



Merri-bek
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

Wednesday 10 December 2025

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.
For assistance with any of the agenda items,
please telephone 9240 1111.

這是市政會議的議程。您若在理解議程中有需要協助的地方，請打電話給“語言連接 (Language Link)”翻譯服務，號碼9280 1910。

Questo è l'ordine del giorno per la Riunione del consiglio Comunale. Se hai bisogno di aiuto sugli argomenti in discussione, sei pregato di telefonare al Language Link al numero 9280 1911.

Αυτή είναι η Ημερήσια Διάταξη για τη Συνεδρίαση του Συμβουλίου (Council Meeting). Για βοήθεια με οποιοδήποτε από τα θέματα της ημερήσιας διάταξης, παρακαλείστε να τηλεφωνήσετε στο Γλωσσικό Σύνδεσμο (Language Link), στο 9280 1912.

هذا هو جدول أعمال اجتماع المجلس البلدي. للمساعدة بأي بند من بنود جدول الأعمال الرجاء الاتصال بخط Language Link على الرقم 9280 1913.

Belediye Meclisi Toplantısının gündem maddeleri burada verilmiştir. Bu gündem maddeleri ile ilgili yardıma ihtiyacınız olursa, 9280 1914 numaralı telefondan Language Link tercüme hattını arayınız.

Đây là Nghị Trình cuộc họp của Ủy Ban Quy Hoạch Đô Thị. Nếu muốn biết thêm chi tiết về đề tài thảo luận, xin gọi điện thoại cho Language Link qua số 9280 1915.

यह काँसिल की बैठक का कार्यक्रम है। कार्यक्रम के किसी भी विषय के बारे में सहायता के लिए कृपया 9280 1918 पर फोन कीजिए।

这是市政府例会的议题安排，如果需要协助了解任何议题内容，请拨打9280 0750。

ਇਹ ਕੌਂਸਲ ਦੀ ਮੀਟਿੰਗ ਦਾ ਏਜੰਡਾ ਹੈ।
ਏਜੰਡੇ ਦੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਆਈਟਮ ਬਾਰੇ ਮਦਦ ਲਈ,
ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ 9280 0751 ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

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

Merri-bek City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways in the area now known as Merri-bek, and pays respect to their elders past, present, and emerging, as well as to all First Nations communities who significantly contribute to the life of the area.

Information about Council Meetings

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NEXT MEETING DATE The next Council meeting is proposed to be held on Wednesday 11 February 2026 commencing at 6.30 pm, in Bunjil (Council Chamber), Merri-bek Civic Centre, 90 Bell Street, Coburg. The next Planning and Related Matters meeting will be held on Wednesday 17 December 2025 commencing at 6.30 pm.

WELCOME

APOLOGIES/LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Cr Miles has sought a leave of absence for the period 18 December 2025 to 1 February 2026 (inclusive).

1. DISCLOSURES OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

2. MINUTE CONFIRMATION

The minutes of the Council Meetings held on the 12 November and 19 November 2025 be confirmed.

3. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND OTHER MATTERS

4. PETITIONS

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

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

7. COUNCIL REPORTS

7.1	PLACES FOR PEOPLE PLAN - DRAFT FOR ENGAGEMENT	22
7.2	SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC HOUSING STATEMENT	77
7.3	SUBURB BOUNDARY REALIGNMENT - BARINA ROAD, GLENROY/OAK PARK	85
7.4	FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 OCTOBER 2025	90
7.5	GOVERNANCE REPORT - DECEMBER 2025 - CYCLICAL REPORT	106
7.6	CONTRACT EXTENSION: CONTRACT SS-08-2020 BANKING AND FINANCIAL SERVICES STATE PURCHASING CONTRACT	132
7.7	CONTRACT VARIATION: RFT-2025-1 DUNSTAN RESERVE CHILDCARE CENTRE EXPANSION	138
7.8	CONTRACT AWARD: RFT-2025-46 WEST STREET SHOPPING STRIP RENEWAL PROJECT	142
7.9	CONTRACT AWARD: RFT-2025-48 ROAD RECONSTRUCTION NORTHUMBERLAND ROAD, PASCOE VALE (FAWKNER ROAD TO LONGVIEW STREET)	149

7.10	CONTRACT AWARD: RFT-2025-49 ROAD RECONSTRUCTION JERSEY STREET, COBURG (O'HEA STREET TO GAFFNEY STREET)	154
8.	NOTICES OF MOTION	
8.1	RETAIN THE FORMER COBURG NORTH TAFE SITE FOR SKILLS, INNOVATION AND JOB CREATION	159
8.2	VENUES FOR COUNCILLOR WORKSHOPS	161
8.3	MOBILE COVERAGE FOR OPTUS NETWORK IN BRUNSWICK	162
9.	NOTICE OF RESCISSION	
	Nil	
10.	FORESHADOWED ITEMS	
11.	URGENT BUSINESS	
12.	CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS	
12.1	PROCUREMENT MATTERS	
	<i>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.</i>	
12.2	AMENDMENT TO A SECTION 173 AGREEMENT ON FORMER COUNCIL LAND	
	<i>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.</i>	
12.3	CONTRACT RFT-2025-09 ALLARD PARK ADJUSTMENT	
	<i>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.</i>	

12.4 PROPERTY MATTERS

Pursuant to section 3(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 2020 this report has been designated as confidential because it relates to Council business information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations if prematurely released.

INTERNAL ARBITRATION PROCESS – DETERMINATION AND STATEMENT OF REASONS

INTERNAL ARBITRATION PROCESS - MERRI-BEK CITY COUNCIL

In the matter of an Application by Cr Oscar Yildiz concerning
Cr Adam Pulford

HEARING PURSUANT TO DIVISION 5 OF PART 6 OF THE *LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2020*

Application Number:	IAP 2025-13
Applicant:	Councillor Oscar Yildiz
Respondent:	Councillor Adam Pulford
Hearing Date:	8 October 2025
Before:	Arbiter Matt Evans

DETERMINATION

Pursuant to section 147(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act), the Arbiter makes a finding of misconduct against Cr Adam Pulford, on the basis that he has breached Standards of Conduct 1, 2 and 4 of the Model Councillor Code of Conduct as set out in Schedule 1 of the Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020.

SANCTION

Pursuant to section 147(2)(b) of the Act, Cr Pulford is suspended from the office of Councillor for a period of 14 days commencing the day after this decision is tabled at the next Council meeting in accordance with section 147(4)(b) of the Act.

