delivered in line with the funding agreement, and relevant targets are being met.
19	Challenging gender-based violence through youth led initiatives	●	Community	Over the past five weeks, a group of Coburg High School students engaged in the Take the Lead program, examining gender roles, stereotypes, the causes of violence against women, warning signs in relationships, characteristics of respectful relationships, and help-seeking options. Twelve students attended all five sessions.  A key part of the program has been co-designing an online campaign together, with students creating posters and social media tiles to promote women's empowerment and challenge gendered stereotypes and roles. This has been a great way to build their confidence and ensure their perspectives are reflected in the messaging.
20	Scope options to provide additional free third spaces for children, young people, and families	●	Community	Preliminary scoping of potential additional third spaces is occurring, and planning to expand the drop-in program for young people in Fawkner is occurring. A project plan and service model for Family Engagement has been developed and will be implemented in the new financial year.
21	Progress the development of the Brunswick Early Years Hub	●	Community	The tender process to appoint a builder has been completed. A report is being prepared for the May Council meeting seeking approval to appoint the builder.
22	Increase awareness of library early literacy programming through partnership with MCH	●	Community	Initial stakeholder meetings have been undertaken to progress this initiative. Planning is underway to develop a bookmark for Maternal and Child Health nurses to distribute to new parents, increasing awareness of library early literacy programming through partnership with Maternal and Child Health.

Merri-Bek Council Action Plan 2025-26 - Quarterly Report: Q3

Action No.	Action	Status	Directorate	Comments
23	Deliver and extend outdoor help program for seniors for 2025/26		Community	<p>The Outdoor Garden Help Program has completed 74 jobs so far in the third quarter, with a further 51 jobs approved and ready for delivery by contractors.</p> <p>Analysis of participants to date identified that some groups were underrepresented compared to Merri-bek's older population. In response, the project team implemented targeted, in-language promotion through senior's groups, community connectors, neighbourhood houses, libraries, the Living and Ageing Well e-newsletter, and social media. This has led to an increase in enquiries from these groups and greater diversity in program participation.</p>
24	Deliver the ageing well navigation support program to older residents		Community	<p>The Age Well team has supported 56 people through one-on-one assistance during the third quarter and reached a further 146 people through 14 outreach activities, including pop-up sessions, presentations, and information sessions delivered in partnership with community organisations, an assessment agency, and a retirement village.</p> <p>The team is also liaising with medical professionals, charities, food banks, and essential services, and has increased promotion both within Council and externally, including an article in Community News and an expanded social media presence. A schedule of monthly themed information sessions is planned through to June 2026.</p>
25	Deliver programs addressing food security through local markets, referral, and voucher systems, strengthening local procurement and logistic		Community	<p>As part of the VicHealth-funded Merri-bek Food Alliance project, implementation has commenced and the project plan is in place. The four project areas include: Merri Food Hub weekly fresh food markets in Glenroy and Fawkner; Fawkner Food Bowls growing culturally diverse food for the markets; a voucher program providing Community Information and Support Merri-bek clients with access to subsidised Merri Food Hub produce; and engagement and outreach through Open Table's community meals program. A Designing Your Garden workshop was also delivered through the My Smart Garden program.</p>
26	Review and implement Social Cohesion Plan		Community	<p>During the reporting period, Council progressed a range of initiatives aligned with the Social Cohesion Plan to strengthen inclusion, connection and community understanding.</p> <p>In February, Council partnered with the Merri-bek Interfaith Network to deliver a World Interfaith Harmony Week event in Fawkner. The event brought together faith leaders and community members for shared reflection, dialogue and cultural exchange. Two Peace Poles were unveiled, symbolising unity and reinforcing commitments to respectful relationships across faiths.</p> <p>On 12 March, Council participated in a joint Places of Worship Bus Tour with</p>

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Action No.	Action	Status	Directorate	Comments
				Darebin, Hume, Merri-bek and Whittlesea Councils. The tour engaged 50 community members from diverse faith and cultural backgrounds, visiting four places of worship across the northern region. Participant feedback identified positive outcomes in building understanding, trust and interfaith connections. Council also advanced the Hume-Merri-bek Anti-Racism Support Network, progressing community-led initiatives informed by the 2023 Victoria University research. Key activities included stakeholder engagement, convening the first network meeting, delivering capacity-building workshops and distributing anti-racism resources. Additionally, Council continued collaboration with women in Fawkner to co-design a Women in Business Empowerment Project with SisterWorks, and commenced promotion of Democracy Lab 2026 to engage under-represented groups in civic leadership and local decision-making.
27	Evaluation and development of a human rights policy	●	Community	Evaluation has been completed, and findings are being used to inform the development of a new Human Rights Policy. Planning for engagement on this policy is now underway.
28	Create Library of Things plan for Merri-bek libraries	●	Community	Members of the Library of Things Working Group attended a conference and met with other library staff to exchange ideas. Library staff also met with the President and Board Secretary of the Brunswick Tool Library to explore opportunities for collaboration. Opportunities for library involvement in the Merri-bek e-bike lending scheme are also being investigated.
29	Deliver the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan including Functional Zero and Assertive outreach	●	Community	Work undertaken in the previous quarter includes the extension of the Assertive Outreach Program until June 2026, continuing to support people sleeping rough to engage with specialist homelessness and other essential services.
30	Advocate for systemic changes to enable a socially just and climate resilient Merri-bek.	●	Place and Environment	This quarter, submissions were made to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry on Waste to Energy (March 2026) and the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into renewable and affordable energy for apartments.  Council also continued to support advocacy led by the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances, in collaboration with the Australian Council of Social Service, to the Federal Government for \$72.5 million in funding for a scalable home energy upgrade program inclusive of vulnerable and low-income households.
31	Embed library social worker program	●	Community	Two part-time Library Social Workers were engaged in February 2026. The Library Social Workers have reviewed recommendations from the pilot program

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Action No.	Action	Status	Directorate	Comments
				and are now establishing how the ongoing Library Social Work Program will be delivered.
32	Explore, including through partnership arrangements, ways to improve health, access and inclusiveness in public & private spaces for people in precarious housing such as access to toilets and bathrooms, seating under shelter, showers, lockers and a place to heat food as well as improved access to services	●	Community	The Community Safety and Partnerships officer is progressing a review and forward planning of strategic initiatives with relevant partners. This includes exploring, including through partnership arrangements, opportunities to improve health, access and inclusiveness in public and private spaces for people experiencing precarious housing, such as access to toilets and bathrooms, sheltered seating, showers, lockers, facilities to heat food, and improved access to support services.
33	Develop and implement Gender Equality and Family Violence Action Plan	●	Community	<p>Input was provided to Council's Progress Report (1 July 2023 - 30 June 2025) to the Commission for Gender Equality, outlining 18 completed Gender Impact Assessments and associated actions taken.</p> <p>In addition, two well-attended community forums were delivered:</p> <p>Women's Safety Forum (12 February), which focused on increasing knowledge of and trust in family violence support services, and reducing barriers to access. Speakers included Victoria Police, Northern Community Legal Centre, Men's Referral Service and Sisters 4 Sisters.</p> <p>Balance the Scales International Women's Day event (26 March), which promoted services supporting women and gender-diverse people in employment and workplace rights, sexual and reproductive health, and financial independence.</p>
34	Deliver an annual Tobacco education and enforcement program	●	Place and Environment	Progress towards delivering the annual tobacco education and enforcement program is underway. The Municipal Association of Victoria target is currently 57 per cent complete, with plans in place to ensure the target is met by the end of the fourth quarter.
35	Develop and implement First Peoples self-determination strategy	●	Community	<p>Council hosted a successful 26 January Day of Mourning ceremony at Coburg Civic Centre, attended by more than 300 community members. The event provided space for truth-telling, reflection, and recognition of the ongoing impacts of colonisation.</p> <p>The First Peoples Advisory Committee met twice this quarter. The committee comprises nine Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members, including Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders and representatives from Aboriginal Community Elders Services and the Victorian Aboriginal Housing Corporation. Matters considered included the First Peoples Strategy development process,</p>

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Action No.	Action	Status	Directorate	Comments
				<p>Council's budget processes, progress against the First Nations Procurement Target, the proposed Memorandum of Understanding with Aboriginal Housing Victoria, a briefing on the draft Partnership Agreement with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung, and updates on key projects including Ballerit Mooroop, the Victorian Treaty process, and the First Peoples Employment Plan.</p> <p>Merri-bek Libraries hosted more than 50 community members at a Treaty Information Session at Brunswick Library on 18 March, delivered by the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria. Council also convened the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country Local Government Group, bringing together more than 10 councils to streamline communication with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.</p>
36	Partner with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service to investigate options, locations and co-design culturally safe programs and services that promote and improve access to Councils Aquatic and Leisure Centres addressing a range of barriers for Aboriginal Victorians	●	Community	The program has commenced, with Elders from the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service attending an introductory session at Coburg Leisure Centre. Ongoing discussions between service providers are supporting program delivery.
38	Progress plans and projects to revitalise and improve central Coburg	●	Place and Environment	The Concept for Coburg and Framework Plan Engagement Report was published, summarising community feedback from a six-week public engagement program held from November to December 2025. Work is underway to update the Central Coburg Framework Plan, incorporating feedback received through this engagement process.
39	Deliver the Merri-bek Affordable Housing Action Plan	●	Place and Environment	<p>This action is on track. Work continues with government and housing providers to progress accessible and inclusive housing opportunities, including First Peoples housing on Council land.</p> <p>Key outcomes include the granting of a planning permit for 106 affordable homes to be delivered as part of the Coburg Health Hub by community housing provider HousingFirst. Ongoing advocacy for increased public and community housing also includes support for the RMIT University report Barkly Street Public Housing - Future Visions, published in January.</p>
40	Support the development of Ballerit Mooroop site/community hub with engagement of local First Peoples communities and Traditional	●	Community	Council is providing support to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation as invited to participate by the organisation. Wurundjeri is leading the development of an Aboriginal Gathering Place at Ballerit

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Action No.	Action	Status	Directorate	Comments
	Owners			Mooroop. The land is currently zoned as Education use and will need to be re-zoned, a process that could take up to 18 months.

**Theme 3: Beautiful and liveable city**





**Strategic Objective 3: Create safe, accessible streets and public spaces that support vibrant communities, active travel, rest and relaxation, and community pride, while ensuring development and growth are well managed and local character is celebrated, ensuring Merri-bek is a welcoming, liveable, and connected place for all.**

Action No.	Action	Status	Directorate	Comments
41	Facilitate additional public toilets in parks & reserves	●	City Infrastructure	Two locations have been identified for design and engagement activities in the 2025-26 financial year. Construction is expected to occur in the 2026-27 financial year.
42	Deliver Park priorities	●	City Infrastructure	<p>Construction has been completed for park upgrades at HM Dowd Reserve and Esslemont Reserve in Pascoe Vale and Gervase Avenue Reserve, Glenroy.</p> <p>Construction is underway on park upgrades at McCleery Reserve, Coburg and Tate Park, Pascoe Vale.</p> <p>Design and consultation in progress on park upgrades at Loyola Pitt Pocket Park, Brunswick, Calder Reserve Coburg, Middle Street, Hadfield, James Reserve, Pascoe Vale and Methven Park Brunswick (minor playground replacement).</p> <p>In March 2026, Council endorsed the schematic design for the new Park Close to Home at 568 Sydney Road t. The project will now move into the concept design phase, which will be presented to the community for further feedback later in 2026.</p>
43	Deliver increased shade in Victoria Mall	●	Place and Environment	Council is progressing plans to enhance shade within Victoria Mall. Engagement with local businesses is underway to seek feedback on the proposed design and coordinate the timing of installation.
44	Implement hooning prevention measures in reserve carparks in Glenroy	●	City Infrastructure	Implementation of hooning prevention measures across identified reserve carparks in Glenroy is progressing well, with treatments delivered at the majority of priority sites. At Wallace Reserve, initial measures have been installed and further refinement has been required following damage to the treatments. Officers are currently exploring alternative design approaches and materials to enhance durability and support a more sustainable long-term outcome for this location.
45	Implement the outcomes of the community engagement for the Stage 1 Pilot - Dog Walking in Merri-bek initiatives at 8 different reserves, including improving Gilpin dog park	●	City Infrastructure	Council at it's April 2026 meeting endorsed the recommendations arising from the six-month pilot program across seven of eight identified parks including interventions for improved amenities and signage. Council committed funding to implement the recommended changes at the seven of the eight pilot parks, including the Improving Gilpin Dog Park community budget project. The Tate Reserve pilot has been deferred to enable specific site issues to be resolved.

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Action No.	Action	Status	Directorate	Comments
46	Engage the community in the review of and update of the Domestic Animal Management Plan	✓	City Infrastructure	This action was achieved in the previous quarter.
47	Engage the community in the review of and update of the Local Law	●	City Infrastructure	The Local Law review process is progressing on schedule. The engagement period with the community commenced 8 April - 6 May. This includes proposed changes to the Local Law identified through earlier internal engagement.
48	Adopt a new Road Management Plan and implement the changes resulting from its review	✓	City Infrastructure	The Road Management Plan was reviewed in time to meet the statutory deadline of 31 October and was subsequently endorsed by Council at the October Council meeting. The changes have now been implemented and embedded into ongoing operations.
49	Deliver the Streets for People Plan priority projects	●	Place and Environment	Breese Street concept designs were presented to the March Council meeting for endorsement. Hope Street concept designs were tested with key stakeholders and were scheduled for endorsement at the May Council meeting.
50	Deliver sustainable transport initiatives that improve options for people walking and riding throughout Merri-bek	●	Place and Environment	Progress has been made on the Streets for People corridor projects. Several projects have completed the design phase, including Breese Street, while others are nearing the construction phase, including Victoria Street.
51	Deliver the Ride & Stride behaviour change program plus priority infrastructure upgrades around schools, to foster safe and active travel to and from school	●	Place and Environment	<p>The Ride &amp; Stride program continues to work with participating schools. Open Streets is being delivered regularly at five local schools across the municipality in 2026, and Ride2School Day celebrations were promoted and held at multiple schools in March.</p> <p>The School Transport Precincts Officer is developing a new Schools Plan to support integrated behaviour change and infrastructure upgrades in school precincts. Design works are scheduled to commence with the first Ride &amp; Stride school before the end of June 2026.</p>
52	Support the expansion of the Electric Vehicle (EV) charging network across Merri-bek	●	Place and Environment	<p>Projects contributing to the expansion of the Merri-bek electric vehicle charging network include:</p> <p>Home to Street electric vehicle charging trial - 15 installations have been completed, with valuable feedback received.</p> <p>Installation of an alternating current dual charger at Coburg Civic Centre has been completed, and procurement is underway for an additional unit at The Grove.</p>

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Action No.	Action	Status	Directorate	Comments
				Community consultation has commenced to identify potential sites for an on-street charging trial (pole-mounted chargers).
53	Deliver the Wheatsheaf Road Glenroy streetscape improvement project (over two years)		Place and Environment	This action has been placed on hold for the remainder of the financial year, with Council endorsing this position at the February 2026 Council meeting, due to external factors impacting delivery. As a multi-year initiative, timing and delivery will be reviewed as part of the development of the Year 2 Council Action Plan 2026–27
54	Ensure Council is well briefed to support the best possible design outcomes from major planning applications		Place and Environment	<p>Most major planning proposals are determined by Council resolution at Planning and Related Matters (PARM) meetings. Generally, proposals that exceed structure plan height limits or are referred to Council by the Minister for Planning are considered by Councillors.</p> <p>All major planning applications undergo a review process with expert input from Council's urban design, environmentally sustainable development, and heritage advisory teams. To date, the following major proposals have been considered at PARM meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 253-259 Brunswick Road, Brunswick - six storeys</li> <li>- 2 Florence Street, Coburg - seven storeys</li> <li>- 278-282 Albert Street, Brunswick - nine storeys</li> <li>- 932 Sydney Road, Coburg North - mixed-use development including warehouse, service station and convenience restaurant</li> <li>- 90 Bell Street, Coburg - Coburg Health Hub</li> </ul>
55	Reporting on Ministerial planning permit decision-making through the Quarterly Planning Permit Activity Reporting to the Planning & Related Matters Council Meeting		Place and Environment	<p>The City Development Activity Report includes details of Ministerial applications, which are reported quarterly to the Planning and Related Matters Council meeting.</p> <p>In the 2025-26 financial year, one Ministerial application has been lodged: MIN/2025/7 - 50-52 Breese Street and 655-661 Sydney Road, Brunswick, for 43 townhouses. This application was reported to the March 2026 meeting.</p>
56	Ensure the review of the Merri-bek Planning Scheme leads to a framework that supports great housing, employment, and liveability in Merri-bek		Place and Environment	This action is on track. Work is underway to ensure the Merri-bek Planning Scheme continues to provide a clear and effective framework of local policies and controls to guide the type and location of housing growth.

#### Theme 4: Thriving economy and culture




**Strategic Objective 4: A lively and inclusive Merri-bek where the economy supports local business and industry growth, celebrates artistic and creative expression, and connects the community through vibrant cultural experiences.**

Action No.	Action	Status	Directorate	Comments
57	Continue to develop the Brunswick Design District in partnership with RMIT University and Creative Victoria, with a focus on supporting economic opportunities and job growth in design-related businesses		Place and Environment	Over the past months officers worked with RMIT University and Creative Victoria to: (i) deliver the fourth in a series of Open Studio networking events; (ii) extensively plan the forthcoming 2026 Melbourne Design Week, including recruiting 12 participating studios for the event; and (iii) making updates to the Brunswick Design District website including the addition of a new page to list over 100 creative spaces within the Brunswick Design District and nearby (see: <a href="http://bdd.org.au/our-spaces">bdd.org.au/our-spaces</a> ).
58	Implement safety & amenity improvements in major activity centres including Glenroy, Brunswick, and Coburg		Place and Environment	Key road safety projects continue to progress across the major activity centres of Glenroy, Brunswick, and Coburg, contributing to safer and more accessible environments for pedestrians, cyclists, and other road users.
59	Belair Street, Glenroy, on-street garden bed		Place and Environment	A preliminary design has been completed, and Council is preparing to engage with local traders. The design is being finalised to refine safety, drainage, and maintenance requirements. The project will then move into detailed design ahead of procurement for delivery.
60	Deliver the West Street Streetscape Renewal Project (over two years)		Place and Environment	Council is progressing the upgrade of the West Street Shopping Strip to enhance the activity centre as a vibrant community destination. Construction has commenced on this streetscape upgrade, with businesses regularly updated on construction timing and staging. Council is on track to complete construction by the end of the year.
61	Deliver priority actions from the Places for People Plan		Place and Environment	<p>During February and March, Council undertook community engagement on the draft Places for People Plan. The plan outlines opportunities to improve public spaces in Merri-bek's shopping strips and activity centres over the next 10 years.</p> <p>Council is now reviewing the feedback received and will update the draft plan where appropriate. The revised Places for People Plan will be presented to Council later this year for consideration.</p>
62	Develop a Public Art Policy		Community	The Public Art Policy was adopted by Council in February 2026, with the associated budget referred to the 2026-27 budget process.

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Action No.	Action	Status	Directorate	Comments
63	Deliver the Merri-bek Economic Development Action Plan	●	Place and Environment	<p>During the quarter, the Economic Development Unit continued to deliver Year 2 actions under the Economic Development Action Plan, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- delivery of four business events (bringing the year-to-date total to 30 skills workshops and business networking events).</li> <li>- progression of a major Business Friendly Council service improvement initiative (ongoing during 2026).</li> <li>- continued support to the Sydney Road Brunswick and Central Coburg business associations, including engagement regarding their proposed renewals.</li> <li>- delivery of a Shopfront Improvement project in Melville Road.</li> <li>- facilitation of nearly 50 business permit concierge processes.</li> <li>- production of a new Investment Attraction video.</li> <li>- commencement of two Multicultural Business Precinct Revitalisation projects in Coburg and Glenroy following successful state government grant funding.</li> </ul>
64	Maintain the Commercial Priority Planning Service to facilitate well prepared planning permit applications that can deliver new or increased local employment opportunities	●	Place and Environment	<p>The Urban Planning Unit continues to provide its Commercial Priority Service to support new and expanding businesses in navigating the planning process. From July 2025 to March 2026, Council received 27 commercial priority planning applications.</p>
65	Deliver expanded Merri-bek murals street art program	●	Community	<p>Murals have been delivered at Fleming Park, East Brunswick (designed as a celebration of Treaty by artist Robert Michael Young), and at Shirley Robertson Children's Centre, Coburg (co-designed with children and artist Amanda Newman).</p> <p>Murals at Oxygen Youth Space (Coburg), Union Street (Brunswick), and Glenroy Community Hub are currently in design and will be delivered in the coming months.</p>
66	Scope project to activate underutilised community spaces for arts and performance	●	Community	<p>A range of community venues has been investigated to inform the potential provision of performing arts infrastructure. Findings will be presented to Council later in 2026 and will inform future capital works planning and budget considerations.</p>
67	Refresh festival program in line with community needs	●	Community	<p>Councillor consultation on the proposed festival program refresh has commenced, providing an opportunity to inform the direction of the program ahead of broader community consultation.</p>

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Action No.	Action	Status	Directorate	Comments
68	Redesign grants program to support more opportunities to create, learn and connect		Community	Internal consultation of the redesigned Grants Guidelines has not yet commenced and is now scheduled to begin in June 2026.
69	Develop scope for Fawkner Library redevelopment to increase opportunities to learn and connect		Community	Research and planning undertaken. A draft vision has been prepared reflecting the need for flexibility, functionality and a strong community identity for the library redevelopment.
70	Undertake design competition for the Coburg Library and Piazza concept design		Community	<p>The design competition for the Coburg Library and Piazza has been completed, with a winning concept design selected through a two-stage process led by an independent jury of design experts.</p> <p>The competition attracted multidisciplinary design teams and resulted in a contemporary concept featuring a new four-storey library integrated with a public piazza, designed to support cultural, community, and learning activities while creating a central gathering space for Coburg.</p> <p>The endorsed concept design will inform the next stage of project development, including Council consideration and community engagement.</p>

### Theme 5: Engaging and responsible council

**Strategic Objective 5: A responsive and engaged Merri-bek that prioritises excellent service, embraces engaging communication methods, advocates community needs, and continues to uphold sustainable financial management and accountable governance that builds trust and collaboration with the community.**

Action No.	Action	Status	Directorate	Comments
71	Develop Customer Experience Strategy		Community	A Customer Experience Strategy is currently in development and is scheduled for delivery by August 2026.
72	Deliver advocacy activities that support council priorities		Business Transformation	<p>Council continued regular meetings with local State and Federal Members of Parliament and maintained collaborative advocacy with key partners, including the Northern Councils Alliance, Melbourne 9, Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment, Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action, and the Mayoral Taskforce for People Seeking Asylum. During the quarter, Council submitted motions to the Municipal Association of Victoria on bus network reform and heat-related emergency management, and to the Australian Local Government Association on heat-related emergency management and the Treaty on the Prohibition of nuclear weapons.</p> <p>Council also hosted an advocacy roundtable with the Victorian Minister for Planning, the Member of Parliament for Pascoe Vale, and key stakeholders to discuss Central Coburg. Advocacy priorities raised included social and affordable housing delivery, planning reforms, the future of Coburg Library, duplication of the Upfield Rail line, and improved accessible public transport along Sydney Road.</p> <p>In addition, Council made submissions to the Victorian Government advocating for stronger protections for live music venues, amendments to the Electric Line Clearance Regulations, and improved access to renewable and affordable energy options for apartment residents.</p>
73	Increase editions and page count for Community News		Community	This action was achieved in the previous quarter.
74	Continue the Merri-bek Community Connectors program		Community	<p>Council has continued to strengthen engagement with multicultural communities through the Community Connectors network, delivering high levels of participation and improving access to Council information and decision-making processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shared information on key Council projects, services and initiatives in plain English and multiple languages across a broad range of topics.</li> </ul>

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Action No.	Action	Status	Directorate	Comments
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Delivered targeted engagement across major projects, including Community Budget Ideas 2026-27, Coburg Library and Piazza, Places for People, and key policy development.</li> <li>- Community Budget Ideas generated strong engagement: 1,945 in-language page views and 160 total submissions, with 99 submitters speaking a language other than English at home.</li> <li>- Community Connectors directly contributed to 35 submissions and 8 ideas progressing to Stage 2 community voting.</li> <li>- Post Office Place engagement reached 586 in-language page views, indicating strong multicultural community interest.</li> <li>- Delivered multiple engagement formats, including in-language webpages, pop-up sessions, workshops and "speak with us in your language" initiatives.</li> <li>- Supported participation in key events and consultations, increasing representation of multicultural communities across Council engagement activities.</li> <li>- Continued capacity building through information sessions with Council teams, strengthening Connectors' ability to share information and gather community feedback.</li> </ul>
75	Maintain the planning and building on-line booking service for improved customer convenience and freely accessible high-quality advice	●	Place and Environment	The online booking system continues to operate effectively for Urban Planning and Building Services, providing improved access to services for those unable to attend Council offices for general advice.
76	Integrate climate risk into Council processes and systems, focusing on risk management, finance, and asset management and capital works planning	●	Place and Environment	Council recently reviewed an operational risk relating to flood impacts on Council buildings, resulting in updated treatments and guidance for officers across business units. Council will now commence a project to assess the financial impacts of climate risk on Council assets and operations to inform future planning.
77	Update Merri-bek's open space and developer contribution models	●	Place and Environment	<p>Merri-bek's open space and developer contributions model update is progressing as planned.</p> <p>The new Development Contributions Plan (DCP 2.0) has been authorised by the Minister for Planning. The next step is for the amendment to be formally exhibited for public submissions.</p>

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Action No.	Action	Status	Directorate	Comments
				Separately, Council is awaiting the Amendment C235mbek Panel Report following the single-day panel hearing held earlier this year. Once received, Council will consider the amendment and panel report and determine whether to adopt the amendment, with or without changes.
78	Complete or commence construction of every project listed in Merri-bek's first Development Contributions Plan before 30 June 2026	●	City Infrastructure	All Development Contributions Plan-listed projects are on track, having been commenced or completed, to acquit Council's program responsibilities.
79	Finalise designs for the Breese Street precinct improvements	●	Place and Environment	Council is progressing improvements to the Breese Street precinct. Following engagement with the local community, a final concept design was endorsed by Council in March 2026. The project is now progressing to the next stage of design.

## 7.12 FRIENDS OF AILEU ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Director Community, Eamonn Fennessy

Community Wellbeing

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### Officer Recommendation

That Council notes the Friends of Aileu Annual Report 2025.

<b>REPORT</b>
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### Executive Summary

This report presents the Friends of Aileu Annual Report 2025 (Attachment 1), documenting the activities undertaken for, and supported by, the East Timor Partnership Project (Merri-bek and Hume) for the calendar year 2025, for Council to note.

### Previous Council Decisions

**Friends of Aileu: Annual Report 2024, Strategy Plan 2025-2030 and Friendship Agreement (Merri-bek - Hume - Aileu) 2025-2030 – 9 April 2025**

*That Council:*

1. *Notes the Friends of Aileu Annual Report 2024 (Attachment 1).*
2. *Endorses the Friends of Aileu Strategy Plan 2025-2030 (Attachment 2), as the guide for Annual Action Plans to be prepared and implemented by the East Timor Project Team and the Friends of Aileu Community Committee.*
3. *Endorses the renewed Friendship Agreement (Merri-bek – Hume – Aileu) 2025-2030 (Attachment 3), as the basis for continuing the friendship relationship with the Municipality of Aileu.*
4. *Authorises the Mayor Cr Davidson and Cr Adam Pulford, Co-Chair of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee, to sign Friendship Agreement (Merri-bek – Hume – Aileu) 2025-2030 (Attachment 3), and a Tetun language copy of that Agreement, with the date of signing to be arranged with the Project Officer.*
5. *Notes the plans to celebrate 25 years of friendship with Aileu, including involvement of Port Phillip Friends of Suai and Yarra-Darebin Friends of Baucau, on 6 May 2025 in Coburg Town Hall.*
6. *Authorises the Mayor Cr Davidson and Co-Chair of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee Cr Adam Pulford to sign invitations for official guests to attend the 6 May event.*
7. *Resolves not to send a Councillor to Timor-Leste in 2025, that the cost of this travel (approximately \$5,250) be provided to a suitable community initiative in the Municipality of Aileu and that Hume City Council are informed of this resolution and requested to consider taking the same action.*

### 1. Policy Context

The primary purpose of Local Government under the *Local Government Act 2020*, and the prior *Local Government Act 1989*, is to ensure 'peace, order and good government'.

It was in this context, that the friendship relationship between the then Moreland City Council, Hume City Council and the then District of Aileu, was established in 2000, following the widespread violence and destruction experienced throughout and at the end of the 24 years of occupation of East Timor by the Indonesian military.

The work of the East Timor Partnership Project (the Friends of Aileu) serves to implement:

- The *Friendship Agreement (Merri-bek - Hume - Aileu) 2025-2030*, which aims to support the development of a more sustainable future and local democracy for Aileu; and
- The complementary *Municipal Cooperation Agreements* between the two Councils which were signed in 2016 and provide for each Council to support the Municipality of Aileu during the decentralisation process and the transition to responsible local government.

Guiding the activities of the Friends of Aileu are:

- The Friends of Aileu Strategy Plan 2025-2030, which is consistent with Merri-bek City Council's:
  - Council Plan 2026-2029, including strategic objectives:
    - 2) Healthy and inclusive communities
    - 4) Thriving economy and culture
    - 5) Engaging and responsible Council
  - Commitment to developing policy and programs founded on health and well-being, social justice, human rights and social inclusion
- The deliberations and input of:
  - The Friends of Aileu Community Committee, comprised of Merri-bek and Hume councillor representatives, community members and partner organisation representatives
  - The Aileu Friendship Commission, comprised of Aileu municipal, village council and community organisation representatives.

Management arrangements for the East Timor Partnership Project provide for the submission of an annual report to both Councils on the activities of the Friends of Aileu.

## 2. Background

The friendship relationship with Aileu was established on 4 May 2000, by the signing of an MOU by Xanana Gusmão, then President of the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT), representing East Timor and Aileu and the then mayors of the then Moreland City Council and Hume City Council.

On 4 May 2000, Xanana Gusmão also:

- Signed the guiding *Statement of Principles for Victorian Local Governments Working in East Timor*, together with the Victorian Minister for Local Government, the President of the VLGA and the President of the MAV
- Delivered the 13<sup>th</sup> Blackburn Oration at Coburg Town Hall on *The Importance of Community Alliances in the Re-Building of East Timor*.

The friendship relationships between the Yarra and Darebin City Councils and Baucau, and between the Port Phillip City Council and Suai, were also established by MOU around 4 May 2000.

Following these first 3 formal local government-sponsored community friendship relationships (with Aileu, Baucau and Suai), numerous other Victorian local governments and communities established friendship relationships with other Districts, Sub-districts and villages in Timor-Leste.

The friendship relationship with Aileu has been renewed by the two Councils, at approximately 5-year intervals, most recently by the signing of the *Friendship Agreement (Merri-bek – Hume – Aileu) 2025-2030* with the Aileu Municipal President and the Timor-Leste Minister for State Administration.

2025 thus marked 25 years since the establishment of formal local government and community friendship relationships with Timor-Leste.

2025 also marked 50 years since:

- The arrival of the first refugees from East Timor in Darwin in August 1975, and their subsequent relocation to Melbourne and other cities.
- East Timor's Proclamation of Independence on 28 November 1975, following Portuguese Colonial Administration leaving Dili and in the face of imminent full-scale invasion by the Indonesian military.
- The establishment of the Australia East Timor Association (AETA) in December 1975, to express solidarity with the people of East Timor by bringing attention to their plight following the Indonesian invasion, and to their resistance to the military occupation.

### 3. Issues

The Friends of Aileu Community Committee, a joint working group of Merri-bek and Hume City Councils, met bi-monthly throughout 2025, continuing to provide guidance and support for project activities including fundraising, bringing community perspectives to the fore and helping the project team implement priority activities aligned with the *Friends of Aileu Strategy Plan 2025-2030*.

Some highlights of The Annual Report 2025 include:

- Merri-bek, Hume and the Friends of Aileu hosting a joint celebration: **Councils Connecting Communities: 25 years of friendship with Timor-Leste**, with the Yarra - Darebin Friends of Baucau and the Port Phillip Friends of Suai, at Coburg Town Hall in May.
- A successful **visit to Aileu by a Council / Friends of Aileu delegation** and its participation, alongside delegates from the Aileu Municipal Administration and Friends of Aileu's non-government project partners, in the **Friendship Conference: Building Stronger Friendships – Empowering Communities Through Partnerships**, which was organised by the Australia Timor-Leste Friendship Network and the Timor-Leste Ministry of State Administration, in Dili, Timor-Leste, in July.
- The ongoing work of the **Oral Health Promotion Project Working Group**, including field visits to Timor-Leste by working group members Dr John Rogers in July and Dr Sandra Frans in October, the development of partnerships with the Balibo House Trust and Maluku Timor NGO.
- A successful **community engagement visit** to Atauro Island, Dili and Aileu and for participation the 1<sup>st</sup> International PermaYouth Convergence in Ermera, Timor-Leste, in October in partnership with Friends of Baucau and the Future Collective NGO, which included the sponsored participation of three young Timorese Australians.
- The award from Jose Ramos Horta, President of Timor-Leste, of the **Medal of the Order of Timor-Leste**, to Friends of Aileu, along with 16 other friendship groups, in recognition of their years of service and friendship, in Melbourne in August.
- Successful fundraising activities, including the **Grassroots Gathering for Aileu** in March and the **Trivia Quiz for the Aileu Scholarship Program** in November.

- New initiatives including two **Library Talks on Timor-Leste** in June at Broadmeadows and in October at Glenroy and a **film screening and seminar** in August at Merlynston Progress Hall.
- Collaboration with others including:
  - The **Australia Timor-Leste Friendship Network**, with the Project Officer contributing as a working group member to the planning and organisation of the Friendship Conference in Dili in July
  - The **Timorese Association in Victoria**, with the Project Officer facilitating regular meetings with TAV and other friends of Timor-Leste to coordinate activities related to the 25 years of friendship and 50 years of Timorese community life in Victoria, including the TAV's celebration *Lao Rai (Walking the Land – Honouring the Past Shaping the Future* at Collingwood Town Hall in August
  - Discussions with the **Inner North Community Foundation**, Friends of Baucau and the Timorese Association in Victoria on the possible establishment of a joint Friends of Timor-Leste MyFund to provide a back up fund, capable of proving DGR status to eligible donations and over time attracting legacy donations for joint or separate activities of the Friends of Aileu, Friends of Baucau and the Timorese Association in Victoria

### **Community impact**

The friendship relationship continues to have positive impacts on residents' ability to participate in public life, and develop strong communities in Merri-bek, Hume and Aileu.

There are also positive community development outcomes in Aileu, including through Friends of Aileu's support during 2025 for:

- The operation of the Aileu Friendship Commission and the Aileu Municipal Youth Centre, which provided secretarial services for the Commission.
- Education and training through the Cr Andy Ingham Aileu Scholarship Program, which covered the tuition fees at Timor-Leste tertiary institutions for 22 young people from Aileu (14 male, 8 female), of whom 5 graduated with a Bachelor Degree, 4 with a Diploma and 2 with a Certificate level qualification.
- Teacher education, through the Hume City Council Education donation, which covered the tuition fees of 8 young people from Aileu (4 male, 4 female) at the Baucau Teachers' College, of whom 2 graduated with Bachelor of Education and have gained employment as teachers.
- The work of the Aileu Resource and Training Centre, including its:
  - Computer, language and children's education and training programs
  - Support for the Manu Casa Resource and Training Centre in Lequidoe, and its women's and children's education and training programs, agriculture, reforestation and land and water conservation project
  - Kadalak Dame Garden agro-ecological activities, including:
    - Its continued development as an experimental, educational and training and income generation project.
    - The successful application to Permaculture Australia's *Permafund* for a grant to support the training of 10 staff, volunteers and community members in permaculture, including their participation in the 1<sup>st</sup> International PermaYouth Convergence in Ermera, Timor-Leste.
    - The training and support provided to local farmers via the Catequists Group, and to alumni of the PermaYouth Convergence.

- Coordinating the 19<sup>th</sup> annual 3-day Aileu Expo of traditional culture and local craft, products and produce for the anniversary of the Proclamation of Independence.
- The ARTC Program Manager's participation in the Friends of Aileu / Friends of Baucau / Future Collective community engagement visit.
- The completion by the Program Manager Joaquin dos Resi and staff members Quintão Alves of their Certificate III course in Training and Assessment.
- The facilitation by the Aileu Anan Association of the participation of 40 young people (32 male and 8 female) from 14 different rural villages in Aileu in 5 days of permaculture training at the 1<sup>st</sup> International PermaYouth Convergence in Ermera, Timor-Leste.

### **Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications**

A significant emphasis in many areas of friendship and cooperation with Aileu is addressing the impacts of climate change and the sustainability of local agriculture on which the community of Aileu largely depends.

### **Economic sustainability implications**

A significant emphasis in many areas of friendship and cooperation with Aileu is addressing constraints on economic participation and sustainable livelihoods.

### **Legal and risk considerations**

The Friendship Agreement is a statement of intent and commitment, but it is stated in its terms, to have no legal effect, and that it may be amended or terminated as agreed between the parties.

Risks of the friendship relationship include the possibility that some members of the Merri-bek community or people in politics or the media may question whether:

- Involvement in the friendship relationship and support for community development in Aileu should be a Council priority
- The expenditure of publicly raised and donated funds transferred to Aileu to support community development activities lacks transparency and accountability.

These risks are suitably mitigated by:

- Implementation of a Communications Plan that provides proactive information, including that included in the Annual Reports and timely reports from Aileu partner organisations, using the Committee to Council Reports (included in the Governance Report to Council), Friends of Aileu's periodic newsletter and through the Merri-bek and Hume Council websites and social media, that illustrates the value of the friendship relationship to the Merri-bek and Hume communities and to the people of Aileu
- The operation and oversight provided by the Friends of Aileu Community Committee and the Aileu Friendship Commission, and the application of Hume and Merri-bek City Councils' financial procedures and delegations.

### **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 it is considered that the friendship relationship and the recommendations of this report impact positively on the human rights of the people of Merri-bek, Hume and Aileu.

The friendship relationship with Aileu provides ongoing opportunities for Merri-bek community members to actively involve themselves in public life and strengthen our local community, while:

- Learning more about the different and common challenges facing our local communities, Australia as a nation and our region, with particular reference to Timor-Leste and Aileu
- Supporting the people of Aileu as they strive to develop their local democracy and a more inclusive and sustainable future and thus contributing to a justice and stability in our region.

#### **4. Community consultation and engagement**

##### **Consultation on the matters dealt with in this report**

Consultation on the matters dealt with in this report include discussion at the following meetings:

- The Friends of Aileu Community Committee in February, April, June, August, October and December 2025
- The Community Committee's Project Reference Group in February, June and November
- The Community Committee's Oral Health Promotion Working Group which met once or twice each month
- Those convened throughout the year coordinate aspects of:
  - The Timorese community's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations
  - The Friendship Conference
  - The Friends of Aileu, Friends of Baucau and Friends of Suai 25 years of friendship event.

Reports on events and activities were included in the Friends of Aileu eNewsletters published in March, June, September and December, with eNewsletter invitations published in advance of individual events.

##### **Affected persons rights and interests**

No person's rights are adversely affected by the friendship relationship or the recommendations of this report.

##### **Communications**

A communications plan will be developed in collaboration with the Communications Teams of Merri-bek and Hume City Councils, covering the public release of the Annual Report 2025.

#### **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 financial or resource implications related to this report.

#### **7. Implementation**

A similar report is being prepared for Hume City Council.

Following Council's noting of the Friends of Aileu Annual Report 2025, copies will be provided to members of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee, partner organisations both locally and in Aileu and Timor-Leste, other interested organisations such as the Australia Timor-Leste Friendship Network and East Timorese community organisations.

The Annual Report will be made available to members of the public on the Merri-bek and Hume City Council websites and through being lodged on-line with NED National Deposits.

### **Attachment/s**

1 [↓](#) Friends of Aileu Annual Report 2025 D26/174553



Linking Merri-bek and Hume communities with Aileu, Timor-Leste.



## Friends of Aileu Annual Report 2025

Activities and Outcomes in 2025 and an Outlook for 2026

Prepared by the East Timor Project Team and the Friends of Aileu Community Committee



***Bemvindu ba Relatoriu Anual tinan 2025 Belun Aileu nian***  
***/***  
***Welcome to Friends of Aileu Annual Report for 2025***

***Acknowledgements:***

*Friends of Aileu Community Committee, Merri-bek City Council and Hume City Council acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, including the Gunung-Willam-Balluk clan in Hume, as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands and waterways in the areas now known as Merri-bek and Hume.*

*We pay respect to their Elders, past and present, as well as to other First Nations people and communities and acknowledge their Care for Country and the significant contributions they make to the life of our communities.*

*The Friends of Aileu Community Committee also acknowledges the support of the Merri-bek and Hume City Councils and their communities for the friendship relationship, which has flourished since its establishment in May 2000, and the support and involvement of the Municipality and people of Aileu.*

*We acknowledge the Government of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste and its agents, including the Aileu Municipal Authority, and their efforts and achievements, together with the people of Aileu, to develop their local democracy and work towards a more prosperous and sustainable future.*

*We acknowledge with respect the traditional leaders and elders of Aileu and the civil society organisations and citizens that supported the armed, diplomatic and clandestine fronts during the resistance period including youth, who participated in the UN Referendum of August 1999 and the subsequent restoration of independence in May 2002.*

*We also acknowledge the many others who continue to contribute friendship between our communities and to the political, social and economic development of Aileu and Timor-Leste.*

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Timor-Leste: one of Australia’s nearest neighbours



**Aileu Municipality:** A largely mountainous, partly forested area of 790 km<sup>2</sup> with significant areas of agricultural use, is home to some 54,300 people (in around 9,400 households), most of whom live in 139 Aldeias (small hamlets) that are administered as 35 Sucos (villages), grouped into 4 Administrative Posts (Aileu Vila, Laulara, Lequidoe and Remexio)



**Signing Friendship Agreement (Merri-bek – Hume – Aileu) 2025-2030**

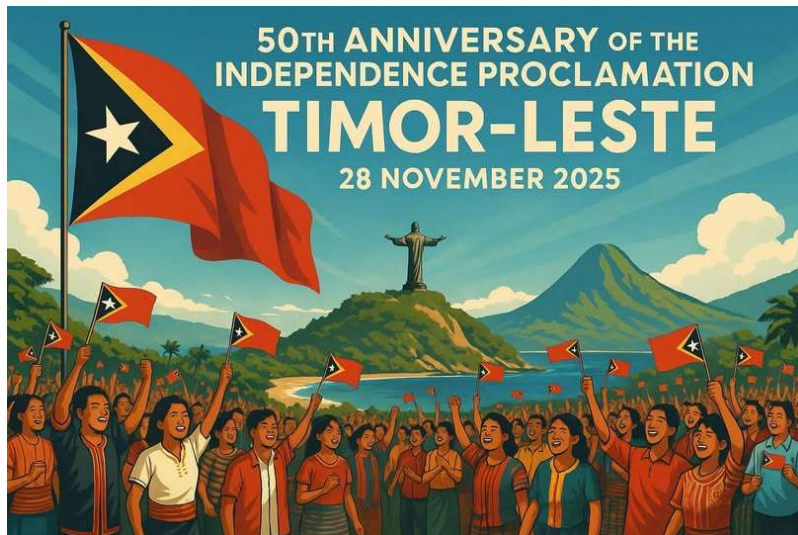
Upper left: Merri-bek Mayor Cr Helen Davidson with Friends of Aileu Chair Cr Adam Pulford

Lower left: Aileu Municipal President Mr João Bosco dos Santos with Hume Mayor Cr Jarod Bell

Right: Timor-Leste Minister for State Administration Mr Tomas Cabral, with Mr João, Cr Bell, Richard Brown, Friends of Aileu, and Quida Pereira, Uma Ita Nian Clinic



Aileu Scholarship Program beneficiaries with Cr Bell and Richard Brown, Aileu, July 2025



50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 1975 Proclamation of Independence

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 This report

The Friends of Aileu Annual Report 2025 highlights the main community development, fundraising and information sharing activities undertaken during the calendar year.

This report has been prepared by the East Timor Project Team with input from the Friends of Aileu Community Committee.

The report is to be presented to Merri-bek and Hume City Councils and made available to Friends of Aileu's partner organisations in Australia, Aileu and Timor-Leste, to our donors and supporters, and to the broader communities of Merri-bek, Hume and Aileu.

### 1.2 The project and its governance

The Friends of Aileu is the East Timor Partnership Project of Merri-bek and Hume City Councils and their communities, engaged in a friendship relationship with the Municipality and people of Aileu.

The aspirations and commitments of the friendship relationship are outlined in the Friendship Agreement (Merri-bek - Hume - Aileu) 2025-2030 and in separate and complementary Municipal Cooperation Agreements (Moreland - Aileu and Hume - Aileu) with the Timor-Leste Ministry of State Administration, that were established by each Council in 2016.

For an illustration of friendship relationship and links between various parties, see **Friends of Aileu Governance and Relationships, June 2025 (Attachment 1)**.

#### 1.2.1 Friends of Aileu Community Committee

The Friends of Aileu Community Committee (a joint Working Group of the Merri-bek and Hume City Councils) met bi-monthly during 2025 (in February, April, June, August, October and December), providing guidance and support for project activities, including bringing community perspectives to the fore and helping the Project Team to implement priority activities that are aligned with the Friends of Aileu Strategy Plan.



At its February 2025 meeting, the Friends of Aileu Community Committee heard from Chris Dureau on strength-based community development principles and practice and endorsed:

- Minor changes to its Terms of Reference

- The Friends of Aileu Annual Report 2024
- A new Friends of Aileu Strategy Plan 2025-2030
- The Friendship Agreement (Merri-bek - Hume - Aileu) 2025-2030, for renewal of the friendship relationship.

The Committee noted that minor refinements may be made to these drafts following the Committee's Project Reference Group meeting on 20 February 2025.

At its December meeting the Committee heard from Ben Rogers, CEO Inner North Community Foundation, about the Foundation, its management of Trust Funds, how a *Friends of Aileu MyFund* (or an *Friends of Timor-Leste MyFund* in conjunction with the Friends of Baucau and the Timorese Association in Victoria ) might be established and the benefits of such a move, including access to new sources of donations and the ability to provide DGR tax deductibility. The Committee agreed to further consider establishing a MyFund with the Inner North Community Foundation early in 2026.

### **1.2.2 Merri-bek and Hume City Councils: Friends of Aileu Annual Report and Strategy Plan**

In April 2025, Merri-bek and Hume City Councils noted the **Friends of Aileu Annual Report 2024** and endorsed the **Friends of Aileu Strategy Plan 2025-2030 (Attachment 2)**.

### **1.2.3 Merri-bek and Hume City Councils' East Timor Project Liaison Group**

The East Timor Project Liaison Group (Director Community Merri-bek, and Director City Services and Living Hume, the Councils' respective Managers and the Project Teams' Unit Manager Merri-bek and Coordinator Hume) met on 21 May:

- Endorsing an amended **Friends of Aileu Community Committee Terms of Reference (Attachment 3)**
- Noting the updated **Community Committee membership (Attachment 4)**.

### **1.2.4 Friendship Agreement 2025-2030**

Subsequently, the mayors of Merri-bek and Hume City Councils, the Aileu Municipal President and the Timor-Leste Minister for State Administration signed the **Friendship Agreement (Merri-bek - Hume - Aileu) 2025-2030 (Attachment 5)**, renewing the friendship relationship for a further 5 years.

The new Friendship Agreement was uploaded to the DFAT Foreign Arrangements portal.

### **1.2.5 Friends of Aileu Community Committee's Project Reference Group**

The Project Reference Group, a sub-committee of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee, whose members are Anne Jungwirth, Glenyys Romanes, Richard Brown, Carlo Carli and Joe Caputo, met four times during the year (in February and June and twice in November), continuing to provide the Project Team with valuable additional guidance between Committee meetings.

### **1.2.6 Merri-bek and Hume City Council East Timor Project Team**

The East Timor Project Team comprised the Project Officer (Christopher Adams) and the Project Administration Support Officer (Aoife Carli Hannan), each employed by Merri-bek City Council at 0.5 EFT.

During the year the Project Team provided a 200-hour Industry Placement for Eric Kioria, a Victoria University Community Development student, who:

- Assisted in planning and executing the Trivia Quiz fundraiser, including soliciting donations for prizes and auction items from local businesses for this large fundraising event
- Contributed to further developing Friends of Aileu volunteer engagement guidelines.

In late 2025, Aoife Carli Hannan, Project Administration Support Officer, advised that she would be resigning in January 2026 to travel overseas for an extended period. The Position Description was reviewed prior to the role being advertised. 106 applications were received and, after shortlisting, 6 candidates were selected for interview. Interviews were completed in December 2025 and a preferred candidate selected. It is expected that an appointment will be finalised in time for the new person to start in February 2026.

Aoife commenced volunteering with the Friends of Aileu in 2017, including coordinating the annual Grassroots Gathering for Aileu from that year and taking part in several visits to Timor-Leste.

Aoife was engaged by Merri-bek City Council to backfill for the Project Officer during a period of leave in 2022, including organising the Trivia Quiz fundraiser that year. Following the return to work of the Project Officer in late 2022 (at 0.5 EFT rather than the previous 0.8 EFT), the role of Project Administration Support Officer (0.5 EFT) was created and advertised. Aoife was appointed following a competitive interview process in early 2023.

Aoife made a significant impact over 3 years in the Project Support role, bringing new skills and experiences to the Project Team, including strengthening connections to younger members of the community, and enthusiastically tackling the varied aspects of the Project Team's responsibilities.

### 1.2.7 Communications

Work continued on changes to the layout and content of the [Friends of Aileu page on the Merri-bek City Council website](#) to better emphasise key messages, calls to action and information on current news and events.

[Friends of Aileu Facebook page](#) was used to provide information on upcoming activities and events and news from Aileu.

The Community Committee identified the need for more sophisticated and varied use of Social Media as an important improvement to achieve better communication, considering both the broad community and more targeted audiences, taking into consideration their media and style preferences. The Committee supported a proposal by the Project Team to investigate creating an Instagram account.

The Friends of Aileu digital newsletter was published 4 times during 2025, in March, June, September and December, providing more detailed news of events and activities in Merri-bek and Hume, and in Aileu.

These newsletters can be accessed on the Merri-bek website at [Friends of Aileu](#) under Friends of Aileu News, and have been shared on the [Friends of Aileu Facebook page](#).

Subscriber numbers have grown from an initial 70 to the current 347.

Campaign Monitor, the platform for the newsletter, was also used throughout the year to help circulate event information and invitations.

Response to the eNewsletter has been good, with numerous compliments from readers, and engagement statistics (opening of the newsletter or notice/invitation):

- The four eNewsletters, ranging from 39.1% to 46.4% (average 43%)
- The 13 event information notices, ranging from 50.6% to 66% (average 57.6%).

### 1.2.8 Fundraising and donations

Friends of Aileu purchases *Wild Timor Coffee*, sourced from small holdings near Belumhato, Aileu Vila, and processed in Timor-Leste and Melbourne, for fundraising at a discounted wholesale price.

The Wild Timor Coffee Company operates as a Social Enterprise (defined as a business that trades to intentionally tackle social problems, improve communities, provide people access to employment and training, or help the environment) and feeds back a proportion of profits to its help its supplier community improve their coffee quality and livelihoods, and for other community development projects in Aileu and elsewhere in Timor-Leste.

Friends of Aileu also purchases traditional woven tais cloth handcraft, sourced by the Rotary Club of Kew Fair Trade and Gift Shop from the not-for-profit women's social enterprise *Kor Timor (Colours of Timor)*, based in Taibesi, Dili, Timor-Leste, for fundraising at a discounted wholesale price.

Sales of these products provide a small regular income to the Friends of Aileu, with 100% of the profit used to support community development activities in Aileu.

The generosity of Friends of Aileu Community Committee and Working Group members and supporters was in evidence during 2025, with individual donations totalling a record \$11,186, due in large part to specific campaigns for funding for the Oral Health Promotion Project (see Section 2.3 below).

### 1.2.9 Financial management and reporting

Merri-bek City Council manages the East Timor Project Cost Centre (the budget for employee salaries and materials and services), with Hume City Council reimbursing Merri-bek for 50% of actual expenses on a quarterly basis.

Expenditure from the Cost Centre budget and the Balance Sheet Accounts is managed according to Merri-bek City Council line management and financial delegations, policies and procedures, where appropriate as agreed with Hume City Council line management and/or with endorsement from the Friends of Aileu Community Committee.

The total Cost Centre expenditure (salaries and materials and services) for calendar year 2024 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2024/25 and 1<sup>st</sup> half of 2025/26) was \$129,031, shared 50/50 by the two Councils.

Merri-bek City Council also manages two separate Balance Sheet Accounts:

- Friends of Aileu Donations & Fundraising
- Friends of Aileu Fundraising Sales).

These accounts receive donations and fundraising managed by the Project Team with the assistance of the Community Committee.

These publicly raised funds are used by Friends of Aileu with 100% going to support community development activities in Aileu (see details at Section 4 below).

The Project Officer lodged an on-line return of the 2024 fundraising activities and expenditure with Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV), as part of the compliance requirements of *Merri-bek City Council – Friends of Aileu*, which is a registered fundraiser with CAV.

## 2 Community Development, information sharing and fundraising activities and outcomes in Merri-bek and Hume:

### *Working together as a community to sustain and develop our friendship with Aileu*

#### 2.1 Collaborating with the Timorese Association in Victoria: 50 years of East Timorese community life in Victoria

Collaboration with the Timorese community got off to a strong start with the Project Officer convening a series of monthly on-line meetings with the Timorese Association in Victoria (TAV) commencing in February.

The meetings brought together representatives of other friendship groups and related organisations and individuals, to coordinate plans for events to celebrate both 50 years of the Timorese Community's presence in Victoria and 25 years of friendship between Victorian and Timor-Leste municipalities and communities.



Friends of Aileu members and the Project Officer participated in the Timorese Association's 50-year celebrations held at Collingwood Town Hall in August, which attracted over 500 guests. At this event the Timorese community's photographic exhibition *Lao Rai (Walking the Land)- Honouring the Past Shaping the Future*, was launched.



**2.2 Australia Timor-Leste Friendship Network and Friendship Conference, Dili, July 2025**

Commencing in February, the Project Officer also met regularly on-line with the National and Victorian coordinators of the Australia Timor-Leste Friendship Network, and representatives of the Timor-Leste Ministry of State Administration, to plan for the Friendship Conference *Building Stronger Friendships - Empowering Communities Through Partnerships*, held in Dili, Timor-Leste in July (see Section 3.1.1 below).

Friends of Aileu Community Committee members participated in an on-line post-conference members forum held in August.



**2.3 Oral Health Promotion Working Group**

Friends of Aileu Oral Health Promotion Working Group, established in late 2024 resumed its monthly meetings in February.

Working Group members, Glenyys Romanes, Natalie Savin, Dr John Rogers, Dr Jamie Roberston, Dr Jinal Prajapti and Dr Sandra Frans (Volunteer Project Coordinator, Oral Health Promotion Project), collectively brought a high level of public health and oral health and community development experience and expertise to planning the next steps following the successful *Kose Nehan (Tooth Brushing)* pilot project.

Dr John Rogers participated in the Friends of Aileu - Council delegation to Timor-Leste in July (see Section 3.1.1 below), while Dr Sandra Frans made a separate visit to Timor-Leste in October (see Section 3.1.2 below).

**2.4 Grassroots Gathering for Aileu 2025**

The Grassroots Gathering fundraiser for Aileu, again organised by Grassroots Gatherings Inc, was held for the first time at the newly upgraded Yubup Park, Brunswick, in March.



Despite heat wave conditions in the lead up days and during the morning, followed by drenching storms through the afternoon, the event was an enjoyable get-together, attracting some 200 people and raising \$3,400 for youth-led environmental activities in Aileu.

Performers included Chico and Xavi, Waiata Takatāpui, Yirmal, Dili All Stars, The Black Sistaz and Waka Viti with special guest Koteka Wenda, with a Welcome to Country by Uncle Colin Hunter.

## 2.5 Councils Connecting Communities: 25 years of friendship with Aileu, Baucau and Suai, Timor-Leste

Friends of Aileu and Merri-bek and Hume City Councils hosted *Councils Connecting Communities*, a celebration of 25 years of friendship with Aileu, Baucau and Suai, at Coburg Town Hall in May.

The event brought together:

- Local Members of the Victorian Parliament, Ryan Batchelor and Kathleen Matthews-Ward
- Members of the Victorian public service and DFAT
- Members and supporters of Friends of Aileu, Friends of Baucau and Friends of Suai Cova Lima
- Councillors, CEO's and staff of Port Phillip, Yarra and Darebin City Councils
- Members of the East Timorese community
- Other friends and supporters of Timor-Leste



The evening featured:

- José Pires, Vice-president of the Timorese Association in Victoria as MC
- A Welcome to Country delivered by Uncle Bill Nicholson
- A welcome address by Merri-bek Cr Liz Irvin and response by Hume Mayor Cr Jarrod Bell
- Recorded video messages from Xanana Gusmão, Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, and Abel Guterres (see these messages on Merri-bek website at [Friends of Aileu <Past Events <25 Years of friendship with Aileu, Baucau and Suai](#)
- The reading of a message from Rae Kingsbury (see [Attachment 6 a](#))
- Kirsty Sword Gusmão as keynote speaker (see a transcript of the address at [Attachment 6 b](#))
- Panel members Glenyys Romanes (Friends of Aileu), Glenda Lasslett (Friends of Baucau) and Megs Alston (Friends of Suai), responding to Kirsty Sword Gusmão's address.

The event attracted some 175 people, raising \$6,800 to support the work of the Aileu Friendship Commission, the Aileu Municipal Youth Centre and the Aileu Resource and Training Centre.

## 2.6 Collaborating with the Melbourne East Timorese Activity Centre

Friends of Aileu hosted the Melbourne East Timorese Activity Centre (METAC) June welcome dinner in Richmond, with guest speakers Dr Vanessa Hearman of Curtin University and Jose da Costa, one of the 18 refugees who arrived in Australia in 1995 aboard the *Tasi Diak*, the only successful maritime escape from occupied East Timor.



The Project Officer and members of the Community Committee also attended other METAC welcome dinners throughout the year, including in:

- August, when Timor-Leste students currently in Melbourne and several PALM scheme workers were welcomed and introduced themselves
- November, when two of the Friends of Aileu - Friends of Baucau Youth Leadership Award recipients (Tina De Melo and Xavi dos Santos) gave a presentation on their participation in the engagement visit to Timor-Leste facilitated by Future Collective for the 1<sup>st</sup> International PermaYouth Convergence (see Section 3.1.3 below).

## 2.7 Trivia Quiz 2025 for Aileu Scholarship Program

The annual Trivia Quiz fundraiser for the Aileu Scholarship Program was held at Coburg Town Hall in November, with Rusty Berther as MC.

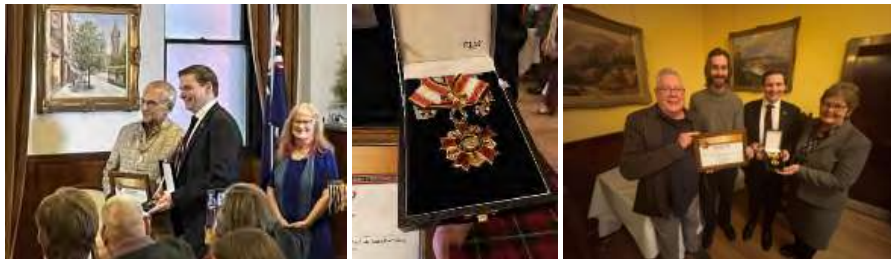
The event attracted over 125 people and raising \$10,700 (Tickets \$5,900 plus Live & Silent Auctions and Coin Toss \$4,800) supporting continuation of the Scholarship Program in 2026 – see Section 3.2.4 below.



## 2.8 Award of Medal of the Order of Timor-Leste

Dr José Ramos Horta, President of Timor-Leste, visited Melbourne in August, conferring Medals of the Order of Timor-Leste to 17 Australian friendship groups, including Friends of Aileu.

The award recognised the groups' promotion of friendship between Australian and Timor-Leste municipalities and communities and their support for Timor-Leste commencing from the time of the August 1999 Popular Consultation.



Hume Mayor Cr Jarrod Bell accepted the award on behalf of the Friends of Aileu. Also attending were Merri-bek Cr Adam Pulford, Community Committee members Anne Jungwirth, Glenyys Romanes and Richard Brown, and Project Officer Chris Adams.

**2.9 New initiatives for 2025: Library Talks and Movie Night**

A new Friends of Aileu initiative for 2025 was the hosting of two Library Talks on Timor-Leste:

- At Broadmeadows Library in July, with:
  - Pat Walsh speaking on *Reflecting on Truth Telling*, including comments on the continuing relevance of *Chega!*, the report of Timor-Leste’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CAVR)
  - Carla Chung speaking on the difficult situations some PALM scheme workers are experiencing
- At Glenroy Library and Community Hub in October, with:
  - Paulie Stewart, speaking on the Balibo 5 Killings (50<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 16 October) and his biographical book *All The Rage!*
  - A display of the Timorese Association’s 50-year exhibition of community photographs *Lao Rai (Walking the Land): Honouring the Past – Shaping the Future*.



These talks attracted over 30 people each, about half of them being new participants in Friends of Aileu activities.

Thanks to staff of the Broadmeadows Library and Glenroy library and Community Hub for their support for these events.

Another new initiative was a climate change themed Movie Night at Merlynston Progress Hall in August, which attracted an audience of 30 people, raised \$1,300, and included:

- Screening the film *Anote’s Ark*
- A discussion and Q & A with:
  - Taulogomai Aii, of *Pacific Climate Warriors*
  - Sticks XO, of *PermaQueer*.



## 2.10 Participation in Council Festivals

Friends of Aileu Community Committee members, Friends of Aileu supporters and the Project Team participated in three of Merri-bek's 2025 festival events, sharing information with festival goers and selling fundraising *Wild Timor Coffee* and *Kor Timor* craft.

The events attended in 2025 were:

- Sydney Road Street Party (March),
- Glenroy Festival (May)
- Coburg Night Markets (December).



## 2.11 Participation in activities of the Australia East Timor Association

Friends of Aileu Community Committee members and supporters, and Project Team members, participated in the 2 main annual activities of the Australia East Timor Association (AETA):

- The annual dinner at William Angliss Centre in May, celebrating the anniversary of Timor-Leste's Restoration of Independence on 20 May 2002, with:
  - Guest speakers Kirsty Sword Gusmão, Teresa Fraga, Febe Gomes and Ann Wigglesworth, giving brief reflections of the achievements of Timor-Leste women's solidarity, challenges and future directions
  - *Tiu Chico Lakadou* (Chico and Xavi dos Santos) giving a musical performance.



- The *Honouring The Struggle: Remembering 1975* seminar and historic poster exhibition, in November at the Victorian Trades Hall, commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup>

anniversaries of Timor-Leste's unilateral Declaration of Independence and The East Timor Solidarity movement and the formation of AETA, with guest speakers:

- John Waddingham, East Timor activist and archivist manager CHART - Clearing House for Archival Records on Timor
- Richard Tranter, Academic, author and activist.

### 2.12 Victoria University Dr Jean McLean Oration: 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Balibo 5 Murders

Friends of Aileu Community Committee members and supporters, and the Project Officer, attended the Victoria University Jean McLean Oration delivered by Dr José Ramos Horta. The event was held in collaboration with the Balibo House Trust on 20 October, just days after the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the journalists' deaths on 16 October 1975.



### 2.13 Flag raising for 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Timor-Leste Declaration of Independence

Cr Adam Pulford, Friends of Aileu Community Committee members and supporters and Council staff, gathered in front of Coburg Town Hall on 28 November, to raise the Timor-Leste flag on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Timor-Leste's unilateral Declaration of Independence from Portugal on 28 November 1975.



## 2.14 Vale John Martinkus and Rae Kingsbury

Two longstanding champions of truth, solidarity and friendship with the people of East Timor / Timor-Leste passed away in 2025, with Friends of Aileu Community Committee members and the Project Officer attending the funeral services of:

- John Martinkus, war correspondent, journalist educator and author (including of *A Dirty Little War*, at St Mary's Catholic Church, Williamstown, in September
- Rae Kingsbury, former Councillor and Mayor City of Darebin, Friends of Aileu Project Officer (2002-2004) and co-founder of the Australia Timor-Leste Friendship Network, at Studley Park Boat House in December.