STATEMENT OF REASONS FOR DECISION

The Application

1. On 7 July 2025, Cr Yildiz applied under section 143 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) for an Arbiter to make a finding of misconduct against Cr Pulford.
2. Cr Yildiz alleged that Cr Pulford had breached Standard of Conduct 1 (Performing the Role of a Councillor), Standard of Conduct 2 (Behaviours) and Standard of Conduct 4 (Integrity) of the Model Councillor Code of Conduct (hereafter referred to as the 'MCCC') during the Merri-bek City Council Meeting on Wednesday 9 April 2025.
3. In summary, the alleged breaches relate to the conduct of Cr Pulford during debate on agenda item 7.2 'Rainbow Crossing Sites for Consultation'. This item contained a recommendation seeking council endorsement of eight identified locations for community engagement to help select two sites (one north and one south of Bell St) and designs for the installation of pride flags (rainbow crossings) on Council roads or footpaths. It also sought to refer the installation of the two rainbow crossings - at a cost of \$45,000 - to the 2025/2026 Council budget process for consideration. The Officer report outlines the policy context, potential sites, material selection, community consultation process, financial and resource implications, implementation and other matters.
4. Cr Yildiz voted against the motion for item 7.2. During debate on the item, it is clear from the recording of the council meeting that Cr Yildiz focussed on the cost of the installation of the two rainbow crossings as his primary reason not to support the motion that was finally passed by council.
5. In his application Cr Yildiz noted that he *'had presented a legitimate and respectful position regarding the allocation of public funds, raising concerns about whether the proposed expenditure represented the best use of ratepayers' money.'* He observes in the application that *'At no point did I attack any individual, nor did I oppose the principles of inclusion or equality. My remarks were focused entirely on policy, fiscal responsibility and the prioritisation of direct support for the LGBTQIA+ community.'*
6. Cr Yildiz alleges that during the debate on item 7.2 Cr Pulford made several statements that breached the Standards of Conduct in the MCCC. He further alleges that Cr Pulford's conduct during the debate *'reflected a deliberate choice to personalise the issue rather than engage respectfully about the report at hand.'*
7. During the debate on this item, Cr Yildiz called a *'Point of Order'*¹ on two occasions during Cr Pulford's address as a speaker in favour of the motion, and it is alleged that *'Cr Pulford continued speaking without pausing for the chair to make a ruling on the point of order'*. In doing so, Cr Yildiz alleges that Cr Pulford *'continued speaking over my objection, ignoring the proper process and preventing the Chair ... from addressing my concern regarding his personal and inappropriate remarks.'*

¹ 'Point of Order' is defined as *'a procedural point (about how the Meeting is being conducted), not involving the substance of a matter before a Meeting'* (section 2.4 Merri-bek Governance Rules, April 2024)

8. According to Cr Yildiz, *‘Cr Pulford’s behaviour showed disregard for Council meeting protocols and the Chair’s role, which undermines the proper conduct expected in Council debates’*.

Process and Hearings

9. Pursuant to sections 144 and 149 of the Act, the Registrar appointed the Arbiter on 2 September 2025.
10. After reviewing the application material, the Arbiter wrote to the Council’s Councillor Conduct Officer and the parties on 12 September 2025 advising that a ‘Directions Hearing’ would be held via Council’s online meeting platform on 25 September 2025. The ‘Directions Hearing’ primarily addressed procedural arrangements for the forthcoming in-person Hearing.
11. Following the Directions Hearing, directions were made by the Arbiter for the filing and serving of written submissions and documents on which the parties intended to rely at the Hearing, and a Hearing date was set for 8 October 2025.
12. On Wednesday 8 October 2025, the Hearing was held at Brunswick Town Hall and was attended by Cr Yildiz, Cr Pulford, Council’s Councillor Conduct Officer, a representative of council’s recording service, and the Arbiter.
13. After hearing submissions from the parties at the Hearing, reviewing video footage of the Council Meeting of 9 April 2025, and considering the documents filed by them, the Arbiter reserved his decision. The transcription of the 8 October 2025 hearing was provided to the Arbiter on 30 October 2025.

Alleged Breach of Standard of Conduct 1 - Submissions and Evidence of Cr Yildiz

14. At the hearing, Cr Yildiz primarily relied on his Application material and provided a link to the publicly available recording of the Council Meeting of 9 April 2025. The recording of the debate on item 7.2 was viewed during the hearing.
15. Cr Yildiz alleged that Cr Pulford had breached Standard 1 (‘Performing the Role of a Councillor’) which requires that *‘A Councillor must do everything reasonably necessary to ensure that they perform the role of a Councillor effectively and responsibly’*. Specifically, Cr Yildiz referred to alleged breaches of Standards 1(a), (b), (c) and (e) (See Attachment 1 - Model Councillor Code of Conduct).
16. In summary, Cr Yildiz alleges that Cr Pulford’s conduct during the debate was a breach of Standard of Conduct 1 because he (Cr Yildiz) raised two points of order in direct response to comments made by Cr Pulford, which he believed amounted to a personal attack and constituted a breach of the Merri-bek Council’s Governance Rules (adopted April 2024), that were applicable at the time.

17. In the first instance, the application alleges that Cr Yildiz calls a 'Point of Order'. The Mayor refers to Cr Yildiz to presumably explain his Point of Order, and almost immediately Cr Pulford turns his attention to Cr Yildiz and asks what is akin to a rhetorical question 'What's the point of order, can you name it? I am debating the item', and Cr Pulford then continues to address the meeting.
18. Cr Yildiz submits that Cr Pulford ignored the process outlined in Council's Governance Rules especially relating to Points of Order. He did not pause to allow the Chairperson (the Mayor) to consider the Point of Order, and he continued to speak, and it is alleged that this thereby undermined the Mayor's authority and the rights of Councillors to participate in an orderly debate.

Alleged Breach of Standard of Conduct 1- Submissions and Evidence of Cr Pulford

19. In response to the allegation of a breach of Standard 1 of the MCCC, Cr Pulford rejected the allegation that he failed to respect the authority of the Mayor as Chairperson. He noted that in relation to points of order, Merri-bek's Governance Rules state:

"3.10 Points of Order

3.10.1 Raising a Point of Order

- (1) A Councillor raising a Point of Order must state:
- (a) the Point of Order; and
 - (b) any chapter, Rule, paragraph or provision relevant to the Point of Order
- (2) The Chairperson must decide all points of order by stating the provision, Rule, practice or precedent which he or she considers applicable to the Point of Order raised, without entering into any discussion or comment."

20. In summary, Cr Pulford argued that Cr Yildiz never specified which point of order he believed he had broken during the debate. Cr Pulford claims he briefly stopped his speech to ask which point of order Cr Yildiz believed he had broken. Cr Pulford claims that Cr Yildiz did not name the point of order, the Mayor did not rule on any point of order and did not direct Cr Pulford to take any action.