### John Martinkus: Journalism Education and Research Association of Australia Tribute

*John Martinkus's career was defined by his commitment to truth and justice in some of the world's most dangerous conflict zones. Born in Melbourne, he studied international relations and began reporting from Indonesian-occupied East Timor in the mid-1990s, often working under extreme conditions and evading military surveillance.*

*His early articles, published in outlets such as Green Left Weekly, The Sydney Morning Herald, and The Age, helped expose the actions of the Indonesian military and the plight of the Timorese people. Martinkus was the only journalist to travel to Alas to investigate reports of a massacre in 1998 and later reported on the militia violence surrounding the 1999 independence referendum. His front-page article in The New York Times on September 9, 1999, coincided with U.S. pressure on Indonesia to allow peacekeepers into Timor-Leste. He chronicled these events in his acclaimed book *A Dirty Little War* (2001) and continued to report on Timor-Leste's political developments for decades.*

*Beyond Timor, Martinkus reported from West Papua, Aceh, Afghanistan, and Iraq, where he was kidnapped in 2004 and released after his captors verified his identity online. In 2011, he was commissioned as the Official Australian War Cinematographer in Afghanistan. He also taught journalism at the University of Tasmania and authored several books, including *Travels in American Iraq* and *The Road: Uprising in West Papua*.*

*In 2024, he was awarded the Order of Timor-Leste for his contributions to the country's liberation. Martinkus died unexpectedly in Melbourne on September 14, 2025, at the age of 56. He is remembered as a journalist whose work gave voice to the oppressed and helped shape international responses to injustice.*

*Martinkus was a lecturer in journalism and communications at University of Tasmania from 2009 to 2015, winning a Vice-Chancellor's Award for Outstanding Community Engagement in 2013.*

**Rae Kingsbury: Darebin mourns the loss of former Councillor and Mayor, Rae Kingsbury AM**

*Rae Kingsbury (formerly Perry) served the Darebin community as Councillor from 1998 to 2004 and as Mayor in 2004. This followed a distinguished career as a nurse, midwife, Oxfam campaigner and union organiser.*

*Her leadership at Darebin is marked by her passion for community engagement, good governance and democracy. During her time at Council, she founded the Darebin Women's Advisory Committee which has since paved the way for many women in leadership.*

*Rae's dedication to the Darebin community was truly extraordinary, and her impact on Darebin and beyond will be felt for generations. Her work championing women in leadership and fostering international friendships is a legacy we will proudly uphold.*

*Her commitment to community politics saw Rae serve on the boards of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA), the Municipal Association of Australia and the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA). In 2004, Rae was the first woman elected as national president of the ALGA.*

*In 2020, Rae was recognised in the Australia Day Honours List as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for her incredible work in Victorian Local Government and our community while a Councillor at City of Darebin.*

*Rae is well known for her work with overseas communities including Timor-Leste, where following the vote for independence she co-founded the community-based Australia Timor-Leste Friendship Network. In 2012, she was appointed Honorary Consul for Timor-Leste Victoria.*

### 3 Community Development activities in Aileu and Timor-Leste:

***Working together in friendship for a more just, prosperous and sustainable future for Aileu***

#### 3.1 Friends of Aileu activities and outcomes

##### 3.1.1 Friends of Aileu - Council Delegation to Timor-Leste

A Friends of Aileu - Council delegation (Hume Mayor Cr Jarrod Bell, Community Committee member Richard Brown, Oral Health Promotion Project Working Group member Dr John Rogers), all travelling at their own expense, and Project Officer Chris Adams, visited Timor-Leste in July:

- Meeting with Aileu partners and visit some government and non-government entities, project activities, health facilities and schools, with Cr Jarrod Bell signing the renewed Friendship Agreement 2025-2030 alongside Mr João Bosco dos Santos, President Aileu Municipal Authority
- Participating in the Friendship Conference held in Dili, obtaining the signature of Mr Tomás Cabrá, Timor-Leste Minister for State Administration, on the renewed Friendship Agreement 2025-2030
- Building relationships with relevant health authorities and organisations and gather information on oral health services, initiatives and needs in Aileu and elsewhere to help develop the project proposal for Friends of Aileu's Oral Health Promotion project.



A key member of the Ministry of State Administration organising committee for the Friendship Conference was Abilio de Araujo, Deputy Team Leader *Partisipa* Program, President of Aileu Anan Association (AILA) and former Aileu scholarship beneficiary.



While the conference was valuable exercise in bringing friendship group representatives together, even more importantly it provided the opportunity for Timor-Leste partner organisations, including in the case of the Friends of Aileu, the Aileu Friendship Commission, the Aileu Municipal Youth Centre, the Aileu Resource and Training Centre and the Uma Ita Nian Clinic, to showcase their work.

For more details see **Attachment 7: Report of Friends of Aileu - Council delegation to Timor-Leste, July 2025.**

### 3.1.2 Oral Health Promotion Project Coordinator visit to Timor-Leste

Dr Sandra Olivia Frans, Oral Health Promotion Working Group member and volunteer Project Coordinator, visited Timor-Leste in October to strengthen relationships and gather further information in Aileu and elsewhere in Timor-Leste.

Dr Frans met with a range of oral health professionals including at the Aileu Municipal Dental Clinic, the Ministry of Health, Maluk Timor and Balibo Houe Dental Clinic, building relationships and helping refine the focus of Friends of Aileu's Oral Health Promotion Project.



Another outcome of the visit was the signing of an MOU between Friends of Aileu and *Maluk Timor* NGO, with the Oral Health Promotion Working Group assisting with preparation of a *Maluk Timor* project proposal and funding application to the UK *Borrow Foundation*, for a 3-year project to build on current efforts in oral health promotion in Aileu, Manatuto and Bobonaro, with advice on the success or otherwise expected by the end of March 2026.

Funding for Dr Frans travel was covered by 2 generous private donations for this purpose. One of the donations was routed via *Balibo House Trust* for DGR tax-deductibility purposes, and this led to the signing of an MOU between Friends of Aileu and *Balibo House Trust*, covering the donation and future collaboration, including on the *Maluk Timor* proposal.

For more details see [Attachment 8: Report on Oral Health Promotion Project field visit to Timor-Leste, October 2025](#).

### 3.1.3 Friends of Aileu – Friends of Baucau – Future Collective engagement visit to Timor-Leste

Friends of Aileu, Friends of Baucau and Future Collective collaborated for an engagement visit to Timor-Leste in October for the 1<sup>st</sup> International PermaYouth Convergence, also spending a few days with NaTerra NGO and the Atekru community of Atauro Island, and visiting Friends of Aileu partners, including the Municipal Youth Centre and the Resource and Training Centre.



A unique aspect of the collaboration was the sponsored participation of 3 young East Timorese Australians Youth Leaders (2 funded by Friends of Baucau and 1 by Friends of Aileu). The 3 sponsored participants made a start to their commitment to share their experiences and learnings with Friends of Aileu and Friends of Baucau and with their peers in their local communities, through presentations at the November METAC welcome dinner, and at the December meetings of the Friends of Aileu and the Friends of Baucau.

For more details see **Attachment 9: Report on the Friends of Aileu - Friends of Baucau - Future Collective engagement visit to Timor-Leste, October 2025.**

### 3.2 Aileu and Timor-Leste partner organisation activities and outcomes

#### 3.2.1 Aileu Municipal Authority – delivering services, developing capacities and preparing for elected responsible local government

The Aileu Municipal Authority continues to deliver services to the community, develop its organisational and staff capacities and progress through the planned processes for administrative decentralisation and local power, with municipal elections potentially as early as 2027, including through regular meetings of:

- The Municipal Coordination Committee (Municipal and Departmental Officers and Village Chiefs) for planning and overseeing the delivery of the overall municipal budget, capital works, municipal services and organisational and staff development.
- The Municipal Consultative Committee, providing a forum for dialogue between the Municipal Administration and community organisations and representatives, relating to municipal governance and services.

The DFAT-funded *Partisipa* Program (Partnership to Strengthen Village Development and Municipal Administration) has deployed a National Advisor, Mr Alfonso Sarmiento Mendonça, within the Municipal Administration.

The Municipal Administration has applied to Australian Volunteers for a Decentralisation Specialist assignment starting in 2026.



The Municipal Administration and civil society groups, including the Aileu Resource and Training Centre, took part in local and national celebrations, including for:

- Timor-Leste's accession to full membership of ASEAN in October
- National Youth Day (Santa Cruz massacre commemoration), in November, for which the national celebrations were held in Aileu in 2025

- The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the unilateral Declaration of Independence in November, including a National Fair of municipal exhibitions at Tasi Tolu.

A major event for Aileu was the inauguration of the new St Peter and St Paul Church in June, which involved a visit by Cardinal Virgilio do Carmo da Silva SDB.



**3.2.2 Aileu Friendship Commission - overseeing friendship relationship activities**

The Aileu Friendship Commission, convened by the Municipal President or delegate, continues to meet regularly to oversee friendship relationship activities, including the work of Friends of Aileu partner organisations supported by funds or other resources from Friends of Aileu.

The Commission Secretary, Mr José Valente, Director Aileu Technical and Vocational High School and General Manager Aileu Municipal Youth Centre, is the principal liaison with Friends of Aileu and the Project Team, keeping the Municipal Administrator and the Commission abreast of activities supported by Friends of Aileu, relevant grants and the execution and reporting of projects and outcomes.



The Friendship Commission Secretary and Youth Centre staff and volunteers provide invaluable support to the Commission and Friends of Aileu by managing day to day aspects of the Aileu Scholarship Program (see 3.2.4 below).

Friends of Aileu has provided a small measure of untied funding (\$1,500 per annum) to assist with meeting costs and consumables for reporting on friendship activities including the Aileu Scholarship Program.

**3.2.3 Aileu Municipal Youth Centre - promoting youth as active healthy citizens**

The Aileu Municipal Youth Centre runs a broad range of programs for youth development, including boarding facilities and a productive community garden, alongside computer and language courses. The Youth Centre also assists the Aileu Friendship Commission with management of the Aileu Scholarship Program and receiving visits from Friends of Aileu and partners.



The Youth Centre manages successful partnerships with a range of funding organisations, including the Timor-Leste Ministry of Youth, Arts and Sport, JICA (Japanese Cooperation) and KOIKA (Korean Cooperation), Jape Kong Su Foundation, Dili Development Centre, Timor Plaza.

Institutional support funding is understood to no longer be available through the Timor-Leste Government. Over recent years Friends of Aileu has been able to provide a small amount of untied funding (\$1,500 per annum) to assist with office costs and consumables.

**3.2.4 Cr Andy Ingham Aileu University Scholarship Program - help address Aileu's human resource needs**

In 2025, the Cr Andy Ingham Aileu Scholarship Program paid the tuition fees of 22 young people (14 male, 8 female) at tertiary institutes in Dili, at a total cost of \$11,800 (\$11,100 from the 2024 Trivia Quiz fundraiser, plus \$700 from the \$5,200 Hume City Council education donation).



By the end of the year the 22 beneficiary students for 2025 had progressed as below and as shown in the following Table:

- 2 continuing beneficiary students completed a 4-year Bachelor of Engineering (Eduardo and Agostinho)
- 3 new beneficiary students completed 4-year Bachelors of ICT (Tome), Engineering (Billygrem) and Mathematics (Jonio)
- 6 other continuing beneficiary students continued studies in Engineering (Hermenegildo and Arcanзу) and ICT (Flaviana, Dionisio, Feliciana and Saturninho)
- 4 other new beneficiary students continued studies in ICT (Filomena), Accounting (Dometilia), Science & Engineering (Joia) and Engineering (Adão)
- 5 other new beneficiary students commenced studies in ICT (Pedro Filo, Elionora, Abril and Armindo), and Finance Management (Teofilia)
- 2 other new beneficiary students completed a Certificate IV Training & Assessment (Pedro Pinheiro) and a Certificate I Culinary (Anamira).

<b>Cr Andy Ingham Aileu University Scholarship Program</b>		
<b>Scholarship recipients for the 2025 academic year</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Course (semesters studied)</b>	<b>Institution</b>
Eduardo S. Caldeira	Graduated Bachelor Engineering (VIII)	National University of Timor-Leste (UNTL)
Agostinho de Jesus Alves	Graduated Bachelor Engineering (VIII)	Dili Institute of Technology (DIT)
Billygrem Antonio Piara de Oliveira	Graduated Bachelor Engineering (VII & VIII)	UNPAZ
Jonio Gonsalves	Graduated Bachelor Mathematics (VII & VIII)	Sao Joao Brito
Tome Fernandes	Graduated Bachelor ICT (VII & VIII)	Cristal Institute (ISC)
Feliciana Tersa Martins	Graduated Diploma ICT (V & VI)	Cristal Institute (ISC) Student with a disability
Saturnino Mendonça	Graduated Diploma ICT (VI & VII)	Cristal Institute (ISC)
Adão da Costa Araujo dos Reis	Graduated Diploma Engineering (V & VI)	National University of Timor-Leste (UNTL)
Hermenegildo Barbara Ximenes	Graduated Diploma Engineering (V & VI)	Cristal Institute (ISC)
Arcanзу Maria	Engineering (III & IV)	Cristal Institute (ISC)
Joia Maesalda M. T. O.	Science & Engineering (III & IV)	Dili Institute of Technology (DIT)
Dionísio de Jesus	ICT (III & IV)	Cristal Institute (ISC)
Flaviana Elisa	ICT (III & IV)	Cristal Institute (ISC)
Filomena do Rego Martins	ICT (III & IV)	Cristal Institute (ISC)
Dometilia Maria Jose	Accounting (III & IV)	Catholic University, Dili

Cr Andy Ingham Aileu University Scholarship Program Scholarship recipients for the 2025 academic year		
Name	Course (semesters studied)	Institution
Pedro Felo Araujo	ICT (I & II)	Cristal Institute (ISC)
Elionora Soares da Silva	ICT (I & II)	Cristal Institute (ISC)
Abril José Tilman	ICT (I & II)	Cristal Institute (ISC)
Armindo Bere de Araujo	ICT (I & II)	Cristal Institute (ISC)
Teofilia Maria de Jesus Fatima	Finance & Management (I & II)	Dili Institute of Technology (DIT)
Pedro Pinheiro de Jesus	Graduated Certificate VI Training & Assessment (I & II)	STVJ Comoro
Anamira da Conceicao	Graduated (Certificate I) Culinary (I)	STVJ Comoro



Five of the 2025 graduates: Eduardo, Billygrem Jonio & Santos, and Pedro (with José Valente)

Over the 5 years from 2021, when the Aileu Scholarship Program was reintroduced after a temporary suspension while the previous program was reviewed, Friends of Aileu has provided \$53,000 which has assisted 44 young people (25 male, 19 female) to undertake post-secondary studies, with:

- 1 having graduated with a Master degree (2 years study post-Bachelor)
- 17 having graduated with a Bachelor degree (4 years study)
- Several others completing a Diploma level qualification (3 years study)
- 3 others completing Certificate level qualifications.

**3.2.5 Hume City Council Teacher Education Scholarships - improving the quality of school education**

In 2025, Friends of Aileu covered the tuition fees of 8 young people (4 male, 4 female) at the Baucau Teachers College, at a total cost of \$4,500 from the annual Hume City Council education donation of \$5,200.

By the end of the year the 8 beneficiary students for 2025 had progressed as below and as shown in the following Table:

- 3 continuing beneficiary students (Angela, Aniceto and Agapito) completed the 4-year Bachelor of Education
- 2 continuing beneficiary students (Louisa and Zelita) continued studies for the initial 3-year Bachelor of Teaching
- 1 new beneficiary students (Federisio) continued studies for the initial 3-year Bachelor of Teaching
- 2 new beneficiary students (Frederico and Betjeba) commenced studies for the initial 3-year Bachelor of Teaching.

<b>Hume City Council Teacher Education Scholarships                      at Baucau Teachers' College (ICFP)                      Scholarship recipients for the 2025 academic year</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Qualification (semesters studied)</b>	<b>Progress, with initial employment or placement school, and results where available (GPA = Grade Point Average)</b>
Angela Mendonça	Bachelor of Education (VII & VIII)	Graduating 14 March 2026 Yet to complete thesis
Aniçeto Fátima Martins	Bachelor of Education (VII & VIII)	Graduating 14 March 2026 Teaching at Santa Ursula school in Via Nova, Baucau Wants to commence Master of Education at Crystal Institute
Agapito Bere Xavier	Bachelor of Education (VII & VIII)	Graduating 14 March 2026 Teaching at Santa Ursula school in Via Nova, Baucau
Luisa Isobél de Jesus	Bachelor of Teaching (V & VI)	On leave
Zelita Doutál Sarmento	Bachelor of Teaching (II & IV)	GPA 3.50 (Very good) Will continue to Year 3 in 2026
Federisio P. Xavier	Bachelor of Teaching (III & IV)	GPA 3.63 (Excellent) Will continue to Year 3 in 2026
Frederico Mouzinho	Bachelor of Teaching (I & II)	GPA 3.17 (Good) Will continue to Year 2 in 2026
Betjeba Mesquita	Bachelor of Teaching (I & II)	GPA 3.10 (Good) Will continue to Year 2 in 2026



2025 graduates Agapito and Aniceto, with their parents

Over the 9 years from 2017 when Friends of Aileu commenced providing fee support for Aileu students at Baucau Teachers College, \$38,100 has been paid via Marist Solidarity Australia and has assisted 18 young people (9 male, 9 female) to undertake teacher education studies.

Since 2018, 12 beneficiary students have completed their studies, with:

- 11 having graduated with a Bachelor of Education (4 years of study)
- 1 having graduated with a Bachelor of Teaching (3 years of study), prior to the introduction of the 4<sup>th</sup> year of studies for Bachelor of Education.

Most of the graduates obtained teaching positions soon after graduating, with 2 of the 2025 graduates (Aniceto and Agapito) employed at the Santa Ursula school in Via Nova, Baucau, and the other (Angela) yet to complete her thesis.

**3.2.6 Aileu Resource and Training Centre - local decision making and strengths-based community development in action**

The Aileu Resource and Training Centre (ARTC) has had another successful year, despite the difficulties associated with their office, computer laboratory and library being relocated on a temporary basis to a sub-standard disused government building. This move followed the Municipal Administration requiring ARTC to vacate their main office in the historic Aileu *Biblioteka* so it could be used for a new one-stop-shop municipal service centre.

ARTC has maintained continuity in delivery of their programs, including their basic Administration and computer training course, English language course and children’s education.



Also continuing was ARTC’s support for the satellite Manu Casa Resource and Training Centre in Lequidoe and a range of education and training, and agriculture and environmental community programs there, which were however, made more difficult due to lack of access to a reliable motor vehicle and the ageing condition of the ARTC motorcycle.

One of the Manu Casa community coffee producers won a major prize at the annual Festival Café Timor run by ACTL (the Timor-Leste Coffee Association) together with Kinta Portugal, Aileu, while ARTC’s Kadalak Dame won 2<sup>nd</sup> prize at a fair in Aileu celebrating Timor-Leste’s of National Youth Day (Santa Cruz Massacre Day).



ARTC continued to develop the Kadalak Dame Garden Project in Aileu, including the reconstruction of the covered meeting space there, working towards a more sustainable income from supplying produce to local and Dili markets.



Friends of Aileu's collaboration with and support for the ARTC during 2025 included:

- Financial support totalling \$7,100 (a \$3,000 contribution towards operating expenses and a \$4,100 contribution for materials and coordination for ARTC's management of the annual Aileu Expo)
- Guidance and support for ARTC Program Manager Joaquin dos Reis in the successful proposal to Permaculture Australia for a \$3,100 *Permafund* grant (celebrated as the 100<sup>th</sup> *Permafund* grant) to provide additional permaculture-oriented training for 4 staff, 3 rural farmers and 3 young volunteers at Kadalak Dame, associated with their participation in the Timor-Leste's 1<sup>st</sup> International PermaYouth Convergence, in Fatuqueru, Ermera, over 5 days in October 2025
- Funding of \$1,395 for Joaquin dos Reis to participate as a co-facilitator in the 11-day Friends of Aileu - Friends of Baucau - Future Collective engagement visit to Timor-Leste (see 3.1.3 above), which included participation in the PermaYouth Convergence and several days with the *Na Terra* NGO and the Atekru community on Atauro Island
- Funding of \$1,000 for the participation of the 10 ARTC staff members, rural farmers and youth volunteers (6 male, 4 female) in the 5-day PermaYouth Convergence alongside the 40 other young people facilitated by the Aileu Anan Association (see Section 3.2.7 below).

Following the PermaYouth Convergence, ARTC provided follow up training and hands-on experience for young people at Kadalak Dame, including building water conservation ponds and implementing various permaculture practices.



ARTC successfully organised the 19<sup>th</sup> annual Aileu Expo in November, celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1975 Proclamation of Independence.



Throughout the year ARTC hosted many visits at Kadalak Dame garden, including by:

- The Municipal Agriculture Service and project *Hadalak*, about Cooperatives access to markets and the school feeding program
- A team from the Secretariat of State for Vocational Training and Employment (SEFOPE)
- World Vision Timor-Leste for an assessment of Kadalak Dame
- Students of the Gleno Technical School for Coffee Industry (ETCI)
- 150 members of youth group Juventude Hadomi Natureza (JHN) and representatives of the Ministry of Youth, Sport, Arts and Culture planting trees at Kadalak Dame
- Xanana Reading Room children's activities on 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Declaration of Independence
- Vice-minister for Institutional Strengthening, Vice-minister of Health, Aileu Municipal President, Commander PNTL Aileu and others planting trees on 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Declaration of Independence

- A Ministry of Health delegation
- Aileu Department of Agriculture, delivering new mini tractor.



In August Natalia was among a group of 8 participants who completed 4 days training as part of the Guidelines for Business Program (KPNI) by the Institute for Business Development Support (IADE), Aileu.



In September, Joaquinho dos Reis and Quintão Alves Mendonca graduated with a Certificate III Training & Assessment from STVJ Comoro, following training facilitated by the Secretariat of State for Vocational Training and Employment (SEFOPE).

**3.2.7 Aileu Anan Association and Aileu PermaYouth Centre - planting water, growing communities**

The Aileu Anan Association (AILA) managed the participation in the 1<sup>st</sup> International PermaYouth Convergence ([IPYC-2025 - Permatil Global](#)), October 2025, of a total of 40 participants from 14 rural villages, the 10 Kadalak Dame workers (6 male, 4 female), 26 other young people (23 male, 3 female), 4 AILA facilitators (3 male, 1 female).



To support this effort Friends of Aileu provided a total of \$4,000 to cover PermaYouth Convergence fee and travel and camping materials for the Aileu participants.

The funding comprised:

- The \$1,000 for the 10 Kadalak Dame workers (see 3.2.6 above)
- An additional \$3,000 for the other 30 participants (24 youth and 4 AILA volunteer facilitators).

AILA, together with the Aileu PermaYouth Centre, Remexio ([CPY Aileu Facebook](#)), continued to mentor and monitor the PermaYouth Convergence alumni, and other alumni from previous PermaYouth Camps, as they implement water resource conservation, reforestation and permaculture garden projects in their home villages.



## 4 Financial Summary 2025

The activities outlined in Section 2 , Section 3.1 and Section 3.2 above have been made possible by the strong partnership between Merri-bek and Hume City Councils, the contributions of members of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee, other supporters of Friends of Aileu, community members, donors, and local organisations and businesses, that have assisted with fundraising efforts.

See **Attachment 10** (Financial Summary for calendar year 2025) comprising:

- 10.1 Income and expenditure totals, Friends of Aileu Donation and Fundraising accounts, 1 January to 31 December 2025
- 10.2 Income by activity, calendar year 2025 - Donations & Fundraising including sales
- 10.3 Expenditure by project, calendar year 2025
- 10.4 Financial Outlook for 2026

## 5 Outlook for 2026

Guided by Friends of Aileu Strategy Plan 2025-2030, the Project Team and the Community Committee will continue to:

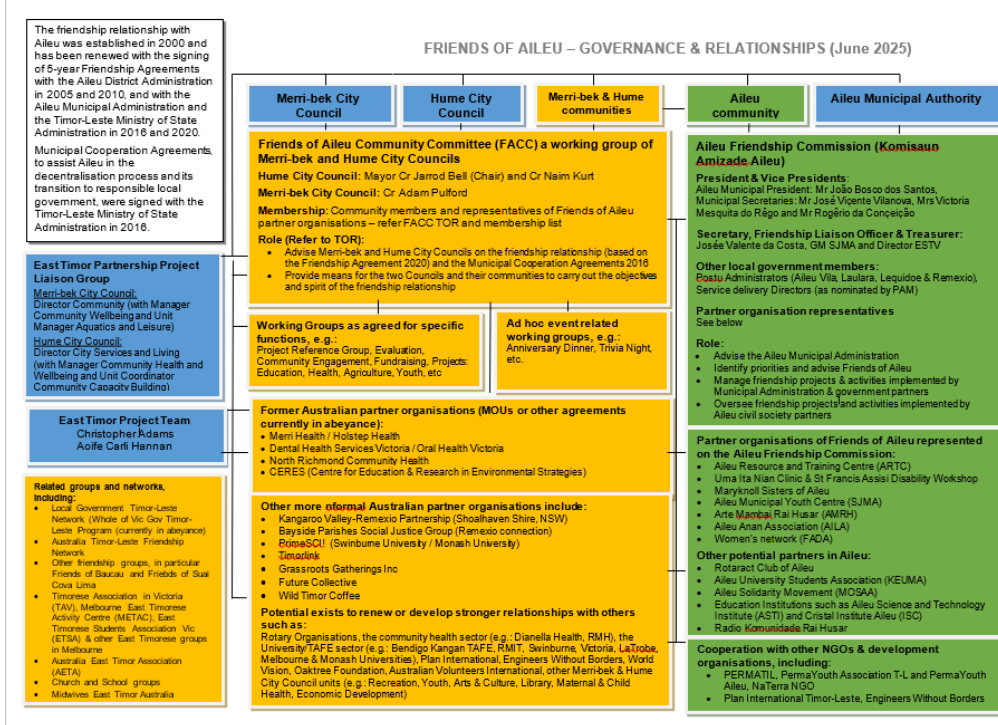
- Develop and diversify Friends of Aileu's relationships with local supporters, donors, businesses and community organisation, the East Timorese community and their organisations
- Collaborate with Friends of Aileu's partner organisations in Aileu and Timor-Leste, working in support of agreed priority projects in education and training, community health and sustainable agriculture and environment protection and their progress to a greater degree of more self-sustainability in their operations
- Support the Aileu Scholarship Program and its management by the Aileu Municipal Administration and Aileu Friendship Commission
- Support for the studies at the Baucau Teachers College of those Aileu students most in need.

Priority actions for 2026 and beyond include:

- Developing and implementing the next phase of the Oral Health Promotion Project, including sourcing support for the Aileu Municipal dental service and the building of relationships, and where appropriate, partnerships with others operating in the oral health field in Aileu and elsewhere in Timor-Leste
- Continued support for the work of the Aileu Resource and Training Centre, and the PermaYouth movement
- Reactivating relationships with educational and community organisations including in the health sector
- A decision on opening a *MyFund* with Inner North Foundation, potentially in partnership with Friends of Baucau and the Timorese Association in Victoria.

**Attachment 1**

**Friends of Aileu - Governance and Relationships, June 2025**



**Attachment 2** (page 1 of 5)**Friends of Aileu Strategy Plan 2025-2030**

Linking Merri-bek and Hume communities with Aileu, Timor-Leste.

### FRIENDS OF AILEU STRATEGY PLAN 2025-2030

#### 1 Purpose

The *Friends of Aileu Community Committee* and the *East Timor Project Team* will use this *Strategy Plan* to guide their actions towards realising the intent of the friendship relationship between the people and municipalities of Merri-bek, Hume and Aileu, as outlined in the *Friendship Agreement (Merri-bek - Hume - Aileu) 2025-2030*.

#### 2 Vision

Our vision is of:

- A prosperous, sustainable, and equitable future for the people of Aileu, supported by inclusive governance that respects local initiatives and traditional values and operates within a thriving national democracy.
- A more connected, informed, and empathetic outlook amongst the people of Merri-bek and Hume, inspiring action to strengthen community bonds and foster local democracy within our increasingly interconnected and interdependent world.

#### 3 What we will do

To help realise this *Vision*, we will foster collaboration between the municipalities and people of Merri-bek, Hume, and Aileu.

We commit to engaging in the spirit of friendship, based on principles of mutual respect, ongoing learning, sustainability and locally led decision-making, sharing our respective stories, cultures, insights, skills and resources.

#### 4 Goals

Our goals are:

##### Goal 1 Communities and friendship

Provide opportunities for the people of Merri-bek, Hume and Aileu to shape and participate in the friendship relationship.



**Attachment 2** (page 2 of 5)**Friends of Aileu Strategy Plan 2025-2030**

Linking Merri-bek and Hume communities with Aileu, Timor-Leste.

**Goal 2 - People and Organisations**

Support the people of Aileu in pursuing their own goals and those of their community organisations and local government, with an emphasis on participation by youth, women, and vulnerable people including those living with a disability.

**Goal 3 – Programs, Projects and Activities**

Support community development programs, projects and activities in Aileu, identified through discussion and interaction between interested people and organisations from our respective communities.

**Goal 4 – Partnerships, Collaboration and Networks**

Develop and maintain collaborations, partnerships and participation in networks, that support the friendship relationship.

**Goal 5 – Capabilities and Resources**

Maintain and develop the capabilities and resources of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee and encourage supporters and other community members to contribute to the friendship relationship.

**5 Objectives**

The Objectives we will focus on to achieve these Goals, and to work towards our Vision, are outlined below. Actions to be undertaken consistent with these Objectives will be detailed in the Annual Action Plan.

**Goal 1 – Communities and Friendship**

Provide opportunities for the people of Merri-bek, Hume and Aileu to shape and participate in the friendship relationship.

**Objectives:**

- 1.1 Increase the involvement of younger members of our communities
- 1.2 Develop and facilitate community development programs, projects and activities in partnership with the people of Aileu to support their aspirations, taking account of mutual interests of our respective communities and partner organisations



**Attachment 2** (page 3 of 5)**Friends of Aileu Strategy Plan 2025-2030**

Linking Merri-bek and  
Hume communities  
with Aileu, Timor-Leste.

- 1.3 Develop, promote and implement activities that attract the involvement and support of community members, Council staff and local community organisations and businesses
- 1.4 Collaborate with members of Melbourne's East Timorese community and students and workers from Timor-Leste and their organisations on activities of mutual interest
- 1.5 Learn from each other as we engage in programs, projects and activities
- 1.6 Share our cultures, stories, interests, concerns and perspectives, including through visits between Aileu and Merri-bek and Hume
- 1.7 Develop and share our understanding of the cultures, stories, interests, concerns and perspectives Australia's First Peoples, our immigrant communities and the people of our neighbouring countries.

**Goal 2 - People and Organisations**

Support the people of Aileu in pursuing their own goals and those of their community organisations and local government, with an emphasis on participation by youth, women and vulnerable people, including those living with a disability.

**Objectives:**

- 2.1 Provide organisational and professional development support for the Aileu Municipal Authority as it develops its service delivery functions and moves towards elected local government
- 2.2 Provide organisational and professional development support for the Aileu Friendship Commission to assist it to provide oversight of programs, projects and activities implemented in Aileu
- 2.3 Provide organisational and professional development support for selected Aileu non-government and community organisations to assist them to operate more effectively and sustainably.

**Goal 3 – Programs, Projects and Activities**

Support community development programs, projects and activities in Aileu, identified through discussion and interaction between interested people and organisations from our respective communities.



**Merri-bek**  
City Council



**HUME**  
CITY COUNCIL

**Attachment 2** (page 4 of 5)**Friends of Aileu Strategy Plan 2025-2030**

Linking Merri-bek and  
Hume communities  
with Aileu, Timor-Leste.

**Objectives:**

- 3.1 Consult with the Aileu Municipal Authority, the Aileu Friendship Commission, our partner organisations in Aileu and other Timor-Leste government and non-government organisations to identify appropriate community priorities that we have the capacity to influence or support
- 3.2 Work with our Aileu partner organisations, selected Aileu government and non-government organisations to help them conceive, design, deliver and evaluate community development programs, projects, and activities that build on their existing capacities and resources to address identified and agreed priorities
- 3.3 Continue our focus on the following areas with an emphasis on participation of youth, women and disadvantaged people including people with a disability:
  - a) Education and training, including through scholarships for university studies, technical and further education, teacher education and pre-school education
  - b) Community health, including improved nutrition and oral health education
  - c) Environmental protection and improvement and sustainable agriculture, including reforestation, soil and water conservation, water source protection and enhancement, permaculture and conservation agriculture.

**Goal 4 – Partnerships, Collaboration and Networks**

Develop and maintain collaborations, partnerships and participation in networks, that support the friendship relationship.

**Objectives:**

- 4.1 Work with the Merri-bek and Hume City Councils to maintain and implement the East Timor Partnership Project, including operating appropriate governance and reporting mechanisms for the Friends of Aileu Community Committee and the Project Team
- 4.2 Develop partnerships with Australian organisations that can contribute to the friendship relationship
- 4.3 Collaborate with other local governments, community groups, community and educational organisations and schools that have friendship relationships with Aileu, its Administrative Posts, Sucos and communities



**Merri-bek**  
City Council



**Attachment 2** (page 5 of 5)**Friends of Aileu Strategy Plan 2025-2030**

Linking Merri-bek and  
Hume communities  
with Aileu, Timor-Leste.

- 4.4 Play an active role in the Australia Timor-Leste Friendship Network, and collaborate with other friendship groups, solidarity groups, and community and educational, health and environmental organisations in areas of mutual interest
- 4.4 Promote the value and achievements of Timor-Leste friendship relationships with relevant areas of the State and Federal Governments such as DFAT, Local Government Victoria and Multicultural Affairs, and peak organisations such as ALGA, LGPro, VLGA and MAV, and support any initiatives that they may undertake that are consistent with this Strategy Plan and our Friendship Agreement.