Findings of the Arbiter on Alleged Breach of Standard of Conduct 1

21. The Arbiter considered submissions and evidence from the parties in relation to the allegation of a breach of Standard 1 of the MCCC.
22. Rule 3.2.4 (5) of Council's Governance Rules states that the Chairperson 'must decide on all points of order in accordance with Rule 3.10'. There is no discretion for the Chairperson when following that process once a point of order is called. However, for the Chairperson to follow this process, this requires the cooperation of Councillors in the 'thick of' debate.
23. To recap, Rule 3.10 Points of Order is as follows:

3.10.1 Raising a Point of Order

- (1) A Councillor raising a Point of Order must state:

- (a) the Point of Order; and*
- (b) any chapter, Rule, paragraph or provision relevant to the Point of Order*
- (2) The Chairperson must decide all points of order by stating the provision, Rule, practice or precedent which he or she considers applicable to the Point of Order raised, without entering into any discussion or comment."*
- (3) The Chairperson may adjourn the Meeting to consider a Point of Order; otherwise he or she must rule on it as soon as it is raised.*
- (4) All other matters before Council are suspended until the Point of Order is decided.*

24. Whilst it was not raised by either of the parties, the Arbiter notes rule 3.8.1 of the Governance Rules requires the following:

3.8.1 Councillor allowed to speak uninterrupted

A Councillor who has the floor must not be interrupted unless called to order, or given notice by the Chairperson his speaking time has elapsed or is about to elapse, when he or she must sit down and remain silent until the Councillor raising the Point of Order has been heard and the Point of Order dealt with [emphasis added].

25. The Arbiter is not persuaded by Cr Pulford's explanation that 'Cr Yildiz did not name the Point of Order, the Mayor did not rule on any Points of Order and did not direct me to take any action'.
26. The Chairperson, the Mayor should have insisted that Cr Pulford pause, as soon as Cr Yildiz called a 'Point of Order'. Instead, Cr Pulford addressed Cr Yildiz directly and assertively to determine the nature of the point of order rather than directing his comments through the Chair.
27. Cr Pulford submitted at the hearing that Cr Yildiz's point of order wasn't valid because he didn't immediately refer to the chapter, rule, paragraph or provision relevant to the point of order. The Arbiter observes that Cr Yildiz was deferring to the Chair and had no opportunity to elaborate before Cr Pulford continued speaking. Cr Pulford submitted that if the point of order had been valid, the Chairperson would have stopped the meeting and ruled. The Arbiter does not accept this explanation and is concerned that Cr Pulford's conduct effectively sidelined Cr Yildiz's point of order and did not support the Chair in performing that role as required in the Governance Rules.
28. This breach reinforces the need for cooperation by Councillors and respect for the role of the Chair - in this case the Mayor. As soon as a 'point of order' is called, the Councillor who is speaking should not need to wait for a direction from the Chairperson to pause. The Chairperson's role should then be guided by fairness, impartiality, and efficiency. Conventions include immediate recognition, which in this case occurred (as the Mayor recognised that Cr Yildiz had called his first point of order). The Chair would then usually ask the Councillor to state the grounds for the point of order clearly and concisely, but by then Cr Pulford has already continued to speak. Consequently, there was no ruling on the point of order.

29. As a Councillor with recent experience as Mayor of Merri-bek for the 2023-24 term, these procedures should be well known to Cr Pulford. Cr Pulford did offer an explanation as to why Cr Yildiz's 'Point of Order' was effectively set aside, when he observed at the hearing that *'the practice at council has been sometimes that it's been informal in that the Mayor doesn't get involved'*. The Arbiter has viewed footage of 'points of order' from other Merri-bek meetings including when Cr Pulford was the Chairperson, which confirmed Cr Pulford's observation. This is both concerning in the context of this application but also for the integrity of the Governance Rules.
30. For the reasons outlined above, the Arbiter finds that Cr Pulford's conduct during the debate on item 7.2 was in breach of Standard 1 requiring that 'A Councillor must do everything reasonably necessary to ensure that they perform the role of a Councillor effectively and responsibly, including (e) acknowledging and supporting the Mayor in the performance of the role of the Mayor.'

Alleged breach of Standard of Conduct 2 - Submissions and Evidence of Cr Yildiz

31. Cr Yildiz alleged that Cr Pulford had also breached Standards 2(1)(a) and (b), and 2(3) ('Behaviours') and claimed that Cr Pulford's comments and tone during debate on item 7.2 were demeaning and abusive. He claims they are inconsistent with Standard 2(1) that requires that 'A Councillor must treat others, including other Councillors, members of Council staff and members of the public, with dignity, fairness, objectivity, courtesy and respect'.
32. This allegation primarily relates to Cr Pulford's comments in the debate that *'We're a proudly diverse community here in Merri-bek and this motion should be celebrating that. I'm proud to support this motion tonight and I'm proud to know that pretty much every Councillor in this room will back this motion. I'm sorry to all community members that we have this duplicitousness in one of our Councillors, but I hope that we celebrate this motion being passed this evening.'*
33. This was referring to Cr Yildiz's failure to support the motion for Item 7.2 associated with consultation on 'Rainbow Crossings', when he had also signed a 'Rainbow Pledge' that included support for the Crossings in the lead up to the 2024 council elections. Cr Yildiz alleges that this remark, together with other comments made during Cr Pulford's address appeared to question his character and integrity, rather than engaging with the substance of the motion under discussion.
34. In a written direction issued on 25 September 2025, the Arbiter requested Cr Yildiz to provide a copy of the 'Rainbow Pledge' that he signed in the lead up to the 2024 council election. Cr Yildiz provided a copy of a document that contained a pledge in 5 parts, none of which referenced support for 'Rainbow Crossings'. The document included a 'source' at the end which linked through to the 'Rainbow Local Government (Victorian Pride Lobby), Local Council Candidate Pledge'.

When following this link, it takes the viewer to a pledge that was specifically for candidates for the 2024 election and did contain a pledge to support 'Rainbow Crossings'.² The Arbiter notes several additional online references relating to the candidate pledge in the lead up to the 2020 election that do not contain the 'Rainbow Crossing' section to the pledge. It appears that Cr Yildiz provided a copy of the contents of the 2020 pledge in response to the Arbiter's direction seeking a copy of the 2024 pledge.

35. The Arbiter took submissions from the parties on this matter. At the hearing, Cr Yildiz initially sought to cast doubt on whether he had signed the pledge that contained the specific section on the 'Rainbow Crossings'. When it was pointed out that the link he provided takes the viewer through to the 2024 version that does contain reference to 'Rainbow Crossings', Cr Yildiz acknowledged at the hearing *'The link is there, and let's say I did sign the Rainbow Pledge, saying that I'm happy to spend the money on rainbow crossings, there was no figure'*.
36. It was unnecessary and unhelpful for Cr Yildiz to equivocate on the version and substance of the pledge he endorsed. Whilst pledges are not binding, a candidate should at least be clear on what they have signed. This observation is made solely in relation to Cr Yildiz's contribution to these proceedings, and it has not influenced the Arbiter's findings on the substantive issues in this case.
37. In relation to the substance of the allegation, and in addition to the use of the term 'dupliciousness', Cr Yildiz alleges that Cr Pulford made multiple statements during the debate that were offensive, malicious and factually incorrect, and therefore did not treat him with dignity, fairness, objectivity, courtesy and respect'. These included:

'I'm really disappointed that I enter another Council meeting with a positive item for the LGBTQIA+ community on the agenda with a sour taste in my mouth and a feeling that I should have to look over my shoulder or look behind me as I walked into the chamber and walked out of the chamber.'