**Goal 5 – Capabilities and Resources**

Maintain and develop the capabilities and resources of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee and encourage supporters and other community members to contribute to the friendship relationship.

**Objectives:**

- 5.1 Maintain ongoing recruitment of individuals and organisations that support or participate in the activities of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee
- 5.2 Enhance community and Merri-bek and Hume staff participation in the Friends of Aileu Community Committee meetings and its activities
- 5.3 Develop Friends of Aileu's communications capacity and effectiveness of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee and the Project Team, including through appropriate use of social media and other new and emerging communications tools
- 5.4 Develop and diversify our fundraising capacity and attractiveness to donors
- 5.5 Conduct events and activities that support the friendship relationship with Aileu and the achievement of goals and objectives of this Strategy
- 5.6 Participate in other community activities that promote the friendship relationship
- 5.7 Assist community members and staff of Merri-bek and Hume City Councils to develop their understanding of Timor-Leste and Aileu and their capacity and motivation to contribute to the friendship relationship
- 5.8 Provide information and reports on these Goals and Objectives, and on events, activities, learnings and achievements, targeted to recipients' needs and preferences.



**Merri-bek**  
City Council



**HUME**  
CITY COUNCIL

**Attachment 3** (page 1 of 7)**Terms of Reference – Friends of Aileu Community Committee, 2023 (revised 2025)****Background**

The friendship relationship with Aileu was established on 4 May 2000, with the signing of an MOU by the Mayors of Moreland City Council (now Merri-bek City Council) and Hume City Council and Xanana Gusmão (then President of the National Council of Timorese Resistance), on behalf of Aileu.

The rationale for the establishment of the relationship was the desire by the two Councils, and members of their communities to:

- express solidarity with the people of Aileu, and
- assist in the re-building of Aileu and the restoration of local democracy following the end of the Indonesian occupation of East Timor in 1999.

The friendship relationship has evolved over time in response to the interests, needs, capacities and aspirations of our respective local governments, and of the community organisations and community members involved. The relationship, however, remains rooted in a commitment to the principles and values on which it is based, including sustainability, mutual respect, mutual understanding and Timorese-led decision making.

The friendship relationship was reaffirmed by the signing of a Friendship Agreement between the two Councils and the Aileu District Administration in 2005. The friendship relationship has been renewed periodically, most recently in 2025 with the signing of an updated **Friendship Agreement 2025-2030** by the 2 Councils, Timor-Leste Government's Minister of State Administration, the Aileu Municipal President and the Secretary of the Aileu Friendship Commission (**Attachment 1**).

Following a request from the Timor-Leste Government's Ministry of State Administration to the Government of Victoria, in 2016 Moreland City Council (now Merri-bek City Council) and Hume City Council each signed a **Municipal Cooperation Agreement** with respect to Aileu (**Attachments 2 and 3**), which provides a framework for provision of support during the transition to responsible local government.

The friendship relationship is supported by MOU's or other agreements with various local community organisations and businesses and friendship partner organisations in Aileu and Timor-Leste.

The friendship relationship is underpinned by the existence of:

- **The Friends of Aileu Community Committee** (these Terms of Reference), and
- **The Aileu Friendship Commission**, which is convened by the Aileu Municipal President, and which includes representatives of the Aileu Municipal Administration, including the 4 Administration Posts, nominated Service Delivery Directorates and Aileu NGOs, community organisations and community members, and which supports and monitors activities in Timor-Leste implemented as part of the friendship relationship and provides advice to the Municipal President.

**Attachment 3** (page 2 of 7)**Terms of Reference – Friends of Aileu Community Committee**

<b>Type of Committee</b>	Joint Working Group of Merri-bek and Hume City Councils
<b>Purpose of the Committee</b>	The purpose of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee is to help Merri-bek City Council and Hume City Council mobilise community perspectives, knowledge, skills and resources to contribute to the friendship relationship with the Municipality and people of Aileu, Timor-Leste.
<b>Role of the Committee</b>	<p>The role of the Committee is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with and make recommendations to the two Councils, principally via the Project Officer East Timor (Friends of Aileu), to support the development and implementation of the <b>Friendship Agreement (Merri-bek – Hume – Aileu) 2025-2030</b>, the <b>Municipal Cooperation Agreements 2016</b>, and the <b>Friends of Aileu Strategy Plan 2025-2030 (Attachment 4)</b>.</li> <li>• Advise and assist with the conduct of awareness raising and fundraising activities and events in Australia</li> <li>• Advise and assist with the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs, projects and activities undertaken with or by partner organisations in Aileu and Timor-Leste.</li> </ul>
<b>Scope of the Committee's activities</b>	<p>The scope of the activities of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee includes but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing information and advice to inform Council decision making in relation to the friendship relationship</li> <li>• Providing information and advice to the Project Officer on the development, review and implementation of the Friends of Aileu Strategy Plan</li> <li>• Helping to identify, prioritise, design, implement, monitor, evaluate and report on activities that contribute to achieving the Goals and Objectives of the Friends of Aileu Strategy Plan</li> <li>• Helping to identify interests, skills, knowledge and resources that may be applied to support community development priorities agreed with the Aileu Municipal Administration and the Aileu Friendship Commission, in collaboration with government, non-government and community organisations in Aileu</li> <li>• Promoting friendship, mutual respect and understanding with the people of Aileu through the sharing of experiences, culture, stories, perspectives, knowledge, skills and resources</li> <li>• Contributing to communications, activities and events that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Raise awareness about the friendship relationship</li> <li>○ Build networks and partnerships to support the relationship</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Helping raise funds to support community development activities in Aileu.</li> </ul>
<b>Committee Structure</b>	The Committee will consist of Councillor representatives, Community members, Special Interest members, Partner Organisation representatives and Co-opted members.

	<p>Merri-bek City Council and Hume City Council will each appoint at least 1 Councillor representative to the Committee.</p> <p>Appointments of Community members (Merri-bek community, Hume community, Special interest and Co-opted members and Partner organisation representatives) will be made following responses to a call for Expressions of Interest or to invitations to nominate for vacant positions.</p> <p>Appointment of Community members will be made following agreement of the 2 Directors.</p>
<b>Accountability</b>	The Community Committee is accountable to the two Councils through the Convenor, the Council officer responsible for coordinating the committee, which is usually the Project Officer East Timor (Friends of Aileu).
<b>Term</b>	<p>The term of the Community Committee term will align with the nominal 5-year duration of the Friendship Agreement and Strategy Plan.</p> <p>The Directors may, by their agreement, extend or renew the term of the Committee or of some or all Community members, with each member's term being of up to 5 years duration from appointment.</p>
<b>Roles and Responsibility</b>	<p><b>Community members (see definitions below)</b></p> <p><u>Role</u>: To contribute respectfully to discussion and recommendations and to assist with agreed activities according to the interests, knowledge, skills and availability of Committee members.</p> <p><u>Responsibility</u>: Responsible for seeking and considering relevant information, including through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading reports and papers distributed for Committee meetings and any sub-committees or working groups</li> <li>• Listening to and considering the contributions of other Committee Members</li> <li>• Where relevant bringing community perspectives to such meetings.</li> </ul> <p><b>Partner Organisation representatives:</b></p> <p>As above for Community members, but additionally:</p> <p><u>Responsibility</u>: Also responsible for representing the views of their organisation, informing their organisation of relevant Committee decisions and facilitating the involvement of their organisation in relevant activities.</p>
<b>Councillor representatives, Chair and Deputy Chair (up to 4)</b>	<p>Merri-bek City Council and Hume City Council will each appoint a Councillor representative to the Committee.</p> <p>Councillor representatives are usually appointed at the start of each term of Council and may be confirmed or varied annually or otherwise as determined by each Council. Each Council may also appoint an additional Councillor as an alternate representative. The Councillor representatives shall allocate the roles of Committee Chair and Deputy Committee Chair amongst themselves by agreement.</p> <p>The roles of Chair and Deputy Chair may be rotated between a Merri-bek and a Hume Councillor on an annual basis or as otherwise agreed.</p> <p>If neither the Chair nor Deputy Chair are available for a given meeting another Councillor or a Community member will chair the meeting as agreed with the Project Officer/Convenor.</p>

<b>Community members (up to 12 in total, 6 each from Merri-bek and Hume)</b>	Persons who live, work, volunteer or study within the areas of the Merri-bek or Hume City Councils are eligible for appointment as Community members.
<b>Special interest members (up to 4)</b>	Persons who have personal or professional affiliation or connection to Aileu or Timor-Leste, or relevant specialist knowledge, skills or experience, are eligible for appointment as Special Interest members, whether or not they live, work, volunteer or study within the areas of the Merri-bek or Hume City Councils.
<b>Co-opted members (up to 4)</b>	The Committee may appoint up to four co-opted members with interests, knowledge, skills or networks that complement those of other committee members
<b>Partner Organisation members (up to 10)</b>	Community organisations or enterprises that actively support the friendship relationship may become a Partner Organisations based on an MOU or other form of agreement. Each Partner Organisation will be invited to nominate a representative and may also nominate an alternate representative.
<b>Role of Staff Members</b>	Council Officers who provide support for the Committee and for the implementation of the Friendship Agreement include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Project Officer East Timor (Friends of Aileu), the Convenor, and the Project Administration Support Officer who <del>is</del> are employed as agreed between the Merri-bek and Hume City Councils, and whose role is funded jointly by the two councils</li> <li>• The relevant Unit Manager Merri-bek City Council and Coordinator Hume City Council, to whom the Project Officer reports.</li> </ul>
<b>Committee Meetings</b>	Times and dates and locations of meetings shall be determined at the discretion of the Chairperson and or Convenor, after seeking input of all other members of the Community Committee. Generally, committee meetings will be held, as far as practicable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bi-monthly</li> <li>• From 6:00 pm (for 6:30pm start and generally of up to 2 hours duration) on the second Tuesday or Thursday of the nominated month as agreed by Committee members</li> <li>• Generally alternating at Merri-bek and Hume City Council premises or venues, with meetings also being held on-line or as hybrid meetings as necessary or as agreed.</li> </ul> The Chairperson or the Committee may establish a Project Reference Group of Community Members to provide advice and assistance to the Project Officer between Committee meetings, and other sub-committees or working groups for particular purposes. The Reference Group and any other such sub-committees or working groups shall: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As far as practicable be chaired by a Committee member with agreed support being provided by the Project Officer</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operate in the manner determined by the Committee, or in the absence of a Committee determination as the group sees fit.</li> </ul> <p>The Reference Group and all other sub-committees or working groups are accountable to the Committee and shall report to the Committee at the next Committee meeting or as otherwise agreed.</p>
<b>Notice and attendance of Meetings</b>	<p>As far as practicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting Agenda and Reports will be distributed at least one (1) week prior to each meeting</li> <li>Meeting Minutes will be distributed within two (2) weeks following each meeting.</li> </ul> <p>Members may request items to be included on the agenda by advising the Project Officer/Convenor at least two (two) weeks prior to the scheduled meeting.</p> <p>Members should endeavour to advise the Project Officer/Convenor of their attendance or non-attendance at least two (2) days prior to any scheduled meeting.</p> <p>Guests or other persons may also be invited to participate in Committee or other meetings in a non-voting capacity.</p>
<b>Decision making</b>	<p>Recommendations of the Committee will usually be taken on a consensus basis as determined by the Chairperson.</p> <p>Any Committee member may request the Chairperson to call for a vote, with the determination to endorse a Committee recommendation, to be made by a simple majority.</p>
<b>Quorum</b>	<p>A quorum for a meeting of the Committee is three (3) persons including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Chair or an Acting Chairperson</li> <li>The Project Officer/Convenor or their Unit Manager/coordinator</li> <li>A community member</li> </ul> <p>Members who attend on-line will also be counted for the purposes of quorum.</p>
<b>Code of Conduct</b>	<p>All Members of the Committee are expected to comply with the following expectations to ensure safe, respectful and effective conduct of meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare for each meeting and be active participants</li> <li>Contribute to discussions during meetings, providing advice and opinions on topics of discussion</li> <li>Always treat others with respect, dignity and courtesy.</li> </ul>
<b>Conflicts of interest</b>	<p>All members of the Committee must avoid any conflict of interest in relation to their participation in discussion, provision of advice or contribution to the making of recommendations.</p> <p>This includes the requirement to declare any real, potential or perceived conflict of interest, absent oneself from the part of any meeting considering any relevant matter and not attempt outside the meeting to influence the decision or the action to be taken following it.</p> <p>Further guidance on managing conflicts of interest will be made available as needed or requested.</p>

<p><b>Financial management</b></p>	<p>Funds raised by or donated to or in the name of the Friends of Aileu shall be held in the Merri-bek City Council bank account and managed according to Council’s policies, procedures and delegations.</p> <p>Such funds will be expended to support agreed programs, projects or activities, consistent with the Friends of Aileu Strategy Plan, considering recommendations by the Project Officer and approvals in accordance with Merri-bek City Council delegations, policies and procedures.</p> <p>The Project Officer’s recommendations shall take into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Input from the Friends of Aileu Community Committee</li> <li>• Alignment of the proposal with priorities for Aileu identified in consultation with the Aileu Municipal Administration and Aileu Friendship Commission, in collaboration with relevant government, non-government and community organisations in Aileu and Timor-Leste</li> <li>• An assessment of the project plan and budget submission prepared by the implementing organisation, e.g.: government, non-government or community organisation based in or working in Aileu, or providing services for the benefit of Aileu</li> <li>• Information available on the implementing organisation’s capacity to deliver value for money in a transparent and accountable way</li> <li>• Endorsement of the project plan and budget submission by the Aileu Municipal Administration or Aileu Friendship Commission</li> <li>• Any general or specific purpose for which funds were raised or donated, including as defined or requested by local partner organisations.</li> </ul> <p>The Project Officer will manage a budget of income and expenditure relating to fundraising and donations and will provide regular reports to the Committee.</p> <p>The Friends of Aileu Annual Report will also include a financial statement.</p> <p><b>Merri-bek City Council – Friends of Aileu</b> is registered as a fundraiser with <b>Consumer Affairs Victoria</b>, and the Annual Report’s financial statement will form the basis of the financial return required to be lodged annually with Consumer Affairs Victoria.</p> <p>Local partner organisations may manage and report on their own funding contributions, donations and other resources, which are used to support programs, projects or activities consistent with the Friends of Aileu Strategy Plan, in accordance with the relevant partnership agreement or project brief.</p> <p>The Project Officer may seek input from the Committee on priorities for the use of funds allocated in each Council’s East Timor Project Cost Centre budget, for instance in relation to communications, awareness raising and fundraising activities and events, strategy planning and travel between Australia and Timor-Leste.</p>
<p><b>Reporting requirements</b></p>	<p>Meeting minutes and reports, or summaries thereof, will be made available to all Councillors in a timely fashion in accordance with each Council’s requirements.</p> <p>Councillors, with support from the Convenor and/or Community members, will report back to their respective councils on their activities on the Committee following Committee meetings.</p> <p>The Committee, through the Council Representatives and the Project Officer, will be available to present the Friends of Aileu Annual Report to a briefing or meeting of each Council, involving Committee members or Reference Group members where</p>

	practicable, with a decision on whether to offer this opportunity being up to each Council.
<b>Other Publications</b>	<p>Other publications include periodic Friends of Aileu newsletters, information on Councils' websites and social media accounts and the Friends of Aileu social media account(s).</p> <p>Other project information will be prepared by the Project Officer, considering input from the Committee where applicable, and will be made available to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee members and local partner organisations</li> <li>• The Aileu Municipal Administration, the Aileu Friendship Commission, the Timor-Leste Ministry of State Administration and other Aileu and Timor-Leste government and civil society partner organisations where applicable.</li> </ul>
<b>Relevant information and references</b>	<p><b>Attachment 1:</b> Friendship Agreement (Merri-bek – Hume – Aileu) 2025-2030</p> <p><b>Attachment 2:</b> Moreland-Aileu Municipal Cooperation Agreement 2016</p> <p><b>Attachment 3:</b> Hume-Aileu Municipal Cooperation Agreement 2016</p> <p><b>Attachment 4:</b> Friends of Aileu Strategy Plan 2025-2030</p> <p><b>Council websites:</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au">Friends of Aileu (merri-bek.vic.gov.au)</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.hume.vic.gov.au/Your-Council/Governance/Information-for-Public-Inspection/Special-Committees">https://www.hume.vic.gov.au/Your-Council/Governance/Information-for-Public-Inspection/Special-Committees</a></p> <p><b>Friends of Aileu Facebook page:</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.facebook.com/friendsofaileu/">https://www.facebook.com/friendsofaileu/</a></p>
<b>TOR adopted and endorsed</b>	<p>Initially by A/CEO, Merri-bek City Council 11/01/2023, and Director City Services and Living, Hume City Council: 24/02/2023</p> <p>This version TOR 2023 (Revised 2025) endorsed following Liaison Group meeting 21.05.2025, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Merri-bek Director Community / /</li> <li>• Hume Director City Services and Living / /</li> </ul>
<b>Review</b>	These Terms of Reference will be reviewed and be refreshed as required or as otherwise decided by the 2 Directors, or as directed by Council.

**Attachment 4****Friends of Aileu Community Committee membership, Nov. 2025**

<b>Qualification: Live, work, study or volunteer in Merri-bek or Hume</b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation and/or City (Suburb)</b>	<b>Comments</b>	
Cr Jarrod Bell	Hume City Council	Hume representative and Committee Co-Chair	Appointed Dec 2024 for 2025 calendar year
Cr Naim Kurt	Hume City Council	Hume representative	
Cr Adam Pulford	Merri-bek City Council	Merri-bek representative and Committee Co-Chair	
Cr Chris Miles	Merri-bek City Council	Resigned from the Committee July 2025	
Anne Jungwirth	Holstep Health (Brunswick West)	Holstep Health Board representative	
John Rutherford	Hume (Broadmeadows)	Community member	Hume Community member continuing from 2023 5 vacancies into 2026
Heather Bridges	Merri-bek (Coburg North)	Resigned December 2025	Merri-bek Community members continuing from 2023 5 vacancies into 2026
Paul O'Sullivan	Merri-bek (Brunswick)		
Dominique Wiehahn	Merri-bek (Brunswick West)	Resigned December 2025	
Joe Caputo	Merri-bek (Brunswick)	Persons with strong knowledge of and special connections to Aileu and Timor-Leste	Special interest members continuing from 2023 No vacancies into 2026
Carlo Carli	Merri-bek (Brunswick)		
Glenyys Romanes	Merri-bek (Brunswick)		
Richard Brown	Merri-bek (Brunswick West)		
Heather McGrath	Bayside	Persons with strong knowledge of and special connections to Aileu and Timor-Leste	Members co-opted by the Committee continuing from 2023 1 vacancy into 2026
Chico dos Santos	Maribyrnong		
Mark Higginbotham	Maribyrnong		
Tiernan Nile Ali	Resigned	Resigned December 2025	

**Attachment 5** (page 1 of 2)**Friendship Agreement 2025-2030****Friendship Agreement (Merri-bek - Hume - Aileu) 2025-2030**

An in-good-faith, non-binding agreement between the Merri-bek and Hume City Councils, Victoria, Australia, the Municipal Authority of Aileu, and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

On 4 May 2000, in recognition of the aspirations of the people of East Timor and Aileu to take control of their future, the then Moreland City Council (now Merri-bek City Council) and Hume City Council committed to a friendship relationship with the then District of Aileu (now Municipality of Aileu).

That commitment was made by signing a *Memorandum of Understanding* with Xanana Gusmão, then President of the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT), representing East Timor and Aileu, on the occasion of Mr. Xanana delivering the 13<sup>th</sup> *Blackburn Oration* on '*The Importance of Community Alliances in the Re-building of East Timor.*'

Also on that day, Xanana Gusmão, the Victorian Minister for Local Government, the President of the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) and the President of the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) signed the overarching *Statement of Principles For Victorian Local Governments Working in East Timor* as a guide for such friendship relationships.

The *Friends of Aileu Community Committee*, which was established in April 2000, continues to operate as a means for the Merri-bek and Hume City Councils, their staff and members of their communities and partner organisations to collaborate to realise the mutual benefits of the friendship relationship.

The friendship relationship has been periodically renewed, most recently in 2020, with the signing of the *Friendship Agreement (2020)* between the then Moreland City Council, Hume City Council, the Timor-Leste Government Ministry of State Administration and the then Aileu Municipal Administration.

In recognition of the continuing value of this relationship to our communities, we the signatories to this *Friendship Agreement (Merri-bek – Hume – Aileu) 2025-2030*, reaffirm our organisation's commitment:

- To continue the *friendship relationship* in accordance with the principles and values of mutual respect, ongoing learning, sustainability and locally led decision making, on which our relationship is based
- To support the development of local government in Aileu, including as outlined in the *Municipal Cooperation Agreements (2016)* between the Timor-Leste Government Ministry of State Administration, and Hume City Council and the then Moreland City Council.

We agree that we will continue to work together in friendship to:

- Help develop and maintain strong communities in Aileu and in Merri-bek and Hume
- Share our stories, cultures, perspectives, skills and resources, and improve mutual understanding
- Respond to the aspirations of the people of Aileu as they build their local democracy and governance, and work towards a healthier and more inclusive, prosperous and sustainable future
- Engage with the people of Aileu in ways that respect their strengths and complement their efforts to achieve the goals that they have developed for themselves

**Attachment 5** (page 2 of 2)

**Friendship Agreement 2025-2030**

> Ensure that any activities that we undertake or support:
 



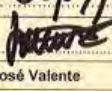
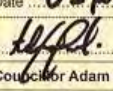
- o Respect the policies, programs and priorities of the **Government of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste** and of the **Aileu Municipal Authority**, and address complementary priorities identified in consultation with the **Aileu Municipal Authority**, the **Aileu Friendship Commission** and our Aileu and Timor-Leste partner organisations and their communities
- o Note the special place of traditional and religious relationships and authority in community life in Timor-Leste
- o Recognise the capacity of our organisations, partners, supporters and communities to resource and sustain them

> Engage with women and vulnerable people including people living with a disability as they strive to participate more fully in community, economic and political life, and with young people as they strive to take on their responsibilities for the future.

We **acknowledge** the independence, wisdom, knowledge and skills of the people of Aileu and their government, non-government and community organisations.

We **also acknowledge** the complementary roles and contributions of Merri-bek and Hume City Councils, the Friends of Aileu Community Committee and community members, Australian partner organisations and other community groups and organisations, engaging with Aileu in the spirit of friendship.

This **Friendship Agreement 2025-2030** is intended to be a guide for our organisations, and for the communities we represent for the coming five years. This agreement will not have any legal effect and may be terminated or varied as agreed between the signatories.

		
Councillor Helen Davidson	Mr João Bosco dos Santos	Councillor Jarrod Bell
Mayor Merri-bek City Council	President Municipal Authority of Aileu	Mayor Hume City Council and Co-Chair of Friends of Aileu Community Committee
Date: 23/06/2025	Date: 08/07/25	Date: 08/07/25
		
Mr Tomás Resário Cabral	Mr José Valente	Councillor Adam Pulford
Minister of State Administration Government of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste	Secretary Aileu Friendship Commission	Merri-bek City Council, Co-Chair of Friends of Aileu Community Committee
Date: 11/07/2025	Date: 08/07/25	Date: 23/06/2025



**Attachment 6** (page 1 of 5)**Councils Connecting Communities:  
25 years of friendship with Aileu, Baucau and Suai****Attachment 6a****Message from Rae Kingsbury, May 2025**

*Good evening, friends and colleagues,*

*It gives me great joy to warmly congratulate you on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of walking beside the people of Aileu, Baucau and Cova Lima.*

*And I apologise for ill-health preventing me from joining you on this happy occasion.*

*Over the past 25 years, the Friends of Aileu, Baucau and Cova Lima have continued to stand for friendship, collegiality and solidarity that has exemplified the Australia-Timor-Leste friendship groups and the very best of Australia's bilateral relationship.*

*Over the years, I have personally been honoured to work with you and the people of Timor-Leste in various capacities, all of which remains my happiest, most rewarding and most treasured period.*

*We are all familiar with Timor-Leste's UN-supervised ballot for independence in 1999 and the terrible price paid for this vote.*

*The Friends of Aileu, Baucau and Cova Lima were formed in the ashes of that destruction, as rebuilding was just beginning.*

*The needs of our Timorese friends were great, and you reached out to build people to people links, to let them know that they were not alone.*

*Like all good friendships, ours with the people of Timor-Leste has evolved and matured and, like all good friendships, it has stood the test of time.*

*At times when Timor-Leste's relationship with Australia was otherwise sorely tested, you led the most positive aspect of that relationship.*

*Together we showed what it meant to be genuine friends, as equals in a partnership, walking side by side.*

*Your role was acknowledged by the Australian Embassy in Dili as the most positive element of the bilateral relationship.*

*So positive was it that the Australian government then formalised the idea of 'friendship' through a grants program, hoping to replicate the successes of the Friendship groups.*

*As laudable as this has been, it remains a truism that money cannot buy friendship.*

*And the relationship you have built with your friends in Timor-Leste – a relationship of trust, honesty and equality - has proven that point.*

*It is also important to reflect on the benefits of this relationship to its Australian friends.*

*We have grown stronger and richer in spirit and community for our coming together in our friendship with the people of Timor-Leste. We are, in short, better people for our shared friendship.*

*I would like to close by again warmly congratulating the Friends of Aileu, Baucau and Cova Lima on the occasion of your 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and wish you every success for the next 25 years.*

*Rae Kingsbury, AM.*

**Attachment 6** (page 2 of 5)**Councils Connecting Communities:  
25 years of friendship with Aileu, Baucau and Suai****Attachment 6b****Transcript of address by Kirsty Sword Gusmao****Keynote address by Kirsty Sword Gusmão**

**On the occasion of the commemoration of  
25 years of friendship: Australia – Timor-Leste  
Coburg Town Hall, 6 May 2025**

*Good evening, friends. Boa noite. Thank you for inviting me to speak tonight.*

*This year marks some important milestones in the relationship between the Victorian community and our brave little neighbour, Timor-Leste. For 50 years Victoria has offered a refuge and a home to our brothers and sisters from Timor-Leste with the largest wave of migration happening in the lead up to and immediately following the Indonesian invasion of December 1975. A photographic exhibition documenting the history of the Timorese community in Victoria will be launched in August and the occasion celebrated in the way the Timorese are famed for – with a huge party. I hope you will all be there.*

*Today, however, we are gathered to reflect on the incredible achievements of three of some 32 friendship associations that were established 25 years ago in response to the vast challenge presented by Timor-Leste's becoming the newest nation of the new Millennium. Many of the people in this room have walked the journey alongside Timor-Leste dating back to the days of protest marches and a range of community actions designed to draw public attention to the horrors unfolding on our doorstep due to the Indonesian invasion and the complicity of western powers, including our own governments.*

*Bill Armstrong, a resident of the City of Port Phillip which established its Friends of Suai friendship association in March 2000 was a staunch advocate of Timor-Leste and its right to self-determination dating right back to the time of the invasion and beyond.*

*Chris Dureau and Christine Perkins, long-time residents of Darebin and old colleagues and friends of mine from the Overseas Service Bureau, were instrumental in setting up Friends of Baucau, alongside Northcote residents and my friends, Pat Walsh and Annie Keogh. Pat and Annie were part of an exploratory visit made to Baucau and Venilale at the invitation of Xanana Gusmão back in December 1999. I remember fondly greeting them off their Hercules jet from Darwin and hosting their group in our very modest lodgings in Dili. There were no ceiling fans, only mozzie domes, and the only item on the menu was tinned sardines. Dili was still smouldering, but there was peace and there was hope. And there were friends! And that was all that mattered.*

*The drive, persistence and passion for social justice of the early founders of the friendship groups was matched by their commitment to best practice in international development and a sound understanding of the principles of community development. Glenys and Graham Romanes brought their decades of experience of overseas development and local government to the establishment of Friends of Aileu and the partnership with Hume and Moreland City Councils, now Merri-Bek, that we celebrate today.*

**Attachment 6** (page 3 of 5)**Attachment 6b contd.**

*For the past ten years I have been a happy and proud resident of Merri-Bek where we find ourselves today. Little did I know when I stood alongside Xanana as he delivered the Maurice Blackburn Oration in May 2000 in this very town hall that, a decade and a half later, I would be living up the road with my kids, albeit with my heart and soul still firmly ensconced in Timor-Leste.*

*I also could never have imagined how the fragile new nation I had made my new home would be transformed in the space of the next two decades. Nor did I have the slightest inkling of the role of First Lady I was to assume or of the incredible lessons I would learn from my East Timorese friends and colleagues about community development and the central role of family, community and friendship in the nation building process.*

*So, what I would like to share with you today is a bit of a selective snapshot of some of the tremendous progress Timor-Leste has made over the past 25 years in terms of its national development. A gargantuan task that many of you who are here present tonight will have contributed to with your hard work and persistence ... and more than a few quiz nights.*

*I'd also like to reflect with you on some of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for Victorian communities and their engagement with Timor-Leste in the next 25 years.*

*I will focus my remarks concerning Timor-Leste's achievements on some of the sectors that are particularly close to my heart, specifically health, women's empowerment, and education.*

*At the time that I gave birth to my sons at Dili National Hospital, starting in September 2000, the average fertility rate was 5.9. This has dropped to 3.3 as women's access to reproductive health services and education standards overall have improved. When my eldest son, Alex, was born there was no obstetrician in attendance at Dili National Hospital, only midwives. Today, largely thanks to cooperation with the government of Cuba, Timor-Leste's numbers of qualified health professionals has more than tripled. Whilst it will be many decades before Timor-Leste enjoys the breadth and quality of medical care that we do here in Australia, in the meantime we can all continue to play our part to bolster health services – and many friendship groups are doing that already through refurbishing health facilities, financing scholarships for nurses and midwives, supporting dental health initiatives and much more.*

*Thanks in part to the work of the Aloa Foundation which I established in 2001, rates of exclusive breastfeeding and maternal and infant mortality have improved drastically, as have the numbers of women opting to give birth in a clinic or hospital. In 2000 only 12% of women gave birth in a health facility whilst data from the Demographic and Health Survey indicates that this figure has today jumped to around 50%. This, of course, means that far fewer women are dying of preventable causes in childbirth.*

*When I was bringing up my first son, I was obsessed with protecting him from mosquito bites given that we lived in a mozzie infested area of Dili and malaria and dengue were rife. Since 2020 malaria has been all but eradicated from Timor-Leste and this is a major win for the country given that prior to that at the time of independence hundreds of people died annually from the disease.*

*Dengue fever cases continue to impose a risk and a burden on the health system, however. But having said that, the Menzies Institute has recently assisted the Ministry of Health in Dili to institute a program whereby Wolbachia mosquitoes are released in Dili's dengue hotspots. The releases are scheduled to begin in July 2025, covering an area of approximately 20 km<sup>2</sup>, protecting around 240,000 people in the Dili municipality. This initiative is expected to save dozens of lives annually.*

*Malnutrition and stunting figures continue to be amongst the highest in Asia and are, of course, linked to food insecurity in addition to poor nutrition education. I know that a number of friendship groups*

**Attachment 6** (page 4 of 5)**Appendix 6b contd.**

*have focussed their efforts on feeding programs, sustainable agriculture and permaculture and it is vital that these continue.*

*When it comes to female political participation, Timor has cause for pride and celebration, as well as ongoing hard work to ensure that the high percentage of female members of parliament at the national level is matched at the level of local government. Over many electoral cycles, the percentage of amazing Timorese women representing their constituencies in the nation's Uma Fukun or parliament has been world-leading at around 38% and the quota system requiring parties to nominate at least 30% women candidates on their electoral lists has certainly helped.*

*Women are increasingly moving into traditionally male-dominated spheres and are proving their mettle. Rates of girls' enrolment in basic education which is years 1-9 is higher than boys and the gap has been steadily growing since 2011 when there was gender parity.*

*I can't speak highly enough of the skills, smarts and potential of Timorese women and I truly believe in Alola's slogan of "Feto Forte, Nasaun Forte." My experience of working in Timor-Leste for close to two decades has taught me that women are team players, problem solvers, are humble and therefore anxious to learn and better themselves, are values rather than ego-driven and simply get the job done.*

*As President JRH declared on IWD 2025, women are "Warriors, peacemakers, entrepreneurs, educators, healthcare providers and guardians of our cultural Heritage."*

*Just a few reflections on the strengths of the friendship model of development, the most salient being, I believe, the strong commitment to best practice principles of community development including mutual understanding, respect, a focus on strengths and the Timorese-led determination of priorities. These things are not to be taken for granted. All too often the traditional international aid and development machinery undermines local ownership and is not targeted to the specific needs of particular groups or local communities. And they most often fail to take into account traditional ancestral knowledge and indigenous belief systems which continue to be vitally important in Timorese society and the key to unlocking sustainable solutions to development challenges. I have seen so many big aid dollars wasted over the years as a result of these shortcomings.*

*In his oration of 2000, Xanana appealed to the international community to respect and be guided by the East Timorese leadership in allocating aid dollars. The local commissions established to oversee and guide the work of the friendship groups is evidence that this appeal has been heeded.*

*And then there is the flexibility and agility of the friendship model, the ability to deviate from strategic plans and priorities and to respond to urgent needs as they arise, whether it be to natural disasters, pandemics or simply unforeseen circumstances.*

*I recall back in the early 2000s that Moreland City Councillors Andy Ingham and Gary Jungwirth were asked by the Alola Foundation to support a small income-generating initiative which would involve hiring out wedding dresses. Andy and Gary dutifully hunted for second-hand wedding dresses and undertook to personally deliver them to Alola. You can image the look of shock and disbelief on the faces of the custom officials in Dili when Andy and Gary opened case after case full of frilly dresses at Dili airport.*

*Finally, a few thoughts on the next 25 years for groups like Friends of Aileu, Suai and Baucau. How do we ensure that the friendships and progress made to date can continue to thrive? An issue that is often raised relates to the need to attract younger people and leaders into the friendship networks. With hundreds of students and volunteers visiting and falling in love with Timor-Leste each year as part of school partnerships, university research collaborations and programs such as Australian*

**Attachment 6** (page 5 of 5)**Appendix 6b contd.**

*Volunteers, this shouldn't be an insurmountable problem. The question is how to harness this passion and drive to make a difference, and that's where the role of the Friendship Network comes in. Derarca and Lorraine, along with the other state facilitators, do an incredible job and are amazing networkers and advocates, but how can we resource the Network better to enable them to do more, including regularly updating the register of activities of various friendship groups which is so important for coordination. Should the Network become membership based and charge fees?*

*Now that the maritime boundary issue has been resolved, what other issues of importance to Timor-Leste's future can the network and members advocate on? Would it be important for friendship groups to push for the inclusion of a unit of work on Timor-Leste in our Victorian high school curriculum? Would this potentially draw more new recruits into the friendship network in the long term, as well as drive greater understanding and interest in Timor-Leste, not to mention tourist numbers?*

*How can friendship groups boost their partnerships with other organisations, including NGOs and philanthropy, the private sector? I know that Friends of Baguia has been receiving funds for a number of years for educational activities from the Noel and Carmel O'Brien Family Foundation, a private philanthropic foundation. Spend It Well, a small Australian-based charity, has built or rehabilitated over 20 schools all over Timor-Leste, including in Baucau. How can we better harness and learn from the experiences, highs and lows, frustrations and ah-ha moments we have all accumulated over the past quarter of a century?*

*So many groups and individuals work tirelessly to raise funds each year – film and quiz nights, selling Timorese coffee and handicrafts. How can we reach out not only to more Australian private sector organizations and invite their engagement and contributions to the work of the friendship groups. How, too, might we engage the Timorese private sector? This is in line with the strategic goals of many of the friendship committees which include the objective of developing and diversifying fundraising capacity.*

*I believe that more private sector organisations within Timor-Leste itself would gladly partner with friendship committees if they were aware of the tremendous work that has been done to date and how they might share in these successes. Perhaps the forthcoming July friendship conference is an opportunity to get these new partnerships underway.*

*Whilst so many other global crises have stolen the spotlight from Timor-Leste in terms of international attention and funding commitments, Timor's story continues to inspire and to be relevant. Timor's lessons to the world on courage, unity of purpose and resilience in the face of adversity, the power of forgiveness and reconciliation and the determination and belief of a people in itself and its leaders are timeless lessons. And a priceless gift. And they are particularly powerful and important in the present moment. So, let's keep teaching the lessons, sharing the stories, listening and continuing to be the very best friends and neighbours we can be to brave little Timor-Leste.*

*In closing, some of you may be aware that Nandy Gurr of Spend It Well and I run an annual Study Tour to Timor-Leste. We raise funds each year for a particular organisation or cause.*

*Thank you for listening to me today. Obrigada barak!*

**Attachment 7** (page 1 of 30)**Report on the Friends of Aileu - Council delegation to Timor-Leste, July 2025****1 INTRODUCTION**

This report summarises activities undertaken as part of the Friends of Aileu – Council Delegation visit to Timor-Leste in July 2025.