But here tonight we have a Councillor stirring up division and anger over queer issues once again.

The Councillor says it's not because it's about LGBTQIA+ issues, it's about costs. But if you look at the pattern of behaviour this Councillor has recently gone to the media to stir up community dissent over queer issues, including opposing the colourful and joyful drag story time events last year.

It's the same Councillor who went on radio in the last term of Council to accuse me of having a conflict of interest on a rainbow flag motion because I'm gay. This pattern of behaviour indicates it's not about cost; It's about something else.

² The 2024 pledge included: 'Install a rainbow crossing (or maintain existing one) This vibrant symbol of Pride is more than just a crossing—it's a visible commitment to diversity, acceptance, and equality for all. Rainbow crossings help create a space where everyone feels seen and valued and make local communities a place where love and inclusion are always in the spotlight. We ask that candidates actively campaign for, and support, installing a rainbow crossing in the community (or maintain one if already installed!).'

This Councillor is happy to sign the rainbow pledge and say he will support LGBTQIA+ people when he wants our votes. But when he's in a position, when he's in a position to honour this pledge, he breaks it and goes on radio to spread division'.

38. At the hearing, Cr Yildiz observed *'The term 'duplicitous' suggests deceitfulness and this is a very serious and unsubstantiated personal allegation against me. His remarks with his comments appear to be targeted at questioning my character and my integrity rather than engaging with the substance of the motion that was being discussed. He caused stigma towards me, there was a fair bit of aggression, anger towards me, it was a personal attack, it wasn't about a legitimate debate ...'*
39. In his submissions and at the hearing, Cr Yildiz described the impact that the comments during the debate of the 9 April 2025 Council meeting have had on his health and safety. He recounted these very serious threats and reflected that Standard 2(2) of the Code states that *'A Councillor, as an individual at the workplace, must take reasonable care for their own health and safety and take reasonable care that their acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons'*.

Alleged Breach of Standard of Conduct 2 - Submissions and Evidence of Cr Pulford

40. In response to the allegation of a breach of Standard 2 of the MCCC, Cr Pulford claims he did not fail to treat Cr Yildiz with dignity, fairness, objectivity, courtesy and respect, in that his contributions were factually accurate and were part of 'robust debate', as allowed under the MCCC.
41. In his submission, Cr Pulford advised that 'prior to the 2024 Council Elections, Cr Yildiz had signed the 2024 Rainbow Pledge, which included 5 action items. One of these pledge actions was 'install a rainbow crossing'. Cr Pulford explained that Cr Yildiz was debating against supporting Item 7.2 Rainbow Crossings - Sites for Consultation and had spoken to various media outlets ahead of the Council Meeting to express his opposition to the item ... just 6 months after the Council Election at which he had signed the pledge.
42. In his defence of using the term 'duplicitousness' to describe Cr Yildiz, Cr Pulford noted the definition of 'duplicitousness' via Oxford Languages is 'the quality of being duplicitous; deceitfulness', and he went on to explain that whilst *'the pledge is of course non-binding, it is duplicitous, or deceitful, to sign a pledge making a commitment to the community before an election and then opposing that same item once elected'*. Cr Pulford believed it was part of robust debate to make sure the community is informed when a Councillor is acting inconsistently with their previous public commitments.
43. In response to Cr Yildiz's allegation that Cr Pulford's comment *'I should not have to look over my shoulder ... as I walk into and out of the chamber'* breaches the MCCC, Cr Pulford noted that during a conciliation meeting held on 19 May 2025, he explained to Cr Yildiz that this comment was not referring to him, but rather about how the threat to Council he had received ahead of the meeting meant he was again going to enter his workplace feeling concerned for his safety and well-being.
44. Cr Pulford submitted that since being elected to Council in 2020, this was the third time that Cr Yildiz has spoken to the media against LGBTQIA+ issues, the previous two times involved social media posts in relation to 'Drag story time' and a radio interview in 2020 in relation to flying the

rainbow flag, and that this accounted for Cr Pulford's comment in the Council meeting that *'We have a Councillor stirring up division and anger over queer issues once again', and 'This Councillor is happy to sign the rainbow pledge ... then goes on radio to spread division.'*

Findings of the Arbiter on Alleged Breach of Standard of Conduct 2

45. The Arbiter accepts Cr Pulford's explanation in relation to his comment *'I should not have to look over my shoulder ... as I walk into and out of the chamber'* - that this was not referring to Cr Yildiz. Rather this was about how threats had been received ahead of the meeting with the result that Cr Pulford was again going to enter his workplace feeling concerned for his safety and well-being.
46. The Arbiter acknowledges Cr Pulford's anxiety which he described in the hearing as *'entering my workplace, under threats, stressed, worried for my safety'*, and that this may have contributed to the comments. Cr Pulford acknowledged that *'if I had my time again I would have maybe not used the word duplicitousness or maybe would have tried to calm myself a little bit more'*.
47. Cr Pulford contends that his comments were 'robust debate'. The MCCC does not limit robust public debate. Standard 5 states 'Nothing in the Model Councillor Code of Conduct is intended to limit, restrict or detract from robust public debate of issues in a democracy'. The MCCC does not prevent Councillors from expressing their views forcefully on issues before the Council nor from providing a critique of the views of others. But this must be done in a respectful manner that is compatible with the standards of conduct. Cr Pulford used inflammatory language, neglected to allow others the opportunity to speak without interruption, and most importantly his criticism focused on Cr Yildiz rather than ideas or issues being discussed. In this case, 'robust public debate' is not a defence against breaches of this standard of conduct.
48. The Arbiter finds that Cr Pulford breached Standard 2 as he did not treat Cr Yildiz with dignity, fairness, objectivity, courtesy and respect. Collectively, his comments during the debate in item 7.2 of the Council Meeting were unfair and disregarded the fact that Cr Yildiz took great care to use respectful and carefully considered language when he spoke on the item. He focussed on the cost of the Rainbow Crossings and conveyed his position on the value of such an investment.