Key aspects to note are:

1. The success of the Friendship Conference 2025: Building Stronger Friendships – Empowering Communities Through Partnerships', which was:
  - a) Co-sponsored by the Timor-Leste Ministry of State Administration and the Australia Timor-Leste Friendship Network (AusTimorFN)
  - b) Supported by the Australian Embassy to Timor-Leste (including with \$US 20,000 funding)
  - c) Organised by the DFAT-funded PARTISIPA municipal development project team and AusTimorFN
2. The signing of the Conference's Dili Declaration – Appendix 1
3. The signing of the Friendship Agreement (Merri-bek - Hume - Aileu) 2025-2030
  - a) In Aileu by the Municipal President and the Friendship Commission Secretary
  - b) In Dili at the friendship Conference by the Minister for State Administration, following it signing by the Mayor Cr Davidson and Cr Pulford on 23 June
4. The desire expressed the Timor-Leste Minister for State Administration, supported by the Australian Ambassador to Timor-Leste, for a resumption of the previous support from the Victorian Government for Timor-Leste, particularly in relation to:
  - a) Decentralisation and the development of local governance (Municipal elections are planned to be held in the next couple of years)
  - b) The local government and community friendship relationships.
5. The potential for enhanced engagement between the Victorian State Government, Peak local government bodies and other Councils with Timor-Leste and member groups of the Australia Timor-Leste Friendship Network
6. The high value that our Timor-Leste and Aileu partners and community members place on the Friendship Relationship with Aileu and its achievements to date, in terms of support for Aileu and the building of enduring friendship between our communities
7. The strong support for continuation of the Friendship Relationships including with Aileu directly expressed by:
  - a) The Australian Ambassador to Timor-Leste
  - b) The President and Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, the President of the Timor-Leste Council of Ministers and the Timor-Leste Minister for State Administration
  - c) The Aileu Municipal President, including in his address on 8 July – **Appendix 2**
  - d) Representatives of Friends of Aileu's Timor-Leste and Aileu civil society partners, including PERMATIL, the PermaYouth Association, the Aileu Municipal Youth Centre, the Aileu Resource and Training Centre, the Uma Ita Nian Clinic and the Maryknoll Sisters
8. The strong support for continuing and developing the Friends of Aileu's Kose Nehan oral health education project at all levels of government and amongst potential partners, including:
  - a) The Oral Health Manager Ministry of Health, and the Secretary of the Timor-Leste

**Attachment 7** (page 2 of 30)

- Dental Association
- b) The Aileu Municipal Authority and its Education and Health Directors, The Aileu Health Centre and Municipal Hospital and Aileu's Uma Ita Nian Clinic
  - c) The Aloia Foundation, Balibo House Trust and Maluk Timor (a Timor-Leste NGO focussed on community health and supporting improvements in resources of locally managed services including for oral health), each of which has an MOU with the Ministry of Health
9. The Mayor of Hume's interest in facilitating connections between local scouts and Aileu scouts
  10. The situation of the Aileu Resource and Training Centre:
    - a) Who have recently been required to vacate their long-term office in a historic public building (that Friends of Aileu helped fund repairs and renovations over the past 20 years) now earmarked for a One-Stop-Shop Municipal Customer Service Centre, for unsatisfactory temporary accommodation in a semi-derelict government building, with an offer from the Municipal President of land but not a building
    - b) Who are facing other resource challenges, including funding a replacement motorbike and staff salary cover
  11. That the Aileu Municipal Authority has submitted an application to Australian Volunteers for a 12-month in-country assignment of a Decentralisation Specialist Advisor
  12. That the Aileu Municipal Youth Centre has submitted:
    - a) An application to Australian Volunteers for a 13-month in-country assignment of a Youth Training and Business Advisor
    - b) An application to Palms Australia for an assignment of an English language training advisor.

**2. BACKGROUND****Travel approval, dates and accommodation**

- Travel for the Project Officer East Timor (Friends of Aileu) was approved by CEO Merri-bek, with the Project Officer being in Timor-Leste from 2 July to 20 July
- The Mayor of Hume, Co-Chair of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee, participated in the delegation at his own cost, and was in Timor-Leste from 4 July to 12 July
- The other delegation members, who also participated at their own cost, were
  - Richard Brown, Friends of Aileu Community Committee member, in Timor-Leste from 5 July to 12 July
  - Dr John Rogers, Kose Nehan Working Group member, in Timor-Leste from 4 July to 20 July
- The delegation members stayed at the Sunset Inn Pro Ema Hotel and the Plaza Hotel in Dili, the Dili Vanilli Farm Homestay in Aileu and the Balibo Fort Hotel in Balibo.

**Relevant Council Plan action, strategy, policy or resolution**

- Friends of Aileu Strategy Plan 2025-2030
- Friendship Agreement (Merri-bek - Hume – Aileu) 2025-2030
- Municipal Cooperation Agreements (Moreland – Aileu) and (Hume – Aileu) 2016

**Attachment 7** (page 3 of 30)**3. DISCUSSION**

A detailed program was developed by the Project Officer, with input from the Secretary of the Aileu Friendship Commission and others. The delegation met with a wide range of organisations and individuals in Dili, Aileu and elsewhere who play a part in the friendship relationship, may be future partners or are beneficiaries of activities supported by Friends of Aileu.

**Significant activities included:****a) The Friendship Conference:**

Presentations were given on:

- The Aileu Friendship relationship and partner organization projects by the Project Officer and non-government partner organization representatives, Secretary Friendship Commission José Valente, Program Manager Aileu Municipal Youth Centre Pedro Pereira, Director Aileu Resource and Training Centre Natalia Ximenes and Director Uma Ita Nian Clinic Guida Pereira
- The Kose Nehan oral health education project by Dr John Rogers and Ana Tilman.

The Friends of Aileu delegation members, Aileu local government officials and partner organization representatives worked together in Discussion Groups, and met many delegates from other Friendship Groups, Timor-Leste municipalities and non-government partner organisations.

Aileu local government participants in the Conference included the Municipal President Mr João Bosco dos Santos, Secretary Mrs Victória Mesquita do Rêgo, Postu Administrators, several Directors and *Partisipa* National Advisor Mr Alfonso Sarmento.

While Timor-Leste has made significant progress in rebuilding its institutions and economy, it now faces new challenges, such as:

- The Transition to decentralization and the introduction of responsible elected municipal-level government
- The country has become less visible in Australian public discourse
- Many founding members of the Friendship Groups are aging
- There is a pressing need to engage younger generations
- Friendship activities need to align with global priorities such as climate change, sustainability, digital innovation and regional cooperation.

Objectives of the conference, which were largely achieved, included to:

- Leverage the relationships between friendship groups and communities in Australia and municipalities, administrative posts and communities in Timor-Leste
- Strengthen the bonds between Australian and Timor-Leste municipalities and between the peoples of both countries
- Contribute to stronger government-to government friendship ties between the Governments of Australia, its States and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

**b) Meetings and visits in Aileu, concerning the friendship relationship, with:**

- i. Mr João Bosco dos Santos, President Aileu Municipal Authority
- ii. Municipal Secretaries (3):
  - Mr Rogério da Conceição, Social Affairs and NGOs
  - Mrs Victória Mesquita do Rêgo, Planning, Investment and Development
  - Mr José Viçente Vilanova, Secretary Administration and Finance (former beneficiary Aileu Scholarship Program)

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- iii. Directors (19) and Managers including:
    - Mr Laurenço Alves Falcão, Director SEFOPE (Secretariat of State for Vocational Training and Employment) which helps prepare and assess young people applying for the PALM scheme (former beneficiary Aileu Scholarship Program)
    - The Manager Aileu Health Centre Mrs Alda Falcão and Municipal Hospital and Dental Clinic staff including Mr Manuel and dentist Dr Calmelita
    - Mrs Beatriz, Director Education Department, and staff, and the Directors and teachers of 2 rural Primary Schools (Cotabaru and Daisoli schools, participants in the Kose Nehan project)
    - The Director Agriculture Department office staff
    - Mr Laurenço Alves Falcão, Director SEFOPE
  - iv. The Aileu Friendship Commission, counterpart to the Friends of Aileu Community Committee, with:
    - Mr Pedro Pereira, Program Manager Aileu Municipal Youth Centre, staff and volunteers
    - Friends of Aileu scholarship graduates and current beneficiaries, including a group who have established the Aileu Friendship Alumni Association
    - National and Catholic Scouts leaders and members
  - v. Mrs Natalia Ximenes, Director Aileu Resource and Training Centre (former beneficiary ARTC Staff Development Program), Mr Joaquininho dos Reis Program Manager and staff, including at ARTC's Kadalak Dame Garden project
  - vi. Ms Quida Pereira, Director Uma Ita Nian Clinic (former beneficiary ARTC Staff Development Program) and Judit Matins, Public Health Nurse
  - vii. Maryknoll Sisters Susan and Rolande and the women's sewing group members
  - viii. Remexio PermaYouth Training Centre and permaculture garden, Remexio Postu, Aileu
  - ix. Martin Hardie and Mrs Nolya Mesquita (former beneficiary Aileu Scholarship Program), Dili Vanilli Farm and Homestay, Aileu
- c) Meetings and visits in Dili, concerning the *Kose Nehan* oral health education project, with:**
- i. Mr Vitorino da Costa Araujo Department Head, Oral Health, Timor-Leste Ministry of Health, and Dr Teresa Antonio Madeira Soares (Dr Nina), Secretary of the Timor-Leste Dental Association
  - ii. Mrs Maria Imaculada Guterres (Macu), Director Alola Foundation and Mr Jose Health Program Manager
  - iii. Mrs Dillyana Ximenes, Director Maluk Timor, and Mrs Flaviana da Silva, Oral Health Program Manager, Dentist Dr Jenifer Martins Ximenes, Nurse Efigenia Pereira dos Santos and staff
  - iv. Mrs Teresa, Director Municipal Health Centre, Formosa, Dili, and Oral Health Clinic Dentist Dr Guilda and staff
  - v. Dr José, Dentist Bairo Pite Oral Health Clinic and nurse Donny
  - vi. Karen Champlin, Menzies Research Centre Timor-Leste.
- d) Meetings and visits out of Dili, about the *Kose Nehan* oral health education project, with:**
- i. Dr Octavia, Dentist Balibo House Trust Oral Health Clinic and staff, Balibo Postu, Bobonaro municipality

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- ii. Ms Ana Martins, Dental nurse Timor-Leste Dental Program, Maubara Postu, Liquisa municipality
- iii. Mr Joaquim Soares, Director Klibur Domin, Tibar, Liquisa municipality, Oral Health Clinic Dentist Dr Jenifer Martins Ximenes and Nurse Efigenia Pereira dos Santos Dentist (seconded from Maluk Timor) and staff

**e) Other less formal meetings and visits in Dili and nearby with:**

- i. Two Hume Education Scholarship beneficiaries for study at the Baucau Teachers' College (ICFP) Alarico Matus and Zachárias Pereira da Conceição (both employed in Primary Schools) and ICFP administrator Mrs Margie Beck
- ii. Former Aileu Scholarship Program beneficiary Hermenegildo A. Mesquita (working at the Timorese Resistance Archive and Museum)
- iii. Timor-Leste Students formerly studying in Melbourne (Australia Awards and others), including Abilio de Araujo and Tony Castro (PARTISIPA Team), Isidoro Correia (Palladium PALM scheme advice for SEFOPE), João Ximenes Soares (private consulting and contracting business) and his wife Livia, João Cardoso (Technical Specialist Bee Timor-Leste, the government water company), Joél da Lima (Media and Comms for Australia Awards, Australian Embassy)
- iv. João Veigas da Costa, former Administration Manager, NGO Forum (FONGTIL), and now Technical Specialist Civil Society Fund, office of Vice Prime-Minister Asanami
- v. Ego Lemos, Founder-Director PERMATIL and his wife Yanti, and Isidoro Pereira Founder-Director PermaYouth Association
- vi. Betti Goreti, Kor Timor
- vii. The Xanana Gusmão Reading Room library and museum
- viii. The Timorese Resistance Archive and Museum
- ix. Memoria Viva, the Jose Ramo Horta Presidential Museum and Archive
- x. Dili's Immaculate Conception Cathedral, An Nur Masjid and Pura Giri Natha Balinese Temple
- xi. The Dare WWII Museum and Café
- xii. Mr Gotys and Mrs Dina, Managers Corner Store Network and Café, Metinaro Postu, Dili municipality
- xiii. The Balibo Flab House Museum, Balibo Postu, Bobonaro municipality.

**4. ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION****Past Community and Stakeholder Engagement**

- The Friends of Aileu Community Committee, the Timor-Leste Ministry of State Administration, the Aileu Municipal President and the Aileu Friendship Commission were consulted prior to the delegation proceeding, and all supported the visit and provided input to the delegation's program
- Photos and notes on the delegation's activities were posted on the Friends of Aileu Facebook Page and delegation members' own Facebook profiles during the visit.

**Future Council, Community, Stakeholder and Staff Engagement**

- The delegation and its outcomes, including the Friendship Conference, were reported on:
  - Via the 2 Councils' Councilor Newsletters
  - In the Project Officer's overseas travel reports to the 2 Councils' Executive Teams
  - At meetings of the Kose Nehan Working Group (including 29 July, 11 and 19 August)
  - At the meeting of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee (7 August)
  - In the next edition of the Friends of Aileu newsletter (August)
  - Via the 2 Councils' websites and social media as agreed with Communications team

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Via the 2 Councils' intranet and at possible staff information and engagement sessions

- At a planned forum of the Australia Timor-Leste Friendship Network (August-September Date TBC), expected to be followed up with formation of a Working Group to build on the outcomes of the Friendship Conference
- In the Friends of Aileu Annual Report 2025.

#### 5. HUMAN RIGHTS & GENDER EQUALITY

The community development activities in Aileu supported by the Friends of Aileu are decided upon, developed and implemented taking account of their positive contributions to human rights and gender equality, e.g.: participation of girls, young and mature aged women in the scholarship programs, training and skills development, income generation activities and other project activities.

#### 6. CLIMATE ACTION

The community development activities in Aileu supported by the Friends of Aileu are decided upon, developed and implemented taking account of their positive contributions to climate action, e.g.: water conservation, reforestation, conservation agriculture and permaculture projects.

#### 7 ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN FOLLOWING CONCLUSION OF THE VISIT

- a) The Project Officer:
  - i. Prepared reports and media as outlined in Section 3 above
  - ii. Followed up with Timor-Leste and Aileu partners on relevant aspects of the friendship relationship and supported project activities.
  - iii. Followed up with the Australia Timor-Leste Friendship Network on a forum to process outcomes and actions from the Friendship Conference.
- b) The Kose Nehan Working Group:
  - i. Prepared a report for the Friends of Aileu Community Committee
  - ii. Discussed with Ministry of Health and the Aileu Municipal Administration the future of the Kose Nehan (Tooth Brushing) pilot project in the 6 participating Aileu schools
  - iii. Made arrangements for a follow-up visit to Timor-Leste by Dr Sandra Olivia Frans, the volunteer *Kose Nehan* Project Coordinator, who could not participate in the July delegation due to an in-person PhD presentation commitment.
- c) The Friends of Aileu Community Committee considered reports from the Project Officer and other delegation members, providing advice and recommendations, including the potential for:
  - i. Engagement with other Local Government Councils, peak bodies and the Victorian State Government
  - ii. Greater collaboration with the Australia Timor-Leste Friendship Network and other Friendship Groups.

#### ATTACHMENTS

**Appendix 1:** Dili Declaration

**Appendix 2:** Aileu Municipal President's address on 8 July

**Appendix 3:** Photos: Some key moments in the delegation's program

**Attachment 7** (page 7 of 30)**Appendix 1****DILI FRIENDSHIP CONFERENCE AGREEMENT (July 2025)**

Australia - Timor-Leste Friendship Network Conference with the theme "Building Stronger Friendships: Empowering Communities through Partnership" held in Dili on 10 and 11 July 2025.

The conference gathered representatives of Australian friendship groups, Timor-Leste national and municipal government officials and friendship groups from different municipalities in Timor-Leste met to celebrate 25 years anniversary of Friendship Network and reaffirm the long-standing bonds between the people of Australia and Timor-Leste.

The conference is jointly organized by the Ministry of State Administration, the Australia Timor-Leste Friendship Network and the Embassy of Australia in Timor-Leste.

Recognizing the rich history of solidarity and shared goals to peace, mutual respect, and inclusive development, participants have agreed to the following declaration to guide future collaboration and strengthen partnerships at national, municipal and community levels.

**As the participants of the Australia – Timor-Leste Friendship Network Conference, we state that:**

**1. Reaffirming Friendship and Solidarity**

We reaffirm our enduring friendship and solidarity between the friendship groups of Australia and Timor-Leste, and our shared goals to maintaining and strengthening this relationship.

**2. Strengthening Collaboration**

We support the expanding of collaboration among friendship groups, municipal governments, and community organizations, to contribute to:

- Strengthening local governance processes.
- Promoting inclusive development, especially in rural communities.

**3. Empowering Communities**

We acknowledge that genuine partnerships empower communities. We intend to:

- Support community-driven development initiatives.
- Promote participation of women, young people, and people with disabilities.
- Share tools, resources, and innovative practices to improve community wellbeing.

**4. Fostering Learning and Exchange**

We will:

- Facilitate mutual learning visits between Australian friendship groups and Timorese communities.
- Share experiences in local governance, service delivery, and community resilience.
- Promote English and Tatum language exchanges to enhance communication and cultural understanding.

**5. Strengthening Organizational Structures**

The Australia–Timor-Leste Friendship Network will continue to strengthen the friendship groups, which will:

- Coordinate collaboration activities and communication among members.
- Serve as a platform for mobilizing resources and sharing information.
- Act as a representative body to engage with governments and stakeholders in both countries.

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**Appendix 1 contd.**

**6. Collaboration with Municipal Government**

We encourage continued collaboration to:

- o Coordinate with municipal authorities and relevant government departments at municipalities that have the mandate to support local NGOs and community organizations at sub-national level.
- o Contribute to community resilience and social inclusion.
- o Promote transparency, accountability, and sustainability in all activities.

**7. Shared Actions**

We intend to develop a shared work plan outlining priority activities for the coming years, including:

- o Strengthening organizational capacities of friendship groups.
- o Supporting local economic development initiatives.
- o Enhancing education, health, and cultural exchange programs.

We, the participants of the Australia – Timor-Leste Friendship Network Conference, adopt this Dili Declaration as a shared expression of our shared goals to building stronger friendships and empowering communities through partnership.

We look forward to working together to transform the aspirations of our people into practical actions that bring lasting benefits and deepen the bonds between our two nations. Align friendship initiatives with the municipal priorities and community needs.

*Dili, 11 July 2025*

Friendship Group	
<b>1. Friendship of Aileu</b>	
1. Name: <i>GRU B-DG SRVTD</i>	Signature: <i>[Signature]</i>
2. Name: <i>James Beal</i>	Signature: <i>[Signature]</i>
<b>2. Friendship of Bobonaro</b>	
1. Name: <i>LOUISE COOK-TUNKIN</i>	Signature: <i>[Signature]</i>
2. Name: <i>Thomas R. Cabul</i>	Signature: <i>[Signature]</i>
3. Name: <i>Maria de Jesus</i>	Signature: <i>[Signature]</i>
4. Name: <i>CE Patrick Binyon</i>	Signature: <i>[Signature]</i>
<b>3. Friendship of Lospalos</b>	
1. Name: <i>MEGG ALSTON</i>	Signature: <i>[Signature]</i>
2. Name: <i>Thomas R. Cabul</i>	Signature: <i>[Signature]</i>
<b>4. Friendship of Covallina</b>	
1. Name: <i>URSULA HARRISON</i>	Signature: <i>[Signature]</i>
2. Name: <i>Thomas R. Cabul</i>	Signature: <i>[Signature]</i>
<b>5. Friendship of Baucau</b>	
1. Name: <i>FRANCISCO CRUZ S. G.</i>	Signature: <i>[Signature]</i>
2. Name: <i>CARIS HANSEN</i>	Signature: <i>[Signature]</i>
3. Name: <i>ANDREW MILLER</i>	Signature: <i>[Signature]</i>
<i>Thomas R. Cabul</i>	

**Attachment 7** (page 9 of 30)**Appendix 2****Aileu Municipal President's address in Aileu on 8 July**

*Your excellencies*

*Distinguished guests, friends from Merri-bek and Hume,*

*Today is a very special day for us to welcome our friends from Merri-bek and Hume. Welcome to Aileu.*

*Today the renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding (Friendship Agreement) between Aileu and the Friends of Aileu will be discussed and signed. It marks a renewal – not just of a document, but of a shared journey. Since the first agreement in 2000, our friendship has grown from a gesture of solidarity into a living partnership rooted in mutual respect, learning and community empowerment.*

*This new agreement for 2025-2030 reaffirms our commitment to work together in building strong, resilient communities. It reflects our shared values: sustainability, inclusion, and locally led decision making. It is a promise to continue exchanging knowledge, culture, and support – not as donors and recipients, but as friends in the same journey.*

*We are very proud of the progress that we have made together – in education, youth development, health, and local governance. And we are excited for what lies ahead. With this renewed partnership, we will continue to respond to the aspirations of our people and strengthen the democratic foundations of our municipality.*

*To our friends in Merri-bek and Hume: thank you for walking beside us. May this agreement be a beacon of what communities can achieve when they choose friendship over distance, and collaboration over isolation.*

*Together, we build not only projects – but hope, dignity, and a better future for all.*

*Obrigadu barak. Thank you very much.*

**João Bosco dos Santos**

**President Aileu Municipal Authority**

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**Appendix 3**

**Photos: Some key moments in the delegation's program**



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**Appendix 3 contd.**



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**Appendix 3 contd.**

Municipal President Joao Bosco dos Santos (R) and  
Secretary Admin & Finance Jose Vicente Vilanova  
(front)



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ARTC: Natalia, Jenni & Ota, Joaquinho,  
Quintao, Ana Paula and Jose Valente



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**Appendix 3 contd.**

Maluk Timor: Flaviana, Dillyana, Ana, Efi and Dr Jenifer



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Darwin to Dili



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**Appendix 3 contd.**

ICFP scholarship graduates Alarico Matus & Zacharias Pereira da Conceicao and ICFP administrator Mrs Margie



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A first meeting with Ana Baretto Tilman and Mrs Victoria Mesquita do Rego



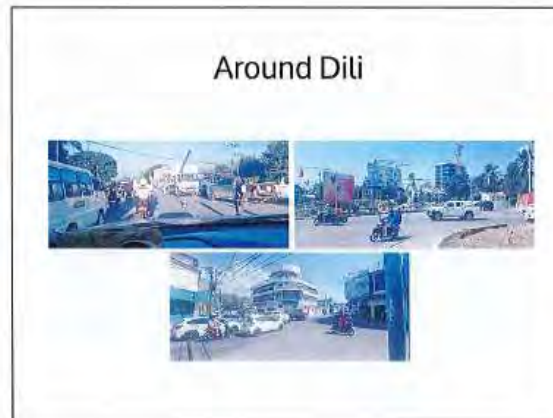
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**Appendix 3 contd.**



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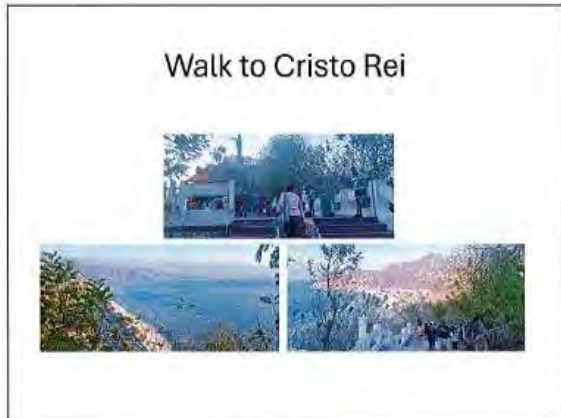


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**Appendix 3 contd.**

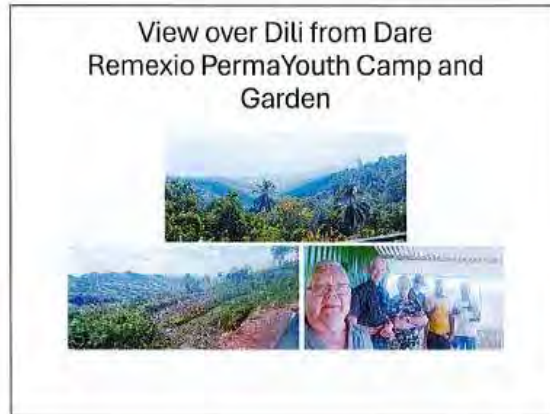


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**Appendix 3 contd.**



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**Appendix 3 contd.**



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**Appendix 3 contd.**



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**Appendix 3 contd.**



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**Appendix 3 contd.**



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**Appendix 3 contd.**



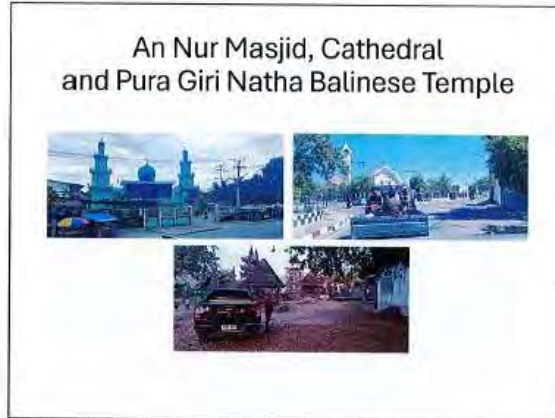
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**Appendix 3 contd.**



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**Appendix 3 contd.**

Maluk Timor: Mrs Flaviana, Director  
Mrs Dillyana,  
Ana Tilman, nurse Mana Efi and Dr  
Jenifer



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Partisipa Offices (former One More  
Bar),  
with Tony Castro and Abilio de Araujo



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**Attachment 7** (page 30 of 30)  
**Appendix 3 contd.**



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**Attachment 8** (page 1 of 2)**Report on the Oral Health Promotion Project field visit to Timor-Leste, October 2025**

**Field Visit Summary Report – Timor-Leste  
Friends of Aileu Oral Health Promotion Working Group  
Dr Sandra Frans: 20 – 31 October 2025**

**1. Background**

The visit was undertaken to strengthen oral health promotion in Timor-Leste to look at the opportunity to scale up the previous oral health project by Friends of Aileu (FoA). The visit was also to follow up on the July 2025 visit. The main objectives of the visit were to understand the current context of organisations working in oral health and explore opportunities for collaboration to support the implementation of the National Oral Health Prevention Strategic Plan 2025 – 2030.

**2. Stakeholders engaged**

Over the course of the field visit, discussions were held with government, health service providers in Aileu and in Balibo, NGOs in Dili, community-based organisations in Aileu. Meetings were conducted in Dili, Aileu and Balibo

Key stakeholders engaged included:

- Ministry of Health
- Maluk Timor
- Alola Foundation
- Aileu Municipality Secretary
- Aileu Vila Health Centre Dental Team and the Chief of Health Centre
- Aileu Youth Centre
- Uma Ita Nian Clinic
- Aileu Resource and Training Centre
- Balibo Dental Clinic
- An independent dental nurse in Dili.

**3. Key Findings****3.1 Governance**

There is a strong priority to formalise the initiative from the Oral Health promotion FoA with the Ministry of Health through a Memorandum of Intent for any future activities. Even though FoA already has the agreement with the Aileu Municipality, FoA is expected to develop the agreement with the Ministry of Health, so future activities can be more accountable.

**3.2 Service Delivery, including existing initiatives**

Aileu Vila Dental Clinic provides a range of routine services—including extractions, fillings, scaling, and simple gingivectomy. However, there are significant equipment limitations, such as non-functional composite tools, an ageing drill, and a dental chair that cannot be adjusted. The clinic has one dentist, four dental nurses, and one dental hygienist, with only two out of six staff being civil servant workers. The dental staff also participates in outreach through monthly SISCA (Serviço Integrado de Saúde Comunitária) in villages in the Aileu Vila area, to deliver basic oral health promotion.

The clinic previously implemented school-based SDF (Silver Diamine Fluoride) applications from March to October 2024 with Maluk Timor's support, reaching multiple sub-districts, but this program cannot continue without additional SDF supplies, PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), and transport resources.

### **Attachment 8** (page 2 of 2)

During our visit to the Balibo Dental Clinic, we learned how a well-equipped facility enables the team to deliver a broad range of services—scaling, fillings, restorations, and extractions (to about 10–13 patients a day), allowing staff to work more effectively than in many nearby clinics. We also observed how the outreach school program and collaborations with the health centre extend their preventive and educational outreach across the community. Importantly, the clinic benefits from routine visits by senior dentists from Australia and Singapore, whose mentorship and hands-on guidance significantly strengthen staff skills and overall service quality.