Alleged breach of Standard of Conduct 4 - Submissions and Evidence of Cr Yildiz

49. Cr Yildiz alleged that Cr Pulford had also breached Standard 4 ('Integrity'). Specifically, Cr Yildiz referred to alleged breaches of Standards 4(1) (a) and (b) of the MCCC.
50. With reference to the comments by Cr Pulford during the debate and outlined in the previous section relating to breaches of Standard of Conduct 2, Cr Yildiz also alleges that these comments constitute a breach of Standard 4(1) because the conduct was inappropriate, unprofessional and inconsistent with the expectations of a Councillor as set out in the MCCC.
51. Cr Yildiz noted at the hearing that Cr Pulford's comments *'did bring discredit upon the council because it misled the Council, it misled the public, that somehow my opposition to spending \$45,000 on two rainbow crossings somehow was duplicitous because I'd already signed to say I was going to support it, when it didn't even have a figure on it ...'*

Alleged Breach of Standard of Conduct 4 - Submissions and Evidence of Cr Pulford

52. In response to the allegation of a breach of Standard of Conduct 4 of the MCCC, Cr Pulford submitted that 'it was not misleading to say Cr Yildiz had gone against the rainbow pledge that he had taken prior to the 2024 Council Elections'.
53. As previously noted, Cr Pulford submitted that Cr Yildiz had excluded the key pledge commitment relevant to this item and debate when providing a copy of the pledge document requested by the Arbiter i.e. 'Install a rainbow crossing (or maintain existing one)'.
54. Cr Pulford argued that Cr Yildiz broke his 2024 Rainbow Pledge by opposing the rainbow crossings item during the April 2025 Council Meeting.
55. When acknowledging using the term 'duplicitousness' to describe the actions of Cr Yildiz, Cr Pulford noted at the hearing that *'I just talked about actions that Councillor Yildiz had taken, consequences of those actions, and yeah, I used the word duplicitousness, which I accept is emotional and could be inflaming.'*

Findings of the Arbiter on Alleged Breach of Standard of Conduct 4

56. Standard 4 requires that 'A Councillor must act with integrity, exercise reasonable care and diligence and take reasonable steps to avoid any action which may diminish the public's trust and confidence in the integrity of local government, including by—(a) ensuring that their behaviour does not bring discredit upon the Council.
57. Cr Pulford's demeanour and lack of restraint in his personal remarks about Cr Yildiz during the debate on item 7.2 did likely diminish the public's trust and confidence in the integrity of Merri-bek City Council, primarily due to the publicity surrounding Cr Pulford's unnecessary behaviour during the debate. In his submission at the Hearing, Cr Pulford conceded that his use of the word duplicitousness was emotional and could be inflaming.
58. It is difficult to characterise Cr Yildiz's speech on item 7.2 as 'stirring up division', which is how Cr Pulford described Cr Yildiz's approach to the debate on this item. Cr Yildiz, just like the Mayor and several other Councillors at the meeting, was scrutinising the budget of the 'Rainbow Crossing' project during debate on the item. This is both reasonable and expected.
59. It may be argued that Cr Yildiz has 'stirred up division' at other times - but his speech during item 7.2 at the Council Meeting on the 9 April 2025 was not one of those occasions. Cr Yildiz was restrained, and his focus was on his concerns regarding the cost of spending \$45,000 on rainbow crossings.
60. When even just one Councillor questions or dissents from the allocation of Council funding to a project, they should be treated with respect. To do otherwise diminishes the public's trust and confidence in Council and the integrity of local government.
61. After considering submissions from the parties and evidence, I am satisfied that Cr Pulford breached Standard 4 for the reasons outlined above.

Conclusion

62. Pursuant to section 147(1) of the Act I make a finding of misconduct in respect of the breach of Standards 1, 2 and 4 of the MCCC for the reasons set out above.

Sanction options

63. Pursuant to section 147(2) of the Act, after a finding of misconduct, the Arbiter may do any one or more of the following—

- (a) direct the Councillor to make an apology in a form or manner specified by the arbiter;
- (b) suspend the Councillor from the office of Councillor for a period specified by the arbiter not exceeding three months;
- (c) direct that the Councillor be removed from any position where the Councillor represents the Council for the period determined by the arbiter;
- (d) direct that the Councillor is removed from being the chair of a delegated committee for the period determined by the arbiter;
- (e) direct a Councillor to attend or undergo training or counselling specified by the arbiter;
- (f) direct that the Councillor is not to attend or participate in a council meeting specified by the arbiter that occurs after the meeting at which the decision and statement of reasons are tabled under subsection (4);
- (g) direct that the Councillor is ineligible to hold the office of Mayor or Deputy Mayor for a period specified by the arbiter not exceeding 12 months.

Cr Yildiz's submission on sanction

64. At the Hearing, Cr Yildiz was invited to make a submission on appropriate sanctions if a finding of misconduct was made in relation to any of the allegations.

65. In response, Cr Yildiz requested that the arbiter consider imposing a requirement for a verbal 'public apology at a future council meeting that acknowledges his remarks were inappropriate and affirms the importance of respectful debate amongst councillors'. Cr Yildiz also requested the arbiter to 'consider whether the severity and public nature of his conduct warrants ... potential suspension'.

Cr Pulford's submission on sanction

66. Cr Pulford was also invited to make a submission on appropriate sanctions if a finding of misconduct was made in relation to any of the allegations.

67. In response, Cr Pulford observed that 'I don't believe a finding on misconduct should be made, and therefore I don't believe I should have any sanctions. This is my fifth year of being a councillor and I haven't had complaints made against me before, and, I mean, and I don't believe that this complaint is substantial'.

Conclusion on sanctions

68. In determining a sanction that is proportionate and consistent with natural justice, the Arbiter has considered several factors that mitigate the seriousness of Cr Pulford's conduct including:

- Cr Pulford partially apologised for hurt caused during the conciliation process between the parties on 19 May 2025,
- he fully cooperated with the Arbitration process,
- his length of tenure as a Councillor and former Mayor without complaints having been previously made, and an absence of prior findings of misconduct,
- the stressful context within which the conduct occurred.

69. Cr Pulford has been found to have breached Standards 1, 2 and 4. After considering the mitigating factors, the Arbiter finds that the appropriate sanction in this instance is for Cr Pulford to be suspended from the office of Councillor for a period of 14 days. The suspension is intended to reinforce standards of conduct, provide an opportunity for reflection, and act as a deterrent to ultimately maintain confidence in council governance and governance procedures during meetings.

70. The option to direct that Cr Pulford make an apology was considered but not imposed. It is preferable for the outcome of this Arbitration to be corrective not performative. In other words, where misconduct is found, impose proportionate and reasoned sanctions. It is the Arbiter's view that imposing a public display of contrition via a forced apology may not be helpful.

Sanction

Pursuant to section 147(2)(b) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, I direct that Cr Adam Pulford of the Merri-bek City Council is suspended from the office of Councillor for a period of 14 days commencing the day after this decision is tabled at the next Council meeting in accordance with section 147(4)(b) of the Act.