Across Maluk Timor, the Ministry of Health and the Aileu Dental Clinic, there is strong alignment on the value of school-based SDF implementation, with MT's MoH-approved program already training dental staff in half of Timor-Leste's municipalities, including Aileu. All parties recognise that MT currently provides the essential materials, transport, and training while government health workers carry out the service, and they agree that sustaining and scaling the training to other districts is a priority. Staff in Aileu reported clear benefits for children and parents but highlighted the need for adequate SDF supplies, PPE, transport, and proper portable equipment to expand and improve school-based follow-up activities.

#### **3.3 Community engagement**

There are several opportunities for community-involvement activities, including leveraging the existing government SISCA program, and could integrate oral health education for children. The mother support group initiated by Alola also could be used here. Dental staff could be trained to deliver these messages and further support community health volunteers. Additionally, organisations such as Uma Ita Nian have village motivators who are closely connected to communities and already active in disability-related work, presenting another strong channel for outreach.

During the discussion with the community organisations in Aileu, we learned that oral health practices in the villages remain limited, often children have untreated caries and often lack their own toothbrushes or toothpaste. Access to clean water is a major barrier, with women and children needing to fetch water, making regular toothbrushing difficult.

#### **4. Opportunities for future collaboration**

##### **4.1 At the Governance level**

- Establish a Memorandum with the Ministry of Health.
- Align the collaboration with the National Oral Health Strategic Plan, with the main focus on prevention.

##### **4.2 Program Opportunities and model of collaboration**

- Provision of IEC (Information, Education and Communication) printing materials that have been developed by the Ministry of Health
- Provide advisory support to Maluk Timor in scaling up the SDF implementation program and more.
- Support the community-based health promotion activities in schools and outreach activities such as SISCA, potentially by supporting technical capacity building for dental staff
- Fundraising for future activities and support for oral health promotion in Aileu and beyond, including dental equipment maintenance

#### **5. Conclusion**

The field visit highlighted readiness and enthusiasm for strengthening oral health prevention across multiple levels of the health system and community. With formalised governance arrangements and targeted resource support, there are strong opportunities to scale preventive oral health activities in Aileu and beyond.

**Attachment 9** (page 1 of 6)**Report on the Friends of Aileu - Friends of Baucau - Future Collective community engagement visit to Timor-Leste, October 2025**

The visit involved collaborations with:

- Future Collective and Friends of Baucau for the PermaYouth Convergence, Fatuqueru, Ermera, and visits to Atekru, Atauro Island, and Aileu
- Victoria University for Pre-School Education fact finding

Highlights reported to the Friends of Aileu Community Committee meeting of 9 December 2025, included the following (refer also to **Appendix 1** photographs of the visit):

- The reception provided by Mr José Vicente, Vilanova, Aileu Municipal Administration's Secretary for Admin and Finance, a former scholarship recipient, for Aoife, Carlo and Siobhan
- Kindergarten exploratory visit taking in discussions and/or trial lessons with managers, teachers and students including:
  - Meeting with the Education Advisors to the President and the Minister for Education
  - Visiting the kindergarten at the ISHMAIK Centre in Aileu, with José Valente's mother Mrs Mafalda
  - Visiting the Kindergarten at the Aileu CAFÉ (Portuguese) Primary School
  - Visiting the SEFOPE English language course for PALM Scheme applicants, with Henrique Rodrigues
  - Visiting
    - Aileu Resource and Training Centre
    - Aileu Municipal Youth Centre, donating some soccer balls
  - Meeting with Kirsty Sword Gusmão and a 2-day Train The Trainer session with her Mother Tongue Project volunteers
- The Future Collective trip, involving:
  - A group of 9, including Tina, Lena and Xavi as Youth Leadership Awardees (sponsored by Foa (1) and FoB (2) and Joaquinho from ARTC (sponsored by FoA)
  - A couple of days at the Atecrú, Atauro Island, with the local community at the *Na Terra* NGO's environmental education and permaculture centre
  - A visit to the *Bridging Peoples* NGO in Dili
  - An overnight stay at Aileu including visits to:
    - The Aileu Resource and Training Centre and its Kadalak Dame garden project
    - The Aileu Municipal Youth Centre, who were engaged in a Japanese language course, with José Valente
  - Several days at the PermaYouth Convergence, connecting with many foreign and Timorese participants, including:
    - The 10 Kadalak Dame workers (as part of the ARTC's Permafund funded project) whose participation was funded by Friends of Aileu
    - The 26 other young PermaYouth Camp alumni and local community leaders from Aileu's rural villages, organised by Aileu Anan Association (AILA) and whose participation was funded by Friends of Aileu.

Aoife also noted, regarding the:

- Kindergarten trip, that the opportunities for future support being considered by Siobhan at VU
- PermaYouth trip, that follow up activities for 2026 being organised with Tina, Lena and Xavi in collaboration with Friends of Baucau.

**Attachment 9** (page 2 of 6)

**Appendix 1 contd.**



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**Attachment 9** (page 3 of 6)

**Appendix 1 contd.**



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**Appendix 1 contd.**



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**Appendix 1 contd.**



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**Appendix 1 contd.**



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**Attachment 10 (page 1 of 3)****Financial Summary for calendar year 2025****10.1 Friends of Aileu donations and fundraising accounts 2025 (\$AU)**

Account	Balance 01/01/25	Income Jan-Dec	Expenditure Jan-Dec	Movement Jan-Dec	Balance 31/12/25
<b>1.3159 Donations and Fundraising</b>	17,299.10	38,635.63	45,045.53	(6,409.90)	10,889.20
<b>1.3160 Fundraising Sales</b>	1,964.00	3,899.65	1,700.00	2,199.65	4,163.65
<b>Totals</b>	<b>19,263.10</b>	<b>42,535.28</b>	<b>46,745.53</b>	<b>(4,210.25)</b>	<b>15,052.85</b>
<b>Balance at 31/12/25</b>					<b>\$15,052.85</b>

**10.2 Income from fundraising and donations 2025**

Source	Amount \$AU	Allocated for
G&GR donation	2,600	OHP 2026
Jamie R donation	2,500	OHP 2025 & 26
<i>GiveNow</i> donations	336	OHP 2026
Oral Health donation via Balibo House Trust	4,000	OHP 2025
Mark H donation	500	ARTC 2026
Hume City Council donation	5,200	ICFP 2025
Other donations	1,250	PermaYouth 2025
Grassroots Gathering, February 2025	3,415	PermaYouth 2025
25 <sup>th</sup> anniversary event, May 2025	6,812	Friendship Commission, Aileu Youth Centre & ARTC
Merlynston movie night, August 2025	1,323	
Trivia Quiz fundraiser, November 2025	10,700	Scholarships 2026
<b>Sub-total donations and fundraising</b>	<b>38,636</b>	
<b>Fundraising sales (nett)</b>	<b>2,200</b>	Coffee and craft items
<b>Total Income 2025</b>	<b>\$40,836</b>	

**Attachment 10** (page 2 of 3)**10.3 Expenditure on Projects and Activities 2025**

<b>Recipient</b>	<b>Amount \$AU</b>	<b>Project or Activity</b>
Australian Marist Solidarity	4,125	Baucau Teachers College scholarships 2024
Australian Marist Solidarity	4,505	Baucau Teachers College scholarships 2025
Aileu Municipal Youth Centre, for Aileu Municipal Administration	11,797	Aileu Scholarship Program 2025
Aileu Municipal Youth Centre, for Aileu Municipal Administration	1693	Aileu Friendship Commission operations
Aileu Municipal Youth Centre (ANYC)	1693	AMYC operations
Aileu Resource and Training Centre (ARTC)	2,948	ARTC operations
Aileu Resource and Training Centre (ARTC)	4,113	Aileu Expo
Aileu Anan Association (AILA)	3,947	Village youth and ARTC Kadalak Dame workers participation costs 2025 PermaYouth Convergence
Sandra Frans	1,691	Oral Health Promotion field visit, air fare
Sandra Frans	4,794	Oral Health Promotion field visit, T-L costs
Xavi dos Santos	1,790	PermaYouth Convergence, air fare
Xavi dos Santos	1,950	PermaYouth Convergence, Future Collective fee
<b>Total Expenditure 2025</b>	<b>45,046</b>	

**Attachment 10** (page 3 of 3)

**8 Financial Summary for calendar year 2025**

**8.4 Financial Outlook for 2026**

**8.4.1 Income Jan 2026**

Give Now OHP	\$148.49
<u>Coffee Uncommitted</u>	<u>\$60.00</u>
	<b>\$208.49</b>

**8.4.2 Funds available at 31/01/26**

Balance 31/12/25	\$15,053
Income Jan 2026	\$208
To be invoiced Balibo House Trust	\$2,150
<u>To be invoiced Hume City Council</u>	<u>\$5,200</u>
<b>Total funds available</b>	<b>\$22,611</b>

**8.4.3 Committed funds**

Scholarship program	\$10,700
Baucau Teachers College scholarships	\$5,200
Oral Health Promotion (G&GR 2,600 + JRob 809 + NS friend 1,356 + GiveNow 360)	\$5,125
<u>ARTC operations (MH donation)</u>	<u>\$500</u>
<b>Sub-total committed funds</b>	<b>\$21,525</b>

**8.4.4 Current uncommitted funds \$1,086**

**8.4.5 Priorities for 2026 fundraising**

(subject to OHPWG and FoA Community Committee deliberations)

**Potential 2026 fundraising**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Source</b>
Additional OHP target	7,000	March Giving Circle
Aileu Friendship Commission operations	1,500	Uncommitted funds and
Aileu Youth Centre operations	1,500	2026 Coffee/Craft sales
Additional ARTC operations	4,500	Possible August
ARTC Expo	4,000	fundraiser and/or ATLFN
AILA PermaYouth	5,000	Possible April-June event
Maryknoll sewing group	1,250	and/or ATLFN
<u>2027 Scholarship Program</u>	<u>\$12,500</u>	<u>2026 Trivia Quiz</u>
<b>Sub-total fundraising priorities</b>	<b>\$37,250</b>	
<u>ARTC replacement motorcycle</u>	<u>\$3,000</u>	
<b>Total additional fundraising priorities</b>	<b>\$40,250</b>	

This \$40,250 fundraising target:

- compares to 2025 income of \$40,836 (\$38,636 plus nett coffee & craft sales of \$2,200)
- if fully achieved and expended would leave carry over to 2027 of only the estimated \$12,500 from the 2026 Trivia Quiz for the 2027 Scholarships

## 7.13 OPEN COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS REPORT

Acting Director Business Transformation, Yvonne Callanan

Governance and Strategy

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### Officer Recommendation

That Council receives and notes the Open Council Resolutions Report provided as Attachment 1 to this report.

<b>REPORT</b>
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### Executive Summary

The Open Council Resolutions Report provided as **Attachment 1**, has been prepared to inform Councillors and the community of the actions taken to date to implement Council resolutions that are currently open and not yet finalised.

There are currently 36 open Council resolutions, with 2 of these relating to Petitions, 19 relating to Council officer reports and 15 relating to Notices of Motion.

### Previous Council Decisions

**Open Council Resolutions Report – 11 February 2026**

*That Council receives and notes the Open Council Resolutions Report provided as Attachment 1 to this report.*

#### 1. Policy Context

Section 46(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020* states:

- (a) That Chief Executive Officer has responsibility for ensuring that the decisions of the Council are implemented without undue delay.
- (e) When requested by the Mayor, reporting to the Council in respect of the implementation of a Council decision.

This report also supports Council's continuing commitment to transparent management of resources on behalf of ratepayers, key stakeholders and the broader community.

#### 2. Background

The purpose of the Open Council Resolutions Report, provided as **Attachment 1**, is to inform Councillors and the community of the actions taken to date to implement the Council resolutions that are currently open.

#### 3. Issues

The Open Council Resolutions Report (shown at **Attachment 1**) outlines the open resolutions and indicates that there is a total of 36 Open Resolutions, with 2 of these relating to Petitions, 19 relating to Council officer reports and 15 relating to Notices of Motion. Each open resolution in **Attachment 1**, includes a target date for completion.

The table below details the allocation of open items - Petitions, Council Reports, Notices of Motion, and Urgent Business—across each Directorate and the CEO Executive Office:

<b>Directorate</b>	<b>Petitions</b>	<b>Council Reports</b>	<b>Notices of Motion</b>	<b>Urgent Business</b>
Chief Executive Office	-	-	-	-
Business Transformation	-	-	1	-
City Infrastructure	-	2	1	-
Community	-	3	7	-
Place and Environment	2	14	6	-
	<b>2</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>

**Attachment 1** excludes resolutions relating to Confidential Items and items relating to Planning and Related Matters.

An Open Council Resolutions report is presented to Council on an ongoing basis, to promote the transparency of how Council resolutions are implemented.

### **Community impact**

Community impact is addressed through the Council Plan 2025-2029 under strategic objective 4: Act with transparency and accountability in all financial and governance practices, setting the standard for integrity and building trust within the community.

### **Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications**

There are no climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications associated with the preparation of this report.

### **Economic sustainability implications**

There are no economic sustainability implications associated with the preparation of this report.

### **Legal and risk considerations**

There are no legal and risk implications associated with the preparation of 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.

## **4. Community consultation and engagement**

Community consultation and engagement is not required for this report as it reflects the status of the implementation of Council Decisions that have been previously made.

### **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 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**

Any financial implications associated with the preparation of this report have been met within existing resource and budget allocations.

## 7. Implementation

The reporting of the Open Council Resolutions will continue on an ongoing basis, with the next report to be presented to Council in August 2026.

### Attachment/s

- |                     |   |            |
|---------------------|---|------------|
| 1 <a href="#">↓</a> | Open Council Resolutions Report for the period ending 31 March 2026 | D26/196600 |
|---------------------|---|------------|

# Open Council Resolutions Report

For the period ending 31 March 2026



## Contents

Petitions.....	2
Officer Reports.....	3
Notices of Motion.....	23

## Petitions – 2

<b>Place and Environment</b>	<b>Council 13/08/2025</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 28/06/2026
<b>5.1</b>	<b>PETITION REQUESTING COUNCIL TAKE ACTION TO REDUCE THE VOLUME OF CARS ON SHAFTSBURY STREET, COBURG</b>	
That Council:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Receives the petition, requesting Council take action to reduce the volume of cars on Shaftsbury Street, Coburg, particularly between Reynard Street and Munro Street.</li> <li>2. Refers the petition requesting Council take action to reduce the volume of cars on Shaftsbury Street, Coburg, particularly between Reynard Street and Munro Street, to the Director Place and Environment for consideration and response.</li> </ol>		
<b>Progress Comment</b>		
Response to petition is being prepared. Shaftsbury Street has been added to the project list for consideration for the 2026-27 road safety design program.		

<b>Place and Environment</b>	<b>Council 11/03/2026</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 25/06/2026
<b>5.1</b>	<b>PETITION REQUESTING COUNCIL INSTALL NO PARKING SIGNS INSTALLED ON ONE SIDE OF WHEATSHEAF RD, GLENROY</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Receives the petition, requesting Council install No Parking signs on one side of Wheatsheaf Road.</li> <li>2. Refers the petition requesting Council install No Parking signs on one side of Wheatsheaf Road to the Director Place and Environment for consideration and response.</li> </ol>		
<b>Progress Comment</b>		
Petition being reviewed and investigated.		

## Officer Reports – 19

Place and Environment	Council 11/10/2017	Target date for full completion:
DCS59/17	PROPOSED LAND SWAP WITH DARUL ULUM COLLEGE OF VICTORIA - EVANS RESERVE, FAWKNER	30/06/2026
<p>That Council, having given public notice and having considered the submission received, in accordance with sections 189 and 223 of the <i>Local Government Act 1989</i>:</p>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Determines to exchange part of its land at 20 Victory Street, Fawkner, with land currently owned by Darul Ulum College of Victoria at 21 and 23 Marjory and 16 and 18 Victory Streets, Fawkner, as shown in the negotiated plan at Attachment 1 to this report.</li> <li>2. Authorises the Director Corporate Services to do all things necessary to affect the exchange of land of part of its land at 20 Victory Street, Fawkner as shown in with land owned by the Darul Ulum College of Victoria at 21 and 23 Marjory and 16 and 18 Victory Streets, Fawkner, as shown in Attachment 1 to this report, including the execution of all relevant documentation.</li> <li>3. Authorises the Director Corporate Services to commence the subdivision of approximately 2,393 square metres from the Evans Reserve, shown as the red hatched area on Attachment 1 to this report, and remove its drainage, sewerage and recreation reserve status pursuant to section 24(A) of the <i>Subdivisions Act 1988</i>.</li> <li>4. Requests authorisation from the Minister for Planning to prepare a planning scheme amendment in accordance with section 20(4) of the <i>Planning and Environment Act 1987</i> to rezone 21 and 23 Marjory and 16 and 18 Victory Streets, Fawkner, to Public Park and Recreation Zone and rezone the land to be sold at 20 Victory Street, Fawkner, shown as the blue hatched area on attachment 1 to this report, to General Residential 1 (GRZ1).</li> <li>5. Notifies the person who made a submission in writing of its decision and the reasons for that decision.</li> <li>6. Explores options with Darul Ulum to preserve 7 mature native trees that exist on the site in keeping with the aims of the newly adopted Urban Forest Strategy.</li> </ol>		
<p><b>Progress Comment</b></p>		
<p>The land swap process is underway. Since the original 2017 decision, the State Government has introduced a Windfall Gains Tax that may render the swap cost prohibitive. Council requested a ruling from the State Revenue Office (SRO) to confirm whether the tax applies however the SRO has declined to issue a ruling. Council's legal advisor is considering the SRO's response and Council's next steps will be informed by this guidance.</p>		

Place and Environment	Council 13/09/2023	Target date for full completion: 31/05/2026
<b>7.9 NAMING OF LANEWAYS</b>		
That Council:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Notes the potential risks and resource challenges associated with a universal approach to naming laneways, and that individual requests for naming laneways can be accommodated within the existing Naming Merri-bek Places Policy (2013), in cases where there is a clear reason to consider them as exceptions to standard practice.</li> <li>2. Continues discussions with Geographic Names Victoria to assess the name 'Kastoria Lane' against Geographic Naming Victoria's naming rules for places in Victoria - Statutory requirements for naming roads, features and localities – 2022.</li> <li>3. Writes to the submitter of the request to name a walkway on Sydney Road 'Pagonis Place' requesting supporting evidence in relation to the naming rules, specifically Principle C – linking the name to the place and Principle I – using commemorative names.</li> <li>4. Commence a formal process to name the laneway between Trafford Street and Ann Street, Brunswick.</li> <li>5. Continues to assess individual naming requests as the naming authority, noting that the Registrar of Geographic Names holds the power to either approve or reject any proposal for naming.</li> <li>6. Refers to the 2024/25 budget process consideration of allocating funds for the installation of informative text beneath new road names and interpretive signage at newly named parks to offer insights into the history and significance of place names and enhances understanding and appreciation of the locale's heritage and cultural importance.</li> <li>7. If budget savings are declared in the 2023/24 budget, that consideration be given to allocating savings identified to ensure that projects nominated in this recommendation are delivered with interpretive signage elements.</li> </ol>		
<p><b>Progress Comment</b></p> <p>All actions have been implemented except for point 4 which will commence once Council's naming policy has been updated. Work is in train to update Council's naming policy in 2026.</p>		

<b>Place and Environment</b>	<b>Council 8/05/2024</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 30/05/2026
<b>7.4 NAMING THE PARK AT 14 FRITH STREET, BRUNSWICK - VOTING POLL RESULTS</b>		
That Council:		
1. Undertake a review of the Naming Merri-bek Places Policy, including consideration of:		
a) Considering naming parks and facilities only after they have been opened to the public, allowing users of the space to engage in the naming process.		
b) Reviewing consultation methods to explore additional strategies for increasing community participation.		
c) Considering incorporating a pre-poll workshop with submitters and stakeholders to discuss proposed names, taking into account historical and contextual factors for each site, as well as the overarching objectives of the policy, particularly in prioritising indigenous, women and migrant names.		
<b>Progress Comment</b>		
A review of the Naming Merri-bek Places Policy is underway.		

<b>Place and Environment</b>	<b>Council 10/07/2024</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 30/06/2026
<b>7.1 BARROW STREET TRIAL ROAD CLOSURE AT HARDING STREET, COBURG</b>		
That Council:		
1. Considering the report from the Department of Transport and Planning and the written and verbal submissions from the public submitted under Section 223 of the <i>Local Government Act 1989</i> (the Act), resolves under Clause 10, Schedule 11 of the Act to block the passage or access of vehicles,		

other than bicycles and pedestrians, by installing temporary barriers (bollards) to trial a road closure on Barrow Street, Coburg, from the intersection of Harding Street to a point up to 8 metres further south. The trial shall be in place for approximately 12 months starting in December 2024.

2. Following the trial, receives a report from Council officers in early 2026 with a recommendation on whether to proceed with consulting with the community on a permanent road closure under Section 223 of the Act.
3. Schedules installation of trial infrastructure to occur during the 2024/25 Summer School Holidays to allow for local schools and the community to prepare for the closure ahead of the 2025 school year.

**Progress Comment**

The trial period ended in January 2026. Evaluation has been undertaken and an evaluation report is scheduled for the May 2026 Council meeting. At this time the action will be completed.

<b>Place and Environment</b>	<b>Council 12/02/2025</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 30/09/2026
<b>7.6 FAWKNER TRANSPORT STUDY IMPLEMENTATION</b>		
That Council:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Endorses infrastructure improvements to improve transport safety and accessibility in Fawkner including:                     <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) A new pedestrian priority crossing on Jukes Road at the Fawkner Leisure Centre to assist in north-south movement.</li> <li>b) Completing a missing link of shared user path between McBryde Street and the Merri Creek.</li> <li>c) Shared Path Accessibility Improvements in Charles Mutton Reserve.</li> <li>d) Zebra Crossings at the intersections of Jukes Road and Williams Street.</li> <li>e) Raised threshold crossings along Jukes Road at the intersections of McDougall Street, Penn Court and Co-op Lane.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Endorses the following actions to reduce conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles on Bonwick Street:                     <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Installing new signage to direct visitors to the adjacent car parks near Bonwick Street.</li> <li>b) Formally requesting a compliance blitz by Victoria Police to reduce double parking, cars not giving way to pedestrians and other unsafe driver behaviour.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>		

c) Reconsider a “Walking Legs” pedestrian sign on the zebra crossing in the carpark on the eastern side of Bonwick St to signify that that it is a pedestrian crossing.

d) In 12 months assess the impact of the above measures on the intersection of Jukes Rd and Bonwick St and bring a report to council identifying ways pedestrian safety could be further improved

3. Endorses the Fawkner Safe Travel Corridors as the preferred active transport routes within Fawkner and investigates extending the north south cycling corridor continuing through Parker Reserve to Shorts Road to enable this as a safe cycling corridor to Aldi supermarket, Upfield Bike Path, Merlynston Station, and Hosken Reserve.

4. Notes that there will be opportunity as part of the Streets for People Plan to identify priority corridors throughout Merri-bek for targeting improvements, which may include the east-west bicycle route in Fawkner at Roma Street and the Sydney Road – Murray Street intersection.

**Progress Comment**

Item 1b, 1d and 1e are complete. Desing on 1a and 1c are in progress., Item 2a is expected to be delivered by June 2026. Item 2c has been completed. Officers will review and report on safety improvements after 12 months of implementation., Item 3 and 4 are complete, as previously reported.

<b>Community</b>	<b>Council 12/03/2025</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 30/08/2026
<b>7.2 BACHAR HOULI FOUNDATION – ISLAMIC COLLEGE OF SPORT AND ASPIRE SPORTS CENTRE</b>		
That Council:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notes the Bachar Houli Foundations concept designs for the proposed Aspire Sports Centre as shown in Attachment 1.</li> <li>Notes the Federal Government’s commitment to provide grant funding of \$15 million and the Bachar Houli Foundation’s application to the Victorian Government’s Building Fund for Non-Government Schools to develop the facility.</li> <li>Notes the planning requirements that must be met for the project to proceed, and the significant community benefits it will deliver.</li> <li>Resolves to enter into a peppercorn lease agreement with the Bachar Houli Foundation for a 30-year term with a 10-year extension option, exercisable by the Bachar Houli Foundation, subject to confirmation that funding has been secured for the project.</li> </ol>		

<p>5. Receives a further report setting out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) detailed terms of the proposed lease agreement</li> <li>b) potential relocation options for existing users at the former Coburg Bowls Club</li> <li>c) grant funding updates</li> <li>d) further design and planning considerations, draft community and stakeholder engagement plan</li> <li>e) details outlining how women and girls will be intentionally included in the programs and design of the facility and how this will be measured and reported by the Bachar Houli Foundation</li> </ul> <p>6. Requests officers continue to explore the potential of Council's adjacent Russell Street car park sites, particularly for future community sport and recreation infrastructure needs, and maximise any synergies or colocation potential with the Bachar Houli Foundation as their proposal develops.</p> <p><b>Progress Comment</b></p> <p>Council officers are working with the Bachar Houli Foundation and other stakeholders in relation to the project and its design and use. Discussions regarding lease terms are continuing and once finalised will form the basis of a report to Council later this year.</p>
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<b>Community</b>	<b>Council 12/03/2025</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 9/06/2027
<b>7.5 VICKI CLEARY DAY 2025 AND FAMILY VIOLENCE INITIATIVES</b>		
That Council:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Notes the information provided on current data, initiative and partnerships on prevention of family violence and gender based violence</li> <li>2. Endorses the proposed program of support for the annual Vicki Cleary Day.</li> <li>3. Requests that an evaluation, outcomes report, and future program proposal be presented to Council for consideration in the first half of 2027.</li> <li>4. Refers support for Vicki Cleary Day in May 2025 to Quarter 3 budget deliberations.</li> <li>5. Refers a funding request of \$40,000 to the 2025/26 budget process for consideration.</li> </ul>		

**Progress Comment**

Funding agreement in place with club and budget confirmed for 26/27. Working towards the evaluation and outcome to be presented to Council in 2027.

**Place and Environment**

Council 9/04/2025

**Target date for full completion:**

30/06/2026

**7.16 ELECTRICAL CAPACITY UPGRADE - HADFIELD OPERATIONS CENTRE**

That Council:

1. Notes the need for an increase in electrical capacity at the Hadfield Operations Centre (also known as 5 Walter Street, Hadfield) by 3,000kVA (or 3 MW), to support electrification of the site and installation of infrastructure necessary for the transition of Council fleet to zero emissions vehicles.
2. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to upgrade electrical capacity at Hadfield Operations Centre, including:
  - a) Accepting the negotiated offer from Jemena to install a new 3 MegaWatt kiosk transformer at Hadfield Operations Centre, for \$403,690.59 (excluding GST); and
  - b) Executing a contract for the delivery of required civil and electrical works on Council property to operationalise the transformer.
3. Notes that the following sums have been referred to the draft budget process for 2025/26:
  - a) \$403,690 (for the Jemena offer)
  - b) \$376,000 (for the remaining works).

**Progress Comment**

2a) Planning is progressing. Still awaiting response from Jemena to approve required changes to the location of the transformer before works can commence.

2b) The contract for the civil and electrical works has yet to be executed. Once final location of transformer is approved, this work can proceed.

Place and Environment	Council 9/07/2025	Target date for full completion: 30/06/2026
7.4	<b>CARBON OFFSETS POLICY UPDATE</b>	
That Council:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Acknowledges that Council has achieved significant reductions to its direct emissions over many years through investment in renewable energy, energy efficiency, fleet electrification and other measures, and that initiatives to reduce Council's remaining emissions while in train are more difficult and expensive than those already delivered.</li> <li>2. Commits to ongoing direct action to reduce Merri-bek Council's operational emissions to zero, as outlined in the Merri-bek Zero Carbon – 2040 Framework corporate target of 80-100% reduction by 2030.</li> <li>3. Commits to releasing a public statement indicating that Merri-bek City Council is determined to reach its target of carbon neutrality, with transparency in the way we work towards it.</li> <li>4. Pauses its Carbon Offsets Purchase Policy for a period of up to 12 months, and diverts the budget allocation for carbon offsets to develop options for verified local offsets for Council's residual emissions (including working with neighbouring councils and the Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action where appropriate).</li> <li>5. Notes that to obtain Climate Active certification in future would currently require that Council "catch up" 2025-26 offsets.</li> <li>6. Continues to monitor developments with carbon offsets and receives a future report which outlines a timeline and investment for options for council to reach zero emissions over time, prioritising direct reductions.</li> </ol>		
<b>Progress Comment</b>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Complete. The public statement was released in October 2025. Including postings on the council website and Zero Carbon Merri-bek website and newsletter.</li> <li>4. Purchase of Carbon Offsets is paused, however no alternative verified local offset options have been identified.</li> <li>6. A report will come to Council later this financial year.</li> </ol>		

Place and Environment	Council 13/08/2025	Target date for full completion: 27/08/2026
<b>7.1 STREETS FOR PEOPLE PLAN</b>		
That Council:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Notes the findings of the community engagement on the draft Streets for People Plan, and thanks the community for their feedback.</li> <li>2. Adopts the Streets for People Plan (Attachment 1), including the Streets for People network, the high priority projects list, and the Streets for People process for design, community engagement, and delivery.</li> <li>3. Advocates to the State Government to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Make improvements to Elm Grove and Urquhart Street in the Coburg Civic and Pentridge area or negotiate changes in the responsible authority for roads in this area, with a goal of moving the state road designation from Elm and Urquhart Streets to Pentridge Boulevard.</li> <li>b) Make improvements for people walking and riding along the length of Boundary Road, Pascoe Street, and Rhodes Parade, in Pascoe Vale.</li> <li>c) Design and deliver the Craigieburn Line shared path project in collaboration with Council.</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Notes the findings of the investigation into turning roads into parks.</li> <li>5. Conducts a review into the operation of Northumberland Road, between Rhodes Parade and Arndt Street, 12 months following reconstruction of the road. The review shall consider feedback from Pascoe Vale Girls College, Pascoe Street businesses, local residents, and users of Northumberland Road.</li> <li>6. Adds the following text to the 'Proposed Network - Corridor and Targeted network' section of the Streets for People Plan (as a new paragraph 2 on Page 17 of the plan – page 41 of the Council Agenda): “Targeted projects focus on smaller improvements that can be made to the street. This includes elements such as street trees, wayfinding, street benches, and other amenities. Targeted projects typically will not consider significant changes to the way the street operates, such as road closures or protected bike lanes.”</li> <li>7. Changes the title in Table 3 of the Streets for People Plan from “Aspirations Community Engagement” to “Engagement on the community’s aspirations and lived experiences” (page 20 of the Streets for People Plan, and page 44 of the Council Agenda).</li> <li>8. Authorises the Director Place and Environment to make minor changes to the policy document for publication, as required.</li> </ol>		
<b>Progress Comment</b>		
Items 1,2,4,6,7 and 8 have been completed.		