Matthew Evans
Arbiter

Date: 21 November 2025

Schedule 1—Model Councillor Code of Conduct

Regulation 12

Definitions

In this Schedule—

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

1. Performing the role of a Councillor

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

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

2. Behaviours

- (1) A Councillor must treat others, including other Councillors, members of Council staff and members of the public, with dignity, fairness, objectivity, courtesy and respect, including by—
 - (a) not engaging in demeaning, abusive, obscene or threatening behaviour, including where the behaviour is of a sexual nature; and
 - (b) not engaging in behaviour that intentionally causes or perpetuates stigma, stereotyping, prejudice or aggression against a person or class of persons; and
 - (c) not engaging in discrimination or vilification; and

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

3. Good governance

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

- (a) the Council's expenses policy adopted and maintained under section 41 of the Act;
- (b) the Council's Governance Rules developed, adopted and kept in force by the Council under section 60 of the Act, including in relation to—
 - (i) conduct in Council meetings or meetings of delegated committees; and
 - (ii) requesting and approval of attendance at Council meetings and meetings of delegated committees by electronic means of communication; and
 - (iii) the Council's election period policy included in the Council's Governance Rules under section 69 of the Act, including in ensuring that Council resources are not used in a way that is intended to influence, or is likely to influence, voting at a general election or by-election;
- (c) the Council's Councillor gift policy adopted under section 138 of the Act;

- (d) any direction of the Minister given under section 175 of the Act.

4. Integrity

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

Note

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

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

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

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

7. COUNCIL REPORTS

7.1 PLACES FOR PEOPLE PLAN - DRAFT FOR ENGAGEMENT

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade

City Design and Economy

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Endorses the draft Places for People Plan (Attachment 1) for community engagement for five weeks from February to March 2026.
2. Receives a further report at the May 2026 Council meeting with a final version of the Places for People Plan, updated following community feedback, and a community engagement report that outlines the feedback received and how this feedback influenced the final version of the Places for People Plan.

REPORT

Executive Summary

The draft Places for People Plan (the draft plan) is Council's plan to enhance the vibrancy, sustainability and liveability of the public realm in Merri-bek's activity centres.

The plan has two key objectives:

1. Define and outline our approach to the improvement of the public realm in our activity centres.
2. Identify priority civic space and streetscape projects to be delivered through Council's forward capital works program.

The plan will guide Council's future investment in the public realm, identifying opportunities for new and improved civic spaces, and as a result, addressing key challenges to maximise the benefits of civic space. It sits alongside and complements Council's two other significant public realm plans: the Streets For People plan which focuses on Merri-bek's streets and transport infrastructure; and the Open Space Strategy Action Plan which is focused on how we plan, deliver and maintain outdoor spaces in Merri-bek.

The draft plan outlines key actions for each of the Major Activity Centres of Brunswick, Coburg and Glenroy, based on detailed place analysis that considers types of civic spaces and where they are best located. The draft plan identifies criteria to be used to prioritise actions for future implementation based on community and economic impact, strategic alignment, environmental benefit, and ease of deliverability.

For Merri-bek's twelve Neighbourhood and 43 Local Activity Centres, assessment criteria have also been developed to help prioritise upgrades at a centre level, based on the centre character, condition and constraints.

Community engagement will seek feedback on the draft plan, proposed actions and prioritisation method.

Previous Council decisions

Adoption of New Merri-bek Open Space Strategy – 10 April 2024

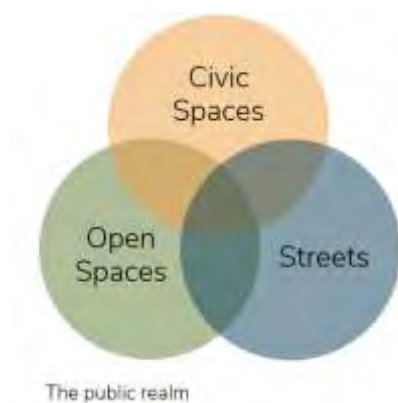
That Council:

1. *Endorses as final the Merri-bek Open Space Strategy (Attachment 1) and associated Action Plan (Attachment 2), with the following changes to the Action Plan:*
 - a) *Insert a new action for 2024/25 in the Action Plan under Direction 1: Providing parks close to home and enhancing existing open spaces after action 1.9 to “Prepare a municipal-wide view of priority of gap areas in addition to the suburb by suburb view, in preparation for the refresh of the Park Close to Home Framework”*
 - b) *Amend action 1.10 listed for 2025 to 2029 under Direction 1: Providing parks close to home and enhancing existing open spaces so that it reads “Refresh the Park Close to Home Framework to guide land acquisition and prioritisation of projects across Merri-bek, taking into account the Open Space Background Technical Report, the Merri-bek Strategic Property Framework, consideration of the Merri-bek Planning Scheme and ensuring the framework is practical to apply.”*
 - c) *Insert a new action for 2024/25 in the Action Plan under Enabling Actions after action 6.8 to “Develop and present to Council principles and a procedure to govern the management of the Public Resort and Recreation Land Fund so that it holds adequate funding to support significant strategic property purchases.”*

1. Policy context

The public realm describes all the publicly owned space that is available for the community to rest, play, move and gather. It includes our streets, civic spaces, and open spaces, with some overlap in the way these spaces function and are used, as illustrated in the diagram to the right.

Places for People focuses on the improvement of our civic spaces and streetscapes in activity centres. Improvement to our streets is addressed in the Streets for People Plan and improvement to our open spaces in the Open Space Strategy and Action Plan.



Streets for People Plan

Streets for People is Merri-bek's plan to create more safe, accessible, healthy, liveable and inclusive streets for everyone. The plan identifies a number of streets prioritised for Streets for People upgrades, and outlines how they will be delivered. It also establishes a prioritisation approach to consider future opportunities. These streets play an important function in connecting people to the activity centres, and making it easier, safer and more pleasant for people to travel to these centres.

Open Space Strategy Action Plan

The Merri-bek Open Space Strategy provides direction for the future provision, planning, design and management of Merri-bek's open space network. It identifies challenges such as increased pressure on existing open spaces, with growing resident and worker populations, and underserved areas that are lacking in open space. In some instances, new and improved civic spaces will help address gaps in the open space network, providing valuable new public space for the dense and growing populations in our major activity centres.

Shopping Strip Renewal Program

The Shopping Strip Renewal Program 2015–2025 (SSRP) delivered a series of local economic development initiatives and urban design improvements to enhance business performance and activate public spaces in Merri-bek's twelve neighbourhood shopping strips. There have been substantial public realm upgrades delivered in five Neighbourhood Activity Centres as well as direct investment and support programs to enhance business activity in these centres. Places for People will replace and expand the SSRP in guiding public realm investment in neighbourhood shopping strips.

Council Plan 2025-2029

The Council plan sets out Council's and community's vision for the future. Key objectives and strategies related to this report include:

Strategic Objective 3 – Beautiful and liveable city

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.

3.1 Build new and revitalised local parks that promote access to open space close to home, catering for all needs and abilities.