Further advocacy on item 3 are well in train. The Mayor has written to the Minister advocating for the design and delivery of Craigieburn SUP to be undertaken by DTP (item 3c). Officers have written to the DTP Executive Director requesting active transport safety improvements to the Boundary Road – Pascoe Street – Rhodes Parade strategic cycling corridor (item 3b). The design project for improvements to Urquhart Street is in early stages and Council will write to the State to commence negotiations on support in delivering the streetscape improvements to the corridor and changes to responsible authority of Urquhart Street and Elm Grove in the coming months (item 3a)., A review of Northumberland is being scheduled following reconstruction of the road carriageway. Target date amended to August 2026 to allow for Northumberland Road project to be completed and a review undertaken

<b>Place and Environment</b>	<b>Council 12/11/2025</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 30/06/2026
<p><b>7.4 PROPOSED SALE OF COUNCIL LAND - 10 MURRELL STREET, GLENROY</b></p>		
<p>That Council:</p>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Notes the five submissions received in relation to the proposed sale of Council land at 10 Murrell Street, Glenroy, and the advice set out in this report.</li> <li>2. Endorses the proposed sale of the land by a public process.</li> <li>3. Writes to all submitters thanking them for their submissions and informing them of Council's decision.</li> <li>4. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to effect the sale.</li> <li>5. Directs the net proceeds of the sale to the Significant Projects Reserve.</li> </ol>		
<p><b>Progress Comment</b></p>		
<p>With the sale now endorsed, an agent will be engaged to commence the sale campaign. The campaign will begin in 2026 and the sale is expected to be settled around mid-2026.</p>		

<b>Place and Environment</b>	<b>Council 11/02/2026</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 11/08/2026
<b>7.1</b>	<b>PRIDE CIVIC ARTWORK</b>	
That Council:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Notes the outcomes of community and stakeholder engagement regarding the painting of intersex inclusive pride flag.</li> <li>2. Endorses the painting of an intersex inclusive pride flag on the footpath adjacent to Michelle Guglielmo Park at 260 Sydney Road Brunswick.</li> <li>3. Refers to the next Quarterly Budget Review the installation cost of up to \$20,000 for the installation of the intersex inclusive pride flag as per point 2 above.</li> <li>4. Endorses further exploration of Glenroy Community Hub as the potential location for a second future pride artwork, for potential incorporation in Council's public art program.</li> </ol>		
<b>Progress Comment</b>		
These actions are now complete. The mural has been installed and the footpath flag is in train for later in 2026		

<b>City Infrastructure</b>	<b>Council 11/02/2026</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 31/10/2026
<b>7.8</b>	<b>CONTRACT AWARD: RFT-2025-56 - ROAD RECONSTRUCTION - NORTHUMBERLAND ROAD PASCOE VALE (ARNDT ROAD TO RHODES PARADE)</b>	
That Council:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Make a formal offer to ADP Constructions Pty Ltd and ACN of 118 588 097 (Contractor) to award to the Contractor contract RFT-2025-56 Road Reconstruction Northumberland Road, Pascoe Vale (Arndt Road to Rhodes Parade) (Contract) on the following terms and otherwise subject to and in accordance with paragraph 1(b) of this Resolution:</li> </ol> </li> </ol>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. For total contract value is \$1,500,278.00 (excl. GST), with the fixed lump sum amount is \$1,298,000.00 (excl. GST) and provisional sum is \$202,278.00 (excl. GST).</li> <li>b) Negotiate and finalise the terms of the Contract between Council and the Contractor provided that:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. the terms specified in paragraph 1(a) of this Resolution shall not be altered without a further Resolution of Council; and</li> <li>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;</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Conditional on acceptance of the Contract by the Contractor in accordance with the terms of this Resolution:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to execute the Contract and any required documentation for the Contract; and</li> <li>b) Advises all tenderers of Council's decision in relation to the Contract.</li> <li>c) Refers the budget savings of \$757,571 to the quarterly review process.</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. In addition to the above points, Council immediately begin investigating solutions to outstanding safety issues on Northumberland Rd near Pascoe Vale Girls Secondary College and at the intersection of Pascoe St and Northumberland Road to address the school's concerns and local residents' concerns, in relation to safety.</li> <li>4. Assist the Pascoe Vale Girls Secondary College in advocating for a second school crossing supervisor.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Progress Comment:</b></p> <p>The construction contract has been executed and signed by Council and ADP Constructions. The Transport Planning team will investigate the safety measures in relation to the bike path and also investigate the requirement for the second school crossing.</p>

<b>Place and Environment</b>	<b>Council 11/03/2026</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 30/09/2026
<b>7.11</b>	<b>PROPOSED SALE OF COUNCIL LAND AT THE REAR OF 436-442 SYDNEY RD COBURG</b>	
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.

**Progress Comment**

Following notice and community feedback, a report is being submitted to the May Council meeting for a decision. At this time the action will be closed.

**Place and Environment****Council 11/03/2026****Target date for full completion:**

24/06/2026

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

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), with any future changes to parking on Staley St to come back to council for a decision.
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.
5. Explore further traffic calming measures for Staley Street.

**Progress Comment**

Further traffic calming measures for Staley Street under investigation. A report on the second round of community engagement will be scheduled for August 2026.

<b>Place and Environment</b>	<b>Council 11/03/2026</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 24/06/2026
<b>7.1 CENTRAL COBURG PROGRAM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY</b>		
That Council:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>2. Notes the feedback provided during the engagement in the draft Concept for Coburg and Framework Plan Engagement Report (Attachment 2).</li> <li>3. Publishes the draft Concept for Coburg and Framework Plan Engagement Report (Attachment 2) on Council's Conversations Merri-bek page.</li> <li>4. Receives an updated central Coburg framework plan following community feedback in the coming months.</li> </ol>		
<b>Progress Comment</b>		
Items 1, 2 and 3 are completed. Item 4 is on track for a report in June 2026.		

<b>Community</b>	<b>Council 11/03/2026</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 24/06/2026
<b>7.4 DRAFT LIBRARY STRATEGY 2026-2031</b>		
That Council endorses the draft Library Services Strategy 2026-2031 for public exhibition in March and April 2026 with wording in the document to indicate that Merri-bek libraries do not intend to adopt the model of unstaffed library hours. In addition that under the heading "Contemporary Library services", one of the actions to read "Opening hours reflect community expectations, including for staffed library opening hours".		
<b>Progress Comment</b>		
A report is being prepared on this matter for the June 2026 Council meeting.		

<b>Place and Environment</b>	<b>Council 11/03/2026</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 8/12/2027
<b>7.10</b>	<b>VISIBLE SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS IN HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	
That Council:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Notes that Amendment C233mbek seeks to reduce planning permit requirements for some visible solar energy systems on contributory and non-contributory heritage buildings.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>3. Notes that consultation with Council's Liveability Advisory Committee and Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience Advisory Committee, and the Brunswick History Group and the Coburg Historical Society will be undertaken as part of the preparation of the further report.</li> </ol>		
<b>Progress comment</b>		
The Liveability Advisory Committee will discuss the matter during the May advisory group meeting and will inform a following report to council.		

<b>City Infrastructure</b>	<b>Council 11/03/2026</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 31/08/2026
<b>7.15</b>	<b>CONTRACT AWARD: RFT-2024-26 - PANEL OF ENGINEERING CONSULTANCY SERVICES</b>	
That Council:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> </ol> </li> </ol>		

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.

**Progress Comment:**

For shortlisted panel contractors whose submissions included departures from the contract, negotiations are being undertaken to finalise the terms and conditions. Unsuccessful tenderers have been formally notified.

## Notices of Motion – 15

<b>Community</b>	<b>Council 9/08/2023</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 30/06/2027
<b>8.2</b>	<b>FIRST NATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE</b>	
That Council:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertakes a review of existing processes associated with Council decision-making (including the formation of Officer recommendations and Notices of Motion) that have an impact on the First Nations community and explore ways to effectively consider and/or refer such matters to the First Nations Advisory Committee and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation for their advice and feedback, prior to presenting to Council for consideration.</li> <li>In addition, the review would seek input from the First Nations Advisory Committee and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation at the beginning of the process and on the outcomes of the review prior to presentation to Council.</li> <li>Receives a further report identifying recommendations that can fulfill the objectives mentioned in point 1) above.</li> </ol>		
<b>Progress Comment</b>		
A First People's Strategy as part of the Council Plan will outline how this group will be involved in decisions. There is budget allocation in the draft 26/27 budget for consideration for this work. A report will be presented in 2027		

<b>Place and Environment</b>	<b>Council 13/03/2024</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 1/12/2026
<b>8.6</b>	<b>DANGERS FOR CYCLISTS AND PEDESTRIANS AT HUDSON STREET AND VICTORIA STREET, COBURG INTERSECTION</b>	
That Council:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Receives a report on safety hazards and potential solutions for cyclists and pedestrians at the Hudson Street and Victoria Street, Coburg intersection.</li> </ol>		

2. Requests officers to take account of potential flow-on effects of additional traffic to Hudson Street and consider the need for potential safety improvements to Hudson Street as part of the Harding/Munro Streets for People project.

**Progress Comment**  
 Concept designs prepared for community consultation to be exhibited with the Harding/Munro Street design. After that step this action will be completed.

<b>Community</b>	<b>Council 12/06/2024</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 31/07/2026
<b>8.1 STANDARDS FOR ENCLOSED DOG PARKS</b>		
That Council:		
1. Conducts a review of the standards for enclosed off-lead dog parks with consideration given to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• eliminating gaps in fences, underneath fences and underneath gates that allow tiny dogs to escape</li> <li>• provision of water in both the large dog and small dog sections of the dog park</li> <li>• provision of shade in dog parks, especially in the area where people gather to watch their dogs</li> <li>• latches on gates to be accessible on both sides of the gate for people in wheelchairs</li> </ul>		
2. Receives a report on the outcome of the review.		
<b>Progress Comment</b>		
Enclosed off-lead dog park standards are to be included in draft Open Space Guidelines. Draft Guidelines will be provided to members of the:, i) Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience,, ii) Health, Wellbeing and Social Inclusion and, iii) Liveability Advisory Committees for feedback early in 2026, with a proposed deadline for completion of the Open Space Guidelines of 30 June 2026 and a report summarising how the matters at item 1 have been considered by July 2026.		

<b>Community</b>	<b>Council 10/07/2024</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 12/08/2026
<b>8.2 RECOGNITION OF INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED LOCAL ARTIST – DESTINY DEACON 1956 TO 2024</b>		
That Council:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pays tribute to the life and work of internationally renowned Merri-bek artist Destiny Deacon.</li> <li>2. Receives a report with recommendations on the best way to recognize the contribution of Destiny Deacon to art, the First Nations community and the local community. Some suggestions for recognition to be considered include an artist's residency or art prize in Destiny Deacon's name as well as other recommendations.</li> </ol>		
<b>Progress Comment</b>		
Report on this matter is being prepared for a late 2026 Council meeting, following consultation with Destiny's family.		

<b>Place and Environment</b>	<b>Council 14/08/2024</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 31/10/2026
<b>8.3 SHORT STAY ACCOMMODATION</b>		
That Council:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Writes again to the Minister for Government Services, Gabrielle Williams MP, noting our earlier request for further detail about the proposed legislative changes in respect to short stay accommodation, observing that significant time has elapsed since the announcement of the measure and expressing concern about the efficacy of the proposed action, if it does not include an annual cap on the number of days a property can be rented on a short-term basis.</li> <li>2. Writes to the Minister for Planning raising the important issue of the proliferation of short-stay accommodation and its impact on housing supply in light of the current housing crisis and seeking the Minister's advice and views on the appropriateness of the planning system to address this issue and of any plans to do so as part of the Government's planning reform agenda, as well as advice on any other suggested mechanisms for how State and/or Local Government can regulate the extent to which dwellings are being rented out as short-stay accommodation.</li> </ol>		

3. Notes the success other jurisdictions have had in shifting properties back to long-term housing by installing caps on the number of days they can be available for short stay.
  4. Notes the advice provided in the report to the February 2024 Council meeting about the inability to pursue a local law on the basis of the impending legislation and receives a report once more detail is known about the legislation. The report should consider what options there are, particularly in relation to the ability for a local law to impose an annual cap on the number of days a property can be listed as short-stay accommodation and include any advice received from the Minister for Planning.
- Progress Comment**
1. Complete. Letter sent and response received in March 2025.
  2. Complete. Letter sent and response received in December 2024.
  3. Complete. No action required.
  4. In progress. Council Officers are preparing a submission to the state government draft report with proposed planning controls to help councils with regulating short-stay accommodation that was released in April. Council Officers are reviewing the draft report from with planning advice from the state government and will prepare a report to council for the second half of 2026.

<b>Place and Environment</b>	<b>Council 11/09/2024</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 30/12/2026
<b>8.3</b>	<b>UPFIELD TRAIN LINE</b>	
That Council:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Receives a report as soon as practicable that identifies the methodology and cost for a survey of people who live north of Batman station who are also current users of the Upfield Line or who have abandoned using the Upfield line. Such a survey would seek to discover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• why people have abandoned using the Upfield Line</li> <li>• changes people have made to their public transport usage because of the unreliability of the train service for people who live north of Batman station</li> <li>• whether people would resume using the Upfield train if it was duplicated to improve frequency and reduce cancellations</li> </ul> </li> </ol>		

- whether people would be attracted to using the Upfield train service if there were one or two extra train stations between Gowrie and Upfield stations.

2. Proposes to our partner Councils in the Northern Alliance of Councils (Banyule, Darebin, Hume, Mitchell Shire, Nillumbik and Whittlesea) that we commission this survey to support advocacy efforts for the Upfield Line duplication and extension.

**Progress Comment**  
Work to begin by September 2026, alongside development of the Transport Advocacy Strategy.

<b>Community</b>	<b>Council 12/02/2025</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 30/10/2026
<b>8.2</b>	<b>REVIVING PASCOE VALE POOL</b>	
That Council:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Acknowledges the importance of accessible, high quality local pools for all residents in Merri-bek.</li> <li>2. Recognises that during this Climate Crisis, we have an obligation to take proactive action and ensure that there are spaces for residents to stay cool in increasingly hot summers.</li> <li>3. Requests Officers provide a report that considers the level of investment required for the refurbishment of Pascoe Vale Pool, with a view to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extending opening hours</li> <li>• Improving facilities</li> <li>• Avoiding unexpected maintenance</li> <li>• Increasing sustainability</li> <li>• Advocating to both state and federal levels of government for funding.</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Revisits the Aquatic and Leisure Strategy for an update.</li> </ol>		

**Progress Comment**  
 Officers are progressing consultations with relevant stakeholders. A report will be presented to Council in late 2026. Delays due to Aquatics tender.

<b>Community</b>	<b>Council 12/02/2025</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 30/10/2026
<b>8.3 IMPROVING SAFETY, CLEANLINESS AND WELLBEING OF COMMUNITY AT VICTORIA MALL</b>		
<p>That Council receives a report by mid-March that considers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Security                      In the interests of public safety, Council extends the current level of Security Services in Victoria Mall with these security services to be trained in and have a focus on de-escalation, for a period of a further 6 months and undertakes a review of the impact of these services within the next 3 months.</li> <li>2. Cleanliness                      Maintains and seeks to increase the cleaning services in the Mall, so that rubbish, tree debris and pigeon droppings are properly managed. In the interests of wellbeing the community should have access to a healthy, hygienic and pleasant public space, that enhances community wellbeing and contributes to a thriving local economy.</li> <li>3. Community Forum                      That Council coordinates a Community Needs and Safety Forum, which is advertised for the public to attend as well as all stakeholders, including Council, traders, service providers, sports clubs, community leaders to have an input into community safety in central Coburg. This forum should consider ways of turning the area in front of the Coburg Library into a community space.</li> <li>4. Exploring ways to better engage with people displaying dangerous and antisocial behaviour                      To keep the community safe, address safety concerns, and reassure shoppers, traders, and the community, Council explores methods for better engaging with people displaying dangerous and antisocial behaviour.</li> <li>5. Reinstating public seating with back rests and access to shelter in Coburg Mall                      In the interests of elderly people, people with mobility issues and others, Council to consider reinstating public seating with back rests in Coburg Mall. Consideration should be given to providing an equivalent amount of public seating to that which was demolished, and some of the new seating to be in front of the library with a table.</li> </ol>		

**Progress Comment**

Items 1 and 2 have been actioned. Item 4 has been actioned and appropriate measures are in place., Item 3, the community forum, is still to be organised in 2026 to determine further actions, which will include consideration of item 5.

**Community****Council 14/05/2025****Target date for full completion:**

30/12/2026

**8.3 HONOURING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF JOE SAM LUPPINO**

That Council:

1. Formally recognises and honors the outstanding contribution of Joe Sam Luppino by naming the grandstand at Coburg City Oval the "Joe Sam Luppino Stand".
2. Should this not be deemed suitable, identifies and considers an alternative location or facility within Merri-bek to appropriately commemorate Joe's legacy and service to the community.

**Progress Comment**

This naming process is still currently underway with delivery expected for 2026.

<b>City Infrastructure</b>	<b>Council 10/09/2025</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 30/06/2026
<b>8.6 ADDRESSING TYRE DUMPING</b>		
That Council:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Writes to the Minister for Environment requesting the State:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) bolsters Environment Protection Authority (EPA) resourcing and powers to deal with the prevalence of illegal tyre dumping; and</li><li>b) invests in Recycling Victoria programs that improve access to appropriate waste disposal and recycling facilities and develop end-markets for the use of recycled tyre materials</li></ol></li><li>2. Works with Tyre Stewardship Australia to develop and deliver public education programs and initiatives that support the Recycling Victoria programs.</li><li>3. Monitors illegal tyre dumping on Council owned land at known dumping sites for six months.</li><li>4. Explores opportunities to collaborate with our neighbouring councils to develop a regional response to tackle a common problem.</li><li>5. Receives a report back to Council within nine months on progress, including potential pilot programs or partnerships to reduce illegal tyre dumping in Merri-bek.</li></ol>		
<b>Progress Comment</b>		
Point 1 - 4 have been completed.		
Point 5 – A report to council will be presented at the June Council meeting.		

<b>Place and Environment</b>	<b>Council 10/09/2025</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 30/03/2026
<b>8.9 URGENT ACTION REQUIRED ON ROAD SAFETY: RECENT FATAL INCIDENTS ON MORELAND ROAD</b>		
That Council:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recognises two recent deaths on the state-controlled Moreland Road, of a cyclist on 25 August and a skateboarder in mid-May, both caused by motorists.</li> <li>2. Acknowledges the urgent need for a safer road environment for vulnerable users along Moreland Road.</li> <li>3. Writes to the Minister for Transport and relevant Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) officials to request: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) An immediate safety audit of Moreland Road.</li> <li>b) Implementation of priority interventions at Murdock Street, Gordon Street, and other high-risk locations.</li> <li>c) That the State government fund and deliver safety enhancements including pedestrian crossings, speed reductions, infrastructure upgrades, safe cycling infrastructure and road user awareness campaigns.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>		
<b>Progress Comment</b>		
Supporting documentation is being prepared to inform requests for road safety interventions and priority crossing investment on state roads. This work will inform the letter to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety.		

<b>Business Transformation</b>	<b>Council 8/10/2025</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 30/06/2026
<b>8.2 COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCE AT ALGA CONFERENCES</b>		
That Council:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Notes in accordance with the Councillor Support, Expenses and Resources Policy an annual budget allocation for attendance at seminars, conferences and training and community events, including for attendance at the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly, which is an important forum for local government advocacy.</li> </ol>		

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Notes the costs associated with Councillors attending ALGA multiple times in a single Council term can be significant, and that Council must balance professional development opportunities with responsible use of public funds.</li> <li>3. Requests a report that reviews Council's Councillor Support, Expenses and Resources Policy regarding Councillor attendance at the ALGA National General Assembly and review the process of Councillor reporting of their attendance at approved activities.</li> <li>4. Explores options for limiting paid councillor attendance such that each Councillor may only attend one National General Assembly at Council expense per Council term.</li> <li>5. Considers necessary exceptions, such as where a Councillor is elected to a national local government body or holds a representative role that requires ongoing attendance.</li> </ol> <p><b>Progress Comment</b>  <b>2 April 2026</b>                  1. and 2. Noted, 3. A report will be presented to the June 2026 Council meeting, providing a review of the Councillor Support, Expenses and Resources Policy in relation to attendance at the ALGA National General Assembly, reporting attendance at activities and considering options as outlined in points 4 and 5., 4. and 5. Will be considered as point 3 above.</p>
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Community	Council 11/02/2026	Target date
		30/12/2026
<b>8.2</b>	<b>COUNCIL SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY DURING EXTREME HEAT</b>	
That Council:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Notes that Merri-bek council recognised that we are in a state of climate emergency in 2018 which obligates council to help develop a climate resilient community through assisting the community to adapt to climate extremes such as extreme heat.</li> <li>2. Notes that climate change is causing an increase in the number of extreme heat events, which means that there is a need for more community venues that provide cool centres which are open to all community members</li> <li>3. Notes that Merri-bek's libraries and aquatic centres, outdoor pools and Maternal and Child Health Centres are relied on as public venues to provide cool spaces during extreme heat.</li> </ol>		

4. Recognises that lack of access to cool spaces is a human rights and equity issue with higher death rates on extreme heat days. This makes extreme heat a life and death issue for many people, especially people from a range of vulnerable communities such as seniors, people with disabilities, First Nations people, young parents with young children and migrant communities.
5. Receives a report which investigates:
  - a) potential additional community centres such as Neighbourhood Houses which could be cool centres to offer hot day activities in a cool environment. Such centres may need to be funded to install passive cooling such as a misting system and would be open to all community members.
  - b) how to make Merri-bek libraries and other Council venues more suitable to be cool spaces to promote to the community, using a holistic approach so that the spaces aren't just a bare air-conditioned room but have activities, programs and engagement.
  - c) availability of a health worker in a cool centre to monitor people's temperature
  - d) expanding the use of Merri-bek's community bus to transport elderly, isolated and vulnerable people to cool spaces
  - e) options for a cool space in Merri-bek such as CB Smith Reserve Fawkner where there are a number of Council facilities in close proximity to each other such as the Fawkner Leisure Centre, the Fawkner Library, the Fawkner Community Hall, Fawkner Community and CB Smith Sport Pavillion as well as a park.
  - f) extension of low-income subsidy scheme for energy efficiency and solar panels
  - g) that councils air conditioning infrastructure is maintained and fit for purpose across all of its workplaces and facilities.
6. Advocates to state government for a low-income subsidy scheme for people to install external blinds and secure window screens to mitigate against extreme heat.
7. Undertakes some targeted community consultation about what the community needs in order to deal with extreme heat. Such consultation could target seniors groups, domestic violence services, people with disabilities, migrant communities, homeless people, young parents with small children and other community organisations as well as open community consultation.
8. Considers a budget allocation in the 2026-27 Council budget for community initiatives to assist community centres such as neighbourhood houses to provide cool spaces for the community during extreme heat as well as targeted upgrades to make Council facilities able to be used as cool spaces.
9. Approaches the State Government about the potential for joint council and state government funding for such initiatives.

**Progress Comment**

A report on this matter will be provided to Council for consideration in the second half of 2026.

Place and Environment	Council 11/02/2026	Target date for full completion: 31/05/2026
<b>8.3</b>	<b>SYDNEY ROAD</b>	
<p>That Council receives a report to its May 2026 Council Meeting exploring options for how Council can strengthen its advocacy on making Sydney Road safer, greener and more accessible for everyone, including options for:</p>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Collecting data from local residents, patrons and traders on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) What changes people want to see along Sydney Road to make it safer, greener and a better experience;</li> <li>b) Experiences of how accessible Sydney Road is for them;</li> <li>c) Who is visiting local shops, cafes, bars and restaurants and the proportion of local residents and visitors from outside Merri-bek;</li> <li>d) Who would visit Sydney Road more if it were safer, greener and more accessible;</li> <li>e) How customers/patrons are getting to/from their destination on Sydney Road; and</li> <li>f) Any other relevant questions as deemed by Council Officers.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Completing analysis on current availability and usage of car parks, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) How much parking is currently along Sydney Road;</li> <li>b) How much parking is currently within walking distance to Sydney Road;</li> <li>c) Existing parking management arrangements for the above areas and whether these are appropriate for current and predicted future land uses; and</li> <li>d) Any other relevant factors to consider on parking.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Resourcing options to ensure advocating for a safer, greener and more accessible Sydney Road remains a priority for Council.</li> </ol>		
<p><b>Progress Comment</b></p>		
<p>Report scheduled for the May 2026 council meeting after which this action will be complete.</p>		

<b>Place and Environment</b>	<b>Council 11/03/2026</b>	<b>Target date for full completion:</b> 24/11/2026
<b>8.2 LANEWAY BEAUTIFICATION PROGRAM</b>		
That Council receives a report on a project to scope a laneway beautification program, which could:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Identify laneways and roundabouts to beautify.</li><li>2. Explore laneways and roundabouts that can be better activated.</li><li>3. Identify ways to encourage laneway and roundabout greening projects in appropriate neighbourhoods.</li></ol>		
<b>Progress Comment</b>		
Early investigation has commenced. A report will be scheduled for November 2026.		

## 7.14 GOVERNANCE REPORT - MAY 2026 - CYCLICAL REPORT

Acting Director Business Transformation, Yvonne Callanan

### Governance and Strategy

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#### Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the summary of minutes from the Advisory Committees and Groups to Council, at Attachment 1 to this report, as follows:
  - a) First Peoples Advisory Committee – 26 March 2026
  - b) Friends of Aileu Community Committee – 14 April 2026
2. Notes the Records of Meetings, at Attachment 2 to this report.
3. Notes responses to questions taken on notice during Public Question Time at the 11 March and 8 April 2026 Council meetings, provided as Attachment 3 to this report.
4. Revokes the Sister/Friendship City Guidelines (as adopted in 2016) and notes the transition of revised guidelines to be established as an internal operational guideline to be adopted by the Chief Executive Officer.

<b>REPORT</b>
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#### 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.
- Records of Meetings, with a recommendation that Council notes the records.
- Responses to Public Question Time items taken on notice at the 11 March and 8 April 2026 Council meetings, with a recommendation that Council notes the responses.

This report recommends revoking the Sister and Friendship City Guidelines (2016) as a Council-adopted document and transitioning revised guidelines as an internal operational document approved by the Chief Executive Officer. This recommendation responds to statutory obligations introduced since the original adoption and aims to strengthen compliance, governance and operational efficiency, while maintaining Council's decision-making authority proposals to establish or revoke international partnerships.

#### Previous Council Decisions

##### Sister Friendship/City Guidelines – 13 April 2016

1. *Council resolve to adopt the Sister/Friendship City Guidelines as per Attachment 1 amending section 6 of the Guidelines to read that: 'A report outlining the expenditure of this budget will be presented to Councillors'.*

...

#### 1. Policy Context

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.

Council's Governance Rules contains provisions which enable the Chairperson to take a question On Notice, with a considered written response being provided to the questioner, in circumstances including where the question requires information that is either not available or accessible at the time of that meeting, or where the time allowed for Public Question Time has elapsed.

Council has in place Sister/Friendship City Guidelines that sets out the criteria for officers to assess requests for sister/friendship city agreements to be established and make a recommendation to Council based on the outcome of that assessment.

Federal legislative provisions under Australia's *Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Act 2020* require all existing or prospective foreign arrangements with Councils, including Sister City arrangements, to be notified to the Minister of Foreign Affairs via the Foreign Arrangements Scheme. Merri-bek Council has complied with this requirement.

## 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.

Council's Sister/Friendship City Guidelines were adopted by Council in 2016 (which is due for review) to provide a framework for Council officers to assess requests for new international relationships and make recommendations to Council. At that time, there was no overarching federal legislative scheme regulating local government foreign arrangements.

In 2020, the Australia's *Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Act 2020* fundamentally changed this environment. Under the Act:

- All foreign arrangements entered into by local governments must be notified through the DFAT Foreign Arrangements Scheme.
- Sister and Friendship City relationships are classified as non-core foreign arrangements, but still require formal notification to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.
- Councils are required to demonstrate that appropriate internal processes are in place to assess, manage and oversee foreign arrangements before they are entered into or amended.

## 3. Issues

### Advisory Committee minutes

A summary of the minutes of Advisory Committees is provided at **Attachment 1** for Council's information:

- First Peoples Advisory Committee – 26 March 2026
- Friends of Aileu Community Committee – 14 April 2026

### 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 – 7 April 2026
- Councillor Briefing – 13 April 2026
- Councillor Briefing – 20 April 2026
- Planning Briefing – 20 April 2026
- Councillor Briefing – 27 April 2026
- Councillor Briefing – 4 May 2026

### **Responses to Questions taken On Notice at Council meetings**

At Council Meetings, questions are taken On Notice during Public Question Time, where persons submitting questions are not in attendance or where the maximum allowable time for public questions has elapsed.

Questions taken On Notice are provided with a written response following the meeting for which they are submitted and reported to Council at the next practicable meeting. The questions are recorded in the meeting minutes.

The responses to questions taken On Notice at **Attachment 3** to this report relate to questions from 11 March and 8 April 2026 Council meetings regarding:

- Use of dashboard cameras
- Enforcement of Road Rules

### **Proposed revocation of the Sister/Friendship City Guidelines**

Council's current Sister/Friendship City Guidelines (adopted in 2016) were developed before the introduction of the Commonwealth Foreign Arrangements Scheme and no longer reflect the legislative requirements that now apply. Under the Scheme, Councils must notify and obtain approval from the Minister for Foreign Affairs before progressing any international arrangement. A review of the Guidelines has therefore been undertaken to ensure they align with the current statutory framework and support compliant decision-making.

The review found that the existing guidelines and criteria as outlined in the guidelines for establishing and maintaining relationships remain sound and consistent with legislative expectations. However, updates are required to incorporate the new approval and notification processes. Importantly, the review confirms that Council's role is unchanged: Council retains full authority to determine whether Sister and Friendship City relationships are established, continued, or discontinued.

It is recommended that the Guidelines shift from a Council-adopted document to a CEO-endorsed internal guideline, as no changes are being made to the existing criteria. This will allow Council officers to efficiently manage administrative requirements, including mandatory notifications and approvals, while keeping decision-making with Council.

Council retains full authority over Sister and Friendship City relationships, that is whether to establish (subject to ministerial approval), maintain, or discontinue them. Once ministerial approval is received, all relevant information is provided to Council to support a formal and informed decision.

Council will also continue to receive regular reports (as required), including updates on requests received to establish relationships but were declined or unable to proceed due to legislative requirements.

#### **Community impact**

Advisory committees provide a valuable communication and consultation link between the organisation, Councillors, Council and the community.

#### **Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications**

There are no climate emergency implications associated with this report.

#### **Legal and risk considerations**

There are no legal and risk implications associated with the preparation of 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**

There are no 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:

- Revising and establishing Sister/Friendship City Guidelines as an internal operational guideline.

#### **Attachment/s**

<a href="#">1</a> ↓	Reports from Advisory Committees to Council - May 2026	D26/194923
<a href="#">2</a> ↓	Records of Meetings - May 2026	D26/194908
<a href="#">3</a> ↓	Responses to questions taken On Notice - May 2026	D26/165654

## FIRST PEOPLES ADVISORY COMMITTEE - 26 MARCH 2026

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A report of the First Peoples Advisory Committee meeting held on 26 March 2026 are provided for Council's information.

Councillors appointed to the First Peoples Advisory Committee: Cr Sue Bolton.

### Key Items Discussed

- The committee discussed meeting protocols, affirming that the purpose is to channel concerns constructively to decision-makers rather than place pressure on staff, and that mentoring support are available to First Nations council employees.
- Officers tabled a document explaining the annual budget cycle and where the committee can have input, noting the greatest opportunity is October–November when community budget ideas can be submitted; officers agreed to bring community grant application data and approved funding outcomes to a future meeting, with a suggestion that First Peoples organisations be invited to lead on capital works grant opportunities.
- The committee discussed the Ballert Mooroop project; the land transfer and rezoning process has slowed progress, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung will take the lead in submitting funding applications; a Council staff role is being refocused on First Peoples Projects and will include support for the Ballert Mooroop Corporation, and a further update will be provided at the next meeting.
- The committee received an update on the proposed MoU with Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV), which manages 50 homes in Merri-bek and is modelled on an arrangement established with Darebin Council; the MoU has three components covering participation and inclusion, information sharing and coordination, and registering and resolving issues; following a recommendation from the previous meeting, officers will commence the process of working towards negotiating the MoU; members raised the need for clear local data on First Nations housing need including population, age groups and homelessness levels, and officers committed to bringing this data and a proposed target to the next meeting.
- The committee agreed to host a workshop to collectively define what self-determination means in the context of council's work, recognising that council timelines and structures can be at odds with genuine self-determination practice.
- Officers confirmed the 1% First Nations procurement commitment and agreed to provide the list of eligible businesses.
- The next meeting is proposed for 28 May; members asked that Kim Kruger's availability be confirmed before the date is finalised, noting the value of her contribution.

### 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.

## FRIENDS OF AILEU COMMUNITY COMMITTEE - 14 APRIL 2026

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A report of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee meeting held on 14 April 2026 is provided for Council's information.

Councillors appointed to the Friends of Aileu Community Committee:

Merri-bek: Cr Adams Pulford (apology)

Hume: Cr Jarrod Bell (chair), Cr Naim Kurt (apology)

### Key Items Discussed

- A financial summary (fundraising and donations) 1 January to 31 March, noting also that the 2025 Financial Return to Consumer Affairs Victoria was lodged on-line on 13 April
- Friends of Aileu Annual Report 2025, proposed to be reported to the Merri-bek City Council meeting on 13 May 2026, and to Hume City Council via Councillor Bulletin
- A proposal to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish a *Friends of Timor-Leste MyFund* with the Inner North Community Foundation (INCF), in partnership with Friends of Baucau Inc. and the Timorese Association in Victoria Inc. Negotiations are ongoing, but it is intended that:
  - The MyFund would provide:
    - A vehicle for the Friends of Aileu Community Committee, the Friends of Baucau Inc. and the Timorese Association in Victoria Inc. (the three organisations) to collaborate on future community development activities
    - The ability for the Inner North Community Foundation to accord DGR status to eligible donations for DGR activities in Timor-Leste and Australia undertaken by non-DGR entities (the three organisations and/or their Timor-Leste implementing partners)
    - Opportunities to tap into bequests and other legacy donations including from existing and new donors to the Inner North Community Foundation
  - The MOU would provide for:
    - The respective chair/president of the three organisations to be nominated as the joint holders of the Friends of Timor-Leste MyFund
    - Nominated representatives of the three organisations to form the *Friends of Timor-Leste MyFund Advisory Committee* that would provide advice to INCF on the disbursement of donated funds and that MyFund's share of INCF earnings, taking account of relevant donor wishes
    - The three organisations to access disbursements from the MyFund, either for jointly agreed or for separately managed activities, taking account of relevant donor wishes
- Progress of the work of the Friends of Aileu Oral Health Promotion Project Working Group, including:
  - Plans to review the unsuccessful submission to the Borrow Foundation, that was developed with Malk Timor NGO, to determine whether a revised submission with additional research component might be prepared for a future funding round
  - The successful Giving Circle dinner fundraiser held on 27 March
  - The draft Memorandum of Intent (Friends of Aileu / Timor-Leste Ministry of Health / Aileu Municipal Administration) and draft Project Plan 2026-2029 currently being discussed with T-L MoH representatives

- Collaboration with the Aileu Resource and Training Centre (ARTC), including the proposal for Friends of Aileu to sponsor a visit to Victoria by ARTC Program Manager Joaquin dos Reis in August 2025
- Other Action Plan items for 2026, including:
  - Fundraising plans
  - A Library Talk, film screening *Culture, Country and Carbon* and discussion, with Professor Lisa Palmer, at Glenroy Community Hub on 23 April 7-9pm, free event, with registration requested via: <https://events.humanitix.com/culture-country-and-carbon-an-exchange-across-the-timor-sea-a-film-screening-and-discussion-with-professor-lisa-palmer-university-of-melbourne>

**Disclosures of Conflict of Interest**

No conflict of interest was disclosed at the meeting.