3.2 Ensure clean, safe, and inviting spaces and vibrant places, promoting responsible and civic engagement and greater neighbourhood pride, usage, and social connections.

3.7 Design, approve and develop public places that and promote universal access and personal safety for all.

2. Background

The draft Places for People Plan (the draft plan) is Council's plan to enhance the vibrancy, sustainability and liveability of the public realm in Merri-bek's activity centres. The draft plan was developed in response to Action 2.11 of the Merri-bek Open Space Strategy Action Plan:

'Prepare a Civic Spaces Action Plan for Brunswick, Coburg and Glenroy Activity centres which:

- Develops key principles and criteria to guide the location of civic spaces in Merri-bek's key activity centres in a place-based way and complementary with the Streets for People approach in Council's Transport Strategy.*
- Identifies locations for new or improved civic spaces to inform future land acquisition and capital works plans'.*

The draft plan has evolved to consider Neighbourhood Activity Centres and Local Activity Centres as well as the Major Activity Centres listed above. The draft plan will guide Council's future investment in the public realm, identifying opportunities for new and improved civic spaces, and as a result, addressing key challenges to maximise the benefits of civic space.

Benefits of civic spaces and streets

Civic spaces and streets provide residents and visitors with places to gather, rest, connect with others, and engage in the social and cultural life of our municipality. In Merri-bek, we require more and higher-quality civic spaces to meet the needs of the growing population, support our local economy, respond to climate change, and address the lack of public spaces in our activity centres.

In addition to addressing these key challenges, civic spaces provide numerous benefits to the community and the environment, these include:

- Engendering a sense of community belonging, ownership and civic pride.
- Improving community health and well-being through social connection and connection to nature and the outdoors.
- Benefitting the local and cultural economy by attracting visitors and providing space for activation.
- Contributing to a centre's identity and unique sense of place.
- Facilitating a range of events and activities, encouraging outdoor activity.
- Environmental benefits include stormwater capture, reuse and infiltration through integrated water management, expanded tree canopy cover, increased biodiversity and urban cooling.

Past planning

Past public realm capital works programming in Merri-bek's major activity centres has been based on the Structure Plans, which are dated (from between 2009 to 2012) and which, due to their ambitious and long-term view, have been delivered only in part.

More recent strategic planning for the centres has been focussed primarily on land use and built form controls, rather than the public realm. Places for People brings a refreshed view to the structure plans for these centres, taking into account recent developments and how these have shaped opportunities and constraints, including the Level Crossing Removal Project and the State Government Activity Centre program.

3. Issues

Community impact

The draft plan proposes changes to some public spaces and streets, to provide more space for social gathering, resting, playing and greening within our activity centres.

The projects identified in the plan will increase the greening of our activity centres and contribute to a more pleasant environment and experience for the community visiting and working in the activity centres.

Through the future implementation of each project, there will be extensive stakeholder engagement to inform the specific elements and design of each space to meet the needs of the community.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

The projects identified in the draft plan will help to address climate emergency and improve climate resilience in the public realm by:

- Increasing permeable surfaces and stormwater infiltration.
- Capturing, treating and reusing stormwater as a valuable resource.
- Increased planting and vegetation to support biodiversity in the city.
- New canopy tree planting for enhanced shade and urban cooling benefits.

Economic sustainability implications

The draft plan proposes new and upgraded civic spaces located to support economic activity. Pleasant, usable and welcoming spaces will attract more people to visit and stay in our activity centres for longer, which will benefit local businesses. These projects will also provide additional outdoor space which businesses can utilise for trading and seating, which further activates our streetscapes.

The proposed prioritisation criteria in the draft plan includes the economic impacts of individual projects. This will consider the level of activation delivered by a project, as well as the number of businesses and residents in the surrounding area.

An analysis of economic activity across Merri-bek's activity centres has informed the recommended distribution of capital investment in public realm improvements, to provide a commensurate and equitable approach to project allocation. A summary of the economic analysis is provided in Appendix 2 of the draft plan.

Public realm improvements to neighbourhood and local centres aren't the only Council investment that supports economic activity. There are many other important services and operations critical to businesses such as waste management and street cleansing.

Merri-bek's Economic Development Action Plan also outlines the numerous ways in which Council supports local businesses. These programs and activities are cost effective ways to directly benefit businesses and will require continued funding into the future, in parallel with the capital works program.

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 *Gender Equality Act 2020*.

Under the *Gender Equality Act 2020* Council has a duty to promote gender equality in policies, programs and services with a direct and significant impact on the community. This includes gender impact assessments which consider how our plan will:

- meet the needs of people of different genders
- address gender inequality
- promote gender equality.

An intersectional-lens Gender and Equity Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the draft plan and the assessment will be provided to the Human Rights Commission at the next submission date.

4. Community consultation and engagement

The development and adoption of the Merri-bek Open Space Strategy involved extensive community engagement during 2023 and 2024 to understand community uses and priorities relating to open space, including civic spaces. Key findings from that engagement have influenced the development of the draft plan. These include:

- There is pressure on existing open spaces as the population grows.
- Demand for more space to socialise, especially for girls and women, that is not in traditional open space or sporting settings but in more urban spaces.
- A need for seating and shade/shelter from sun and rain, over playgrounds, picnic and rest areas.
- Demand more trees and planting to improve biodiversity and provide more green space.
- Demand for spaces for diverse activities and programming.

Forthcoming activities

Engagement and communications activities for the draft plan in early 2026 will include:

- Conversations Merri-bek project page.
- Social media posts including in-language ads.
- A short survey (available digitally on Conversations Merri-bek, in several languages other than English, and in hard copy format at all public-facing council facilities and upon request).
- Visits to relevant community advisory committee and reference groups.
- Briefing Merri-bek Community Connectors to facilitate feedback from CALD communities.
- Pop-up events in Brunswick, Coburg, Glenroy and Fawkner which will be promoted on the Conversations Merri-bek page and at the locations when times, dates and locations are confirmed.

Affected persons rights and interests

Officers recommend a public exhibition period for the draft plan to allow all affected community members the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft plan. Changes to the document will then be considered that directly address the ideas or concerns of all affected persons before the Plan is finalised and presented to Council for adoption at the May 2026 Council meeting.

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 draft plan has been developed using inhouse resources.

The existing Five Year Capital Works Program includes a budget for activity centre public realm works. It is intended that the implementation of the draft plan be delivered through and within this existing budget, with allocation of priority projects to be considered annually through the development of the capital works program, and endorsed by Council through the adoption of the annual budget.

The activity centre capital works program is largely funded through Council rates, with some supplementation from grants when available. Council officers will continue to pursue funding opportunities, where projects align with grant objectives.

Some recommendations in the draft plan align with Open Space Strategy and Park Close to Home actions to address open space gap areas. Where these aligned projects involve land acquisition and creation of new urban parks, they may be funded through the Open Space Reserve.