**Committee Recommendation**

The Committee recommended Council notes the Friends of Aileu Annual Report 2025, to be reported separately to the Council meeting of 13 May 2026.

**Attachment/s**

There are no attachments for this report.

# Record of Meeting

**Meeting: Councillor Briefing**

**Date: 7 April 2026**

**Meeting time: 6.00pm to 8.00pm**



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		
<b>Councillors</b>	Cr Helen Politis (acting chair) Cr Katerine Theodosis Cr Liz Irvin	Cr Adam Pulford Cr Chris Miles Cr Ella Svensson
<b>Apologies</b>	Cr Nat Abboud, Mayor Cr Oscar Yildiz JP	Cr Helen Davidson, Deputy Mayor Cr Sue Bolton
<b>Council Staff</b> (name and position)	Sue Vujcevic, Acting Chief Executive Officer Anita Curnow, Acting Director Business Transformation Greg Rodwell, Acting Director City Infrastructure Indivar Dhakal, Acting Director Place and Environment Lisa Dempster, Acting Director Community	

	Items discussed	Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1	Council meeting agenda	Nil	
2	Council meeting agenda item 7.8	Cr Liz Irvin indicated a general conflict with a project identified for a carry forward in the financial report	No
2	Update on land purchase suggestion by Greg Rodwell	Nil	
3	Reminder about requirements for any Councillor standing as a candidate in the forthcoming state election by Sue Vujcevic	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: Councillor Briefing**

**Date: 13 April 2026**

**Meeting time: 6.00pm to 8.00pm**



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	
<b>Councillors</b>	Cr Nat Abboud, Mayor Cr Sue Bolton Cr Liz Irvin Cr Adam Pulford Cr Chris Miles Cr Helen Davidson, Deputy Mayor Cr Jay Iwasaki Cr Helen Politis Cr Ella Svensson
<b>Apologies</b>	Cr Oscar Yildiz JP Cr Katerine Theodosis
<b>Council Staff</b> (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 Chrissy Grayland, Acting Manager Community Wellbeing Indivar Dhakal, Manager Capital Works Planning and Delivery Lisa Dempster, Manager Cultural Development Yvonne Callanan, Manager Governance and Strategy

Items discussed	Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1 Final Budget Review	Nil	
2 Community Awards Update	Nil	
3 2025-26 Community Budget Ideas Update	Nil	
4 Capital Works Update	Nil	
5 Pride Mural	Nil	
6 Revocation of Sister/Friendship City Guidelines	Nil	
7 Update from A/CEO – Industrial Action	Nil	

**Name and title** of Council officer completing record:

Anita Curnow, Acting Director Business Transformation

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# Record of Meeting

**Meeting: Councillor Briefing**

**Date: 20 April 2026**

**Meeting time: 6.00pm to 6.20pm**



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		
<b>Councillors</b>	Cr Nat Abboud, Mayor Cr Katerine Theodosis Cr Liz Irvin Cr Adam Pulford Cr Chris Miles	Cr Helen Davidson, Deputy Mayor Cr Jay Iwasaki Cr Helen Politis Cr Ella Svensson
<b>Apologies</b>	Cr Oscar Yildiz JP	Cr Sue Bolton
<b>Council Staff</b> (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	

	Items discussed	Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1	Contract-2025-2 Brunswick Early Years Hub	Nil	
2	Briefing on Industrial Action	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: Planning Briefing**

**Date: 20 April 2026**

**Meeting time: 6.20pm**



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													
<b>Councillors</b>	<table> <tr> <td>Cr Nat Abboud, Mayor</td> <td>Cr Helen Davidson, Deputy Mayor</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cr Sue Bolton</td> <td>Cr Jay Iwasaki</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cr Liz Irvin</td> <td>Cr Adam Pulford</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cr Helen Politis</td> <td>Cr Katerine Theodosis</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cr Ella Svensson</td> <td>Cr Oscar Yildiz JP</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cr Chris Miles</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Cr Nat Abboud, Mayor	Cr Helen Davidson, Deputy Mayor	Cr Sue Bolton	Cr Jay Iwasaki	Cr Liz Irvin	Cr Adam Pulford	Cr Helen Politis	Cr Katerine Theodosis	Cr Ella Svensson	Cr Oscar Yildiz JP	Cr Chris Miles	
Cr Nat Abboud, Mayor	Cr Helen Davidson, Deputy Mayor												
Cr Sue Bolton	Cr Jay Iwasaki												
Cr Liz Irvin	Cr Adam Pulford												
Cr Helen Politis	Cr Katerine Theodosis												
Cr Ella Svensson	Cr Oscar Yildiz JP												
Cr Chris Miles													
<b>Apologies</b>	Nil												
<b>Council Staff</b> (name and position)	Sue Vujcevic – Acting Chief Executive Officer Pene Winslade – Director Place and Environment Esha Rahman – Acting Unit Manager Urban Planning Aileen Chin – Planning Coordinator												

Items discussed	Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1   MIN/2025/7 – PA2504091 – 50-52 Breese Street and 655-661 Sydney Road, Brunswick	-	

**Name and title** of Council officer completing record: Pene Winslade, Director Place and 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: 27 April 2026**

**Meeting time: 6.00pm to 7.50pm**



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	
<b>Councillors</b>	Cr Helen Davidson, Deputy Mayor      Cr Jay Iwasaki Cr Liz Irvin      Cr Ella Svensson Cr Adam Pulford
<b>Apologies</b>	Cr Helen Politis      Cr Sue Bolton Cr Chris Miles      Cr Oscar Yildiz JP Cr Nat Abboud, Mayor      Cr Katerine Theodosis
<b>Council Staff</b> (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 Caden McCarthy, Manager City Design and Economy Chrissy Grayland, Acting Manager Community Wellbeing Leanne Giardina, Manager Aged and Community Support Amber Stuart, Unit Manager Arts and Culture Lisa Dempster, Manager Cultural Development Elissa Barlow, Retail and Experience Economy Officer Chris Cheal, Unit Manager Economic Development Lachlan McGowan, Central Coburg Project Manager Peter Sagar, Program Director Central Coburg

Items discussed	Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1 Barrow Street Trial Road Closure at Harding Street, Coburg	Nil	
2 Basketball Stadium Feasibility Outcome	Nil	
3 Aged Care Act Compliance	Nil	
4 Festivals Refresh	Nil	
5 Notice of Intention to Declare a Special Charge Scheme (2027-2032) – Central Coburg Shopping Precinct	Nil	

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](#).

	Items discussed	Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
6	Central Coburg - Updated Framework Plan	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: Councillor Briefing**

**Date: 4 May 2026**

**Meeting time: 6.00pm to 8.00pm**



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	
<b>Councillors</b>	Cr Nat Abboud, Mayor Cr Sue Bolton Cr Jay Iwasaki Cr Helen Politis Cr Ella Svensson Cr Helen Davidson, Deput Mayor Cr Liz Irvin Cr Chris Miles Cr Adam Pulford
<b>Apologies</b>	Cr Oscar Yildiz JP
<b>Council Staff</b> (name and position)	Sue Vujcevic, Acting Chief Executive Officer Yvonne Callanan, Acting Director Business Transformation Greg Rodwell, Acting Director City Infrastructure Pene Winslade, Director Place and Environment Lisa Dempster, Acting Director Community Abs Ramen, Waste Contract Transition Lead Catherine Dear, Manager City Services Caden McCarthy, Manager City Design and Economy Alayna Chapman, Unit Manager Strategic Planning Robyn Mitchell, Unit Manager Sustainable Built Environment Victoria Hart, Manager Sustainability and Climate

Items discussed	Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1 <b>Confidential:</b> Contract Matters	Nil.	-
2 Sydney Road Notice of Motion	Nil.	-
3 Amendment C235mbek – Public Open Space Contribution Rate Update (Decision Gateway 3)	Nil.	-
4 Housing Capacity Targets and Planning Scheme Review	Nil.	-
5 Pole mounted EV Chargers	Nil.	-

**Name and title** of Council officer completing record:

Yvonne Callanan, 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](#).

**Merri-bek Civic Centre**  
Woi-wurrung Country  
90 Bell Street, Coburg 3058  
T: (03) 9240 1111

**Postal Address**  
Woi-wurrung Country  
Locked Bag 10, Brunswick 3056  
[merri-bek.vic.gov.au](http://merri-bek.vic.gov.au)



XRef: D26/62922  
Doc. No. D26/122202  
Enq: Danielle Pepyat  
Tel: 9240 1111

Mr Joe Gagliano  
[REDACTED]

Dear Joe

### PUBLIC QUESTION TIME ON NOTICE RESPONSE FROM MARCH 2026 COUNCIL MEETING

I write to you in response to your questions submitted to the 11 March Council meeting, as follows:

#### Question 1:

- Is taking photos from dashboard cameras, without ascertaining any reasons for stopping, now a policy of the council?

Thank you for your interest in community engagement and public participation. The answer to your question is set out below.

#### Answer to Question:

- Parking and Road Safety Officers (and some other staff with regulatory roles who are in the field regularly) are equipped with remote activated cameras in their vehicles. Whilst standard practice is for the officers to alight from their vehicles in order to inspect and affix infringements to offending vehicles where necessary, the remote activated cameras are used where road conditions or other situations would make alighting from the vehicle a safety hazard to either the officer or the public. Remote cameras therefore allow the officers to capture evidence of offences in situations where stopping of leaving the vehicle would be potentially dangerous or operationally impractical.

**Speak with us in your language**  For more information visit [merri-bek.vic.gov.au/your-language](http://merri-bek.vic.gov.au/your-language)

<p>Per maggiori informazioni nella tua lingua, chiama il numero <b>9280 1911</b></p>	<p>اپنی زبان میں مزید جاننے کے لیے پر کال کریں۔ <b>9280 1917</b></p>	<p>如需了解更多您语言版本的信息, 请致电 <b>9280 0750</b></p>	<p>अपनी भाषा में अधिक जानने के लिए <b>9280 1918</b> पर कॉल करें</p>
<p>Για να μάθετε περισσότερα στη γλώσσα σας, καλέστε το <b>9280 1912</b></p>	<p>तपाईंको भाषामा थप जान्नको लागि, <b>9280 1910</b> मा कल गर्नुहोस्</p>	<p>Para saber más en tu idioma llama al <b>9280 1916</b></p>	<p>To speak with us in a language not listed here, please call <b>9280 1919</b></p>
<p>لمعرفة المزيد بلغتك، اتصل بالرقم <b>9280 1913</b></p>	<p>Kendi dilinizde daha fazla bilgi edinmek için <b>9280 1914</b>'ü arayın</p>	<p>Để tìm hiểu thêm bằng ngôn ngữ của bạn, hãy gọi <b>9280 1915</b></p>	

I trust this answers your question however, if you require any further information, please don't hesitate to contact myself or Danielle Pepyat, Manager Amenity and Compliance on 9240 1111.

Yours sincerely

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Greg Rodwell.

Greg Rodwell  
**ACTING DIRECTOR CITY INFRASTRUCTURE**

8 / 4 / 2026

**Merri-bek Civic Centre**  
Woi-wurrung Country  
90 Bell Street, Coburg 3058  
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[merri-bek.vic.gov.au](http://merri-bek.vic.gov.au)



XRef: D26/154954  
Doc. No. D26/158706  
Enq: Danielle Pepyat  
Tel: 9240 1111

Mr Joe Gagliano  
[REDACTED]

Dear Joe

#### PUBLIC QUESTION TIME ON NOTICE RESPONSE FROM APRIL 2026 COUNCIL MEETING

I write to you in response to your questions submitted to the 8 April Council meeting, as follows:

##### Question 1:

- Does a parking office take into account traffic conditions surrounding an infringement?

Thank you for your interest in community engagement and public participation. The answer to your question is set out below.

##### Answer to Question:

Parking rules are strict and based on signage. For example, "No Stopping" means a vehicle must not stop at any time, even briefly, unless there is an emergency.

When reviewing a fine, councils generally consider specific grounds such as errors, emergencies, or exceptional circumstances. General traffic conditions (for example, a busy road or pressure from other drivers) are not usually accepted as a reason to withdraw an infringement.

However, in some cases, officers may take surrounding traffic conditions into account when exercising discretion in areas with time-restricted (green sign) parking, where enforcement is intended to support vehicle turnover for local businesses.

**Speak with us in your language**

Per maggiori informazioni nella tua lingua, chiama il numero **9280 1911**

Για να μάθετε περισσότερα στη γλώσσα σας, καλέστε το **9280 1912**

لمعرفة المزيد بلغتك، اتصل بالرقم **9280 1913**

For more information visit [merri-bek.vic.gov.au/your-language](http://merri-bek.vic.gov.au/your-language)

اپنی زبان میں مزید جاننے کے لیے پر کال کریں۔ **9280 1917**

तपाईंको भाषामा थप जान्नुको लागि, **9280 1910** मा कल गर्नुहोस्

Kendi dilinizde daha fazla bilgi edinmek için **9280 1914**'ü arayın

如需了解更多您语言版本的信息, 请致电 **9280 0750**

Para saber más en tu idioma llama al **9280 1916**

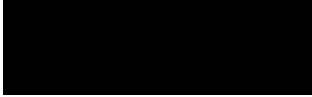
Để tìm hiểu thêm bằng ngôn ngữ của bạn, hãy gọi **9280 1915**

अपनी भाषा में अधिक जानने के लिए **9280 1918** पर कॉल करें

To speak with us in a language not listed here, please call **9280 1919**

I trust this answers your question, however, if you require any further information, please don't hesitate to contact myself or Danielle Pepyat on 9240 1111.

Yours sincerely



Greg Rodwell  
**ACTING DIRECTOR CITY INFRASTRUCTURE**

12 / 4 / 2026

## 7.15 CONTRACT VARIATION: PA-2026-1 - 2707/0846 SECURITY AND CASH COLLECTION SERVICES

Acting Director Business Transformation, Yvonne Callanan

### Governance and Strategy

---

#### Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Opts into additional service categories under existing **Procurement Australia Contract 2707/0846 Security and Cash Collection Services** for the purposes of security monitoring services; access control systems supply and installation; CCTV supply and installation; security system maintenance and security consultancy services.
2. Approves a variation to the Procurement Australia Contract 2707/0846 Security and Cash Collection Services to increase the maximum spend to \$4,610,245 (excluding GST).
3. Notes that all terms and conditions (excluding maximum spend) as previously resolved remain unchanged, including:
  - i) contract term ending 31 July 2027, with two (2) additional extension options of one (1) year each at discretion of Council; and
  - ii) authorising the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to formalise the arrangement; and exercising contract extension options subject to contractor performance and vary the contract (as required) in accordance with the terms of the contract.

<b>REPORT</b>
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#### Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval to opt into additional service categories under Contract No 2707/0846 for Security and Cash Collection Services and to vary the associated contract expenditure.

Under this contract arrangement, Council currently utilises the security guard service category and now proposes to expand its scope to include security monitoring services; access control systems supply and installation; CCTV supply and installation; security system maintenance; and security consultancy services. These services were previously delivered under separate contract *NR-0969-2018 - Provision of Security Services* that has since expired.

This report does not seek further budget, rather transfer existing budget allocation in opting into these services under the Procurement Australia contract.

Council's Procurement Policy permits participation in collaborative procurement arrangements, including those established by Procurement Australia. Opting into this additional service categories will enable Council to access a broader range of services while ensuring value for money through competitive quoting from pre-qualified suppliers.

The tender complies with section 109(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

## Previous Council Decisions

### Procurement Australia Contract No. 2707/0846 – Security and Cash Collection Services – 11 September 2024

*That Council:*

1. *Resolves to opt into a Collaborative Procurement Arrangement with Procurement Australia Panel Contract No.2707/0846 for Security and Cash Collection Services (Contract):*
  - a) *For an amount not exceeding \$3,468,871 (excluding GST).*
  - b) *For a contract term commencing 1 August 2024 and ending 31 July 2027, with two (2) additional extension options of one (1) year each at discretion of Council.*
2. *Advises Procurement Australia of its decision on this matter.*
3. *Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to:*
  - a) *Do all things necessary to formalise the arrangement.*
  - b) *Exercise contract extension options subject to contractor performance and vary the contract (as required) in accordance with the terms of the contract.*

### NR-0969-2018 - Provision of Security Services - 13 March 2019

*That Council:*

1. *Awards contract No. NR-0969-2018 for the provision of security services to Southern Cross Protection Pty Ltd for a lump sum of \$406,266.00 (inclusive of GST) for routine security services and on a schedule of rates basis for reactive security services. The contract is for a 3-year period with an extension option for a further 4-year period at Council's discretion.*
2. *Authorises the Director Business Transformation to do all things necessary to execute the contract and any other required documentation.*
3. *Authorises the Director Business Transformation to award an extension/s of this Contract, subject to review of the Contractor's performance and Council's business needs, at the conclusion of the initial 3-year Contract term.*

## 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

In September 2024, Council resolved to opt into the Collaborative Procurement Arrangement with Procurement Australia Contract No.2707/0846 Security and Cash Collection Services. This contract was awarded for the purposes of security guard services.

This report seeks Council approval to opt into additional categories of the existing panel arrangement. These services were previously delivered under Contract No. NR-0969-2018 for the Provision of Security Services which expired on 31 March 2026.

The services are required to safeguard Council assets, facilities, staff, and the community, and deliver end-to-end security services. This includes the supply, installation, monitoring, maintenance, and management of security systems, as well as ongoing alarm and security system monitoring to identify and respond to incidents such as unauthorised access, intrusions, or system faults. It also covers the provision and maintenance of CCTV systems, 24/7 security and duress monitoring, and regular system servicing to ensure reliability and compliance. Additionally, security consultancy services offer expert advice and recommendations to enhance security outcomes, upgrade systems, and implement solutions across Council sites.

### 3. Issues

#### Collaboration

Note that 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.

This is a Collaborative Procurement Arrangement with Procurement Australia (PA).

#### 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

Community engagement is not required for contracting the services, as these are operational considerations. Procurement as the leading service unit for this process consulted Facilities Management, Community Wellbeing and Building Maintenance. Due to this being an organisational wide contract the Procurement team have facilitated the process and recommendation to ensure compliance with the Procurement Policy.

### 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

Procurement Australia panel contractor will be engaged based on agreed rates for reactive/ad-hoc services, and fixed price for routine/preventative services.

The estimated expenditure for additional categories over the initial contract term until 31 July 2027 with a further two (2) by one (1) year extension options.

The below table shows the estimated breakdown aligning to the maximum spend:

	<b>\$ (excluding GST)</b>
Actual spend under for current category (guarding services) as at YTD March 2026	\$832,262
Estimated remaining spend for current category (guarding services)	\$2,636,609
Additional category (security services) from within existing operational budget.	\$1,141,374
<b>Total maximum spend</b>	<b>\$4,610,245</b>

### 7. Implementation and Timeline

Following Council approval, Council officers will opt into the new panel arrangement using the Procurement Australia portal. Suppliers will receive confirmation via email.

## **Attachment/s**

There are no attachments for this report.

## 8. NOTICES OF MOTION

### 8.1 FOOTBRIDGE ACROSS MERRI-CREEK IN SOUTHERN FAWKNER

Cr Sue Bolton

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#### Motion

That Council receives a report this year on what it would cost to determine service need and, pending that, undertakes a feasibility study, for a footbridge across the Merri Creek between Fawkner and Reservoir, near Lorne Street, Fawkner with a view to consideration in the 2027-28 budget process. The scope would consider:

1. Exploring options for external funding; and
2. Delivering an appropriate stakeholder consultation program which might include: City of Darebin; Merri Creek Management Committee; State Government; Victoria Walks; Bicycle Victoria; Walk on Merri-bek; Merri-bek Bicycle Users Group; Darebin Bicycle Users Group; Streets Alive Darebin.

#### 1. Background

Cr Bolton's background:

In the southern half of Fawkner, there are no bridges across the Merri Creek that allow Fawkner residents to access Reservoir. The distance between the footbridge at Bakers Road Coburg North and the footbridge at Hare Street is about 2.6 km as the crow flies. The two bridges south of the Hare Street do not allow access into Reservoir. This long gap makes it difficult for Fawkner residents to walk or cycle into Reservoir. Therefore an additional bridge in the south of Fawkner appears to be warranted. A new footbridge near Lorne Street would provide access to Newlands Road and Edwardes Street. The Reservoir side is mostly industrial. However, on the south side of Edwardes Street there is a housing estate, with direct access to the Public Park and Recreation Zone along the Merri Creek. This could be a suitable location to provide safer access to Newlands Road.

A new footbridge would improve access to public transport for Fawkner residents. Currently Fawkner is poorly served by public transport. The Moving Around Merri-bek Transport Strategy identifies improving bus services in Fawkner as a core advocacy item. A new footbridge near Lorne Street would allow residents to access the buses along Newlands Road - in particular the 561 bus service. The 561 bus is a key east-west public transport link across Merri-bek and Darebin. It runs between four rail lines (the Craigieburn, Upfield, Mernda and Hurstbridge lines) via Latrobe University. It offers a reasonable service level, operating at a 20 minute frequency on weekdays till after 10pm.

The new footbridge would also allow walking and cycling access for Fawkner to employment opportunities in the industrial estate around Newlands Road. It would allow Fawkner and Reservoir residents to access a range of recreational facilities on both sides of the Merri Creek. Reservoir residents would have improved access to the Fawkner Parklands.

The new footbridge would also allow walking and cycling access between Edwardes Lake and the Merri Creek Trail. Currently there is a Darebin Council informal cycling route along Edwardes Street, which stops at Radford Street Reservoir, but there is currently no way to cross the Merri Creek. A new footbridge would also provide an additional route from Fawkner to the Coburg Lake area when the Merri Creek trail floods.

## **2. Policy Context**

Officer's comments:

The current pipeline of transport infrastructure projects in Fawkner are set out in adopted Council strategies and plans that have been adopted by council following rigorous community engagement.

Most recently, the Streets for People Plan (August 2025), and the Moving Around Merri-bek Action Plan (February 2026) considered the transport and active transport program in Fawkner. These plans prioritise a range of actions to improve access to existing creek crossing points and infrastructure, while improving connections to the Upfield Rail line and local shopping strips such as Bonwick Street.

The Streets for People Plan identifies Council's priority streetscape and active transport projects for investment during the current Council term. Within Fawkner, Roma Street is a high priority project to support east-west movement through the suburb. This route connects with Hare Street and the existing bridge crossing into Darebin. As part of developing Streets for People, capital investment was prioritised toward projects that connect into existing crossing points and sit within Council's authority. New bridges and major new crossings over roads or creek corridors were not prioritised due to their significant capital cost and delivery complexity relative to other priorities.

The Fawkner Transport Study Implementation, endorsed on 12 February 2025, supported two new Safe Travel Corridors as the main active transport corridors within Fawkner. Improving links within Fawkner was identified as the key priority for Council to improve active transport in the suburb.

The Fawkner Merri Creek Parklands Plan, endorsed on 10 July 2024, also identified opportunities to improve connectivity to and along Merri Creek. However, locations near Lorne Street were not identified for a new crossing. The infrastructure projects identified in the Plan focused on improving connections to existing creek crossings, including works at Moomba Park and Hare Street.

Investigating and delivering a new pedestrian and cycling bridge is a significant undertaking from a time and cost perspective. Delivering this project would require reprioritisation of existing adopted projects and work program commitments.

## **3. Financial implications**

Officers' comments:

The preparation of a scoping report is unlikely to require additional funding but would require staff resources as noted below.

## **4. Resources implications**

Officers' comments:

There is limited capacity to absorb additional workload in the transport team in the short term. However, the work could be delivered with existing staffing within the 2026-27 financial year.

## 8.2 MERRI-BEK CREATIVES WORKSHOP

### Cr Nat Abboud

---

#### **Motion**

That Council facilitates a networking event at Council designed to hear from, support and help creatives to connect with each other and their common practices in the arts community.

#### **1. Background**

Cr Abboud's background:

Creatives in Merri-bek are the backbone of our cultural identity but they are often unable to access each other, suitable workspaces, performance spaces and are not often aware of what grants and connections can be made through council. Council could hold a networking event to hear from creatives in the city, help them to connect with each other and help them understand what council can and can't do to support them. There are people in the city doing everything from film making to circus and beyond and getting them all in the same room could be very beneficial as we try to ensure we can protect the arts community and help them to be stronger together.

#### **2. Policy Context**

Officer's comments:

Merri-bek's Council Plan highlights the theme of 'Thriving Economy and Culture'.

Merri-bek's *Arts and Culture Strategy 2023 – 2030* identifies key priorities of creation, connection and investment. The priority of cultural investment highlights the need to invest in the creative community, and generate opportunities for artists and the creative sector.

Merri-bek aims to be a city that champions arts and cultural activity that is self-determined, intersectional, intergenerational, accessible and available across the municipality; and additionally to foster connections between artists, audiences and communities.

#### **3. Financial Implications**

Officer's comments:

There are no financial implications arising from this resolution.

#### **4. Resources Implications**

Officer's comments:

The resolution can be actioned within existing resources.

## 8.3 OPEN FAWKNER OUTDOOR POOL YEAR-ROUND

Cr Sue Bolton

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### Motion

That Council receives a report which explores options for keeping the Fawkner Leisure Centre 50 metre outdoor pool open year-round, even if limited to early morning hours such as 6am–9am.

#### 1. Background

Cr Bolton's background:

Through the 2025-2026 summer, Merri-bek's seasonal outdoor pools trialled opening up for early morning swimming.

The trial showed the enthusiasm of local swimmers for early morning lap swimming, despite the lack of publicity about the early morning trial. Most of the early morning lap swimmers found out from word of mouth rather than through the Active Merri-bek.

The observations of the early morning lap swimmers is that:

- Multiple swimmers consistently used each lane from 6am onwards.
- There is a clear demand for early lap swimming before general pool use begins.
- People are experiencing strong physical and mental health benefits from having access at this time.

There is limited access to outdoor pools in winter in Merri-bek. With Brunswick Baths being unavailable for maintenance work in the 2026 winter and Oak Park taking on winter demand, there is effectively only one centre offering lap swimming.

This has made it extremely busy, which discourages people from doing lap swimming at a Merri-bek pool.

Overcrowding and access to only one outdoor pool in winter, forces residents to travel to pools outside Merri-bek to access a pool for early morning lap swimming.

Having a second outdoor pool open during winter, would create a more balanced distribution of patrons across Merri-bek pools.

The current situation of having only one outdoor pool open in Merri-bek for early morning lap swimming during winter, undermines the "Active Merri-bek" goal of reducing car use.

With only one outdoor pool open in winter, people have to travel for longer distances which promotes car travel rather than walking and cycling.

Opening the 50 metre pool, even for limited hours in winter would attract dedicated lap swimmers who specifically seek 50 metre pools and encourage new memberships.

#### 2. Policy Context

Officer's comments:

The proposal is broadly consistent with Council's strategic and policy framework, including the Council Plan and relevant service strategies. It aligns with Council's objectives to support community wellbeing, access to services, and effective use of Council assets.

### **3. Financial Implications**

Officer's comments:

The preparation of the report can be undertaken within existing operational budgets.

### **4. Resources Implications**

Officer's comments:

The development of the report can be delivered using existing Council resources.

## 8.4 PLACE-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR FAWKNER

Cr Sue Bolton

---

### Motion

That Council receives a report by August 2026 on options for an expanded Place-Based Community Development Program for Fawkner, including possible objectives, scope and cost implications.

#### 1. Background

Cr Bolton's background

Merri-bek Council has been running a very successful Place-Based Community Outreach project in Fawkner for a couple of years.

The program was initially established to raise awareness, especially in multicultural communities about Merri-bek's vision for environmental sustainability.

The project established a working group which attracts people from a very wide range of backgrounds, across different nationalities and different religions.

The working group sometimes invites guest speakers such as Council officers to talk about the importance of the street tree planting program, the Council's Nature Plan and the solar rebate program and insulation subsidies plus many other issues to do with environmental sustainability.

The working group has connected community members with local groups such as Climate Action Merri-bek and Merri Food Hub.

This project has been very valuable, especially for people from multicultural communities.

Some of the participants in the program have told Councillors that people with low English skills and who would never normally have a voice or be invited to meetings have been actively involved in the project.

Participants have said that involvement in this project is the first time that they have felt connected to the council and involved in local environmental issues. Without it, there is no engagement in areas like Fawkner and Glenroy on sustainability matters.

While the focus of the program is on environmental issues and programs, it has a broader impact on the local community. Participants feel more connected to their local community and the local council. They feel more of a sense of belonging to their community which means that they are thinking about how to contribute to their community. They also have more of an awareness about the Council and its projects.

#### 2. Policy Context

Officer's comments:

The Merri-bek Council Plan 2025 – 2029 highlights key themes of 'Care for nature and climate resilience' and 'Healthy and inclusive communities'.

Merri-bek's Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 - 2030 includes the priority to be 'Socially just and resilient'. Actions include ensuring that Council communicates, engages and collaborates with its diverse community, and that low income and at risk residents are not left behind. Additionally, Merri-bek's Zero Carbon 2040 Framework has an ambition to mobilise the community and support more people to participate, feel ownership and get involved with its vision.

### **3. Financial Implications**

Officer's comments:

There are no financial implications arising from this resolution.

### **4. Resources Implications**

Officer's comments:

The resolution can be actioned within existing resources.

## 8.5 CLIMATE ADVOCACY

### Cr Ella Svensson

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#### Motion

That Council:

1. Notes:
  - a) That people all around Australia, including Merri-bek, are experiencing increasing impacts of climate change, including heatwaves and extreme storms, placing pressure on local infrastructure, services and community wellbeing.
  - b) The financial and social impacts of these climate events on households, businesses, and community organisations, already experiencing a cost-of-living crisis
  - c) The rising costs to Council budgets as a result of climate change, including costs associated with disaster response, infrastructure repair and resilience upgrades;
  - d) The existing constraints on local government budgets and shortfalls in existing government grants, meaning councils are ill-equipped to support residents and businesses without significantly compromising budget and resources.
2. Writes to the Federal Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Minister for Local government, and Treasurer, and the Victorian Local Government Minister and Treasurer, advocating for more action and resources to help communities, households, and local governments tackle the intense challenges of climate change and a just transition in the community.
3. Receives a report scoping a project to develop options to ensure adequate funding to manage the increasing costs of extreme weather events and other climate impacts on our communities, including appropriate means of liaising with and advocating to other tiers of government around funding options.

#### 1. Background

Cr Svensson's background:

The impacts of climate change are already being felt in Merri-bek and across our broader community. Extreme heat and rainfall events are already increasingly common, and are continuing to intensify in both frequency and severity.

All levels of government have a responsibility to take climate action, both to rapidly reduce carbon emissions and to invest in adaptation and resilience measures to protect our communities from the now unavoidable impacts of climate change.

As the closest level of government to the community, local government plays a key role in delivering climate action. However, capacity to respond effectively is increasingly constrained by already inadequate and declining funding.

At the same time, fossil fuel corporations, despite being some of the most significant drivers of the climate crisis, contribute relatively little tax and make extremely limited contributions towards the costs of the damage they cause.

This injustice has driven a growing community movement calling on governments to make polluters pay for the harm they cause, with a fair share of funding directed to local governments to support community-level climate adaptation and resilience.

Note:

The City of Sydney recently passed a motion to be tabled at the ALGA National Conference calling for the establishment of a Polluters Pay Levy to fund local councils, titled: [National Climate Adaptation Funding and Accountability for Australian Cities](#)

## **2. Policy context**

Officer's comments:

The proposed Motion is consistent with advocacy actions outlined in the Climate Emergency Action Plan (adopted 2025) and objectives in the Climate Risk Strategy (adopted 2022).

## **3. Financial implications**

Officer's comments:

There are no financial costs associated with the recommendations (only staff resources).

## **4. Resources implications**

Officer's comments:

These actions can be achieved within existing staff resources.