The Victorian Government Activity Centres Program has also prompted discussion on funding the community infrastructure needs of the Brunswick and Coburg activity centres slated to receive significant new development and population growth. As outlined in Merri-bek's Submission to the Activity Centre Program, Council acknowledges the need for more housing, jobs and open space around our major activity and transport hubs, and notes this must be matched with adequate investment from the State Government in infrastructure and services that enhances liveability and supports vibrant, resilient communities.

The Victorian Government has signalled it intends to introduce an Activity Centres Infrastructure Contributions Plan model for the sixty Activity Centres prioritised in its reforms (this includes Brunswick and Coburg). Council will continue to advocate for a model that aligns with Merri-bek's local priorities and delivery processes.

7. Implementation

Community feedback will be sought on the draft Places for People Plan from February to March 2026.

Following review and analysis of feedback, a report detailing the findings of the engagement and how it influenced changes to the final plan will be presented to Council in May 2026.

Attachment/s

- 1 [↓](#) Draft Places for People Plan D25/622333



1

Table of Contents

A plan for Merrri-bek's activity centre public realm.....	1
Table of Contents	2
Introduction	3
Background	5
Activity Centres	12
Major Activity Centres	18
Brunswick Activity Centre.....	20
Coburg Activity Centre	28
Glenroy Activity Centre.....	32
Neighbourhood Activity Centres	36
Local Activity Centres.....	38
Appendix 1 - Design Principles	39

Introduction

Places for People is Council's plan to create civic spaces and streets that enhance the vibrancy, sustainability and liveability of Merri-bek's activity centres.

Civic spaces and streets provide residents and visitors with welcoming places to gather, rest, connect with others and engage in the social and cultural life of our municipality.

In Merri-bek, we require more and higher-quality civic spaces to meet the needs of the growing population, support our local economy, respond to climate change, and address the lack of public spaces in our activity centres – as identified in the Merri-Bek Open Space Strategy. In addition to addressing these key challenges, civic spaces provide numerous benefits to the community and the environment, these include:

- Engendering a sense of community belonging, ownership and civic pride
- Improving community health and well-being through social connection and connection to nature and the outdoors.
- Benefitting the local and cultural economy by attracting visitors and providing space for activation
- Contributing to a centre's identity and unique sense of place
- Facilitating a range of events and activities, encouraging outdoor activity
- Environmental benefits include stormwater capture, reuse and infiltration through integrated water management, expanded tree canopy cover, increased biodiversity and urban cooling.



Saxon Street Urban Pocket Park, Brunswick Library

This plan will guide Council's future investment in the public realm through identifying opportunities for new and improved civic spaces, and as a result, address key challenges and maximise the benefits of civic space.

The plan has two key objectives:

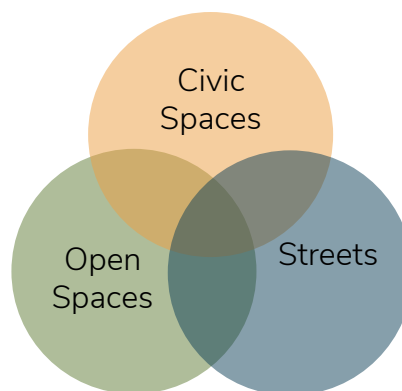
1. Define and outline our approach to civic spaces in our Major Activity Centres, Neighbourhood Activity Centres and Local Activity Centres.
2. Identify priority civic space and streetscape projects to be targeted through Council's 10-year capital program.

Merri-bek is home to 3 Major Activity Centres, 12 Neighbourhood Activity Centres and 40+ Local Activity Centres. These centres vary in scale, function and features and therefore require different approaches to civic space. Analysis of these centres resulted in the identification of **civic space programs** (see page 6) that define the different types of spaces in our centres and a set of **civic space drivers** (see page 13 and 18) that outline where civic spaces are best located in each of the activity centre types. Criteria for each category of centre were then applied to the actions, to develop the priority list of projects for future focus.

Merri-bek Public Realm

The public realm is all the publicly owned space that is available for the community to rest, play, move and gather. Our public realm consists of our streets, civic spaces, and open spaces. There is overlap in the way these aspects of our public realm function.

This document, the Places for People Plan, focuses on the improvement of our civic spaces. Improvements to our streets is addressed in the Streets for People Plan and improvements to our open spaces in the Open Space Strategy and Action Plan.



The public realm

Policy context

Plan for Victoria, the state governments 2050 vision for the future of Victoria, sets out a new structure for the planning of activity centres. The new approach departs from the hierarchy of Local, Neighbourhood and Major Activity Centres to a network-based approach that focuses on accessibility and transport connectivity. These new classifications will replace the traditional hierarchy over time, and as the *Plan for Victoria framework is implemented*. In the interim this document utilises the hierarchy of Major, Neighbourhood and Local Activity Centres, as currently reflected in the Merri-bek Planning Scheme.

At a local government level, this plan is complimentary to the Open Space Strategy and the Streets for People Plan. It also builds upon existing structure plans, streetscape master plans and strategic documents for Merri-bek's activity centres. Where recommendations from past strategic documents have not yet been implemented and are still evaluated to be a priority, they are incorporated into this plan.

There are several other council plans, strategies and policies related to this plan which are reflected in the actions and design principles. These include but are not limited to:

- Urban Heat Island Action Plan which informs decision-making to mitigate urban heat risks.
- Climate Emergency Action Plan which outlines goals for a zero carbon, circular and climate resilient future.
- Economic Development Action Plan
- Merri-bek Human Rights Policy

Streets for People Plan

Streets for People is Merri-bek's plan to create more safe, accessible, healthy, liveable and inclusive streets for everyone. The plan identifies streets that council will target as Streets for People Projects and outlines the process through which the projects will be delivered. The plan focuses on streets and corridors with relatively lower movement functions, allowing them to play a stronger place role, with an emphasis on amenity and providing comfortable connections into activity centres.

Open Space Strategy

The Merri-bek Open Space Strategy provides direction for the future provision, planning, design and management of Merri-bek's open space network. The challenges identified in the strategy included increased pressure on existing open spaces, given the rise in resident and worker populations, and underserved areas that are lacking in open space. Places for People will contribute to relieving pressure on existing open space and improving underserved areas within the activity centres by identifying opportunities for new and improved civic spaces.

Shopping Strip Renewal Program

The Shopping Strip Renewal Program 2015 – 2025, delivered a series of local economic development initiatives and urban design improvements to improve business performance and activate public spaces across neighbourhood shopping strips in Merri-bek. Through the program there have been substantial public realm upgrades delivered in 5 Neighbourhood Activity Centres as well as direct investment and support programs to enhance business and economic activity in these centres. This plan will continue the legacy of the SSRP moving forward and will take on the role of upgrading NACs.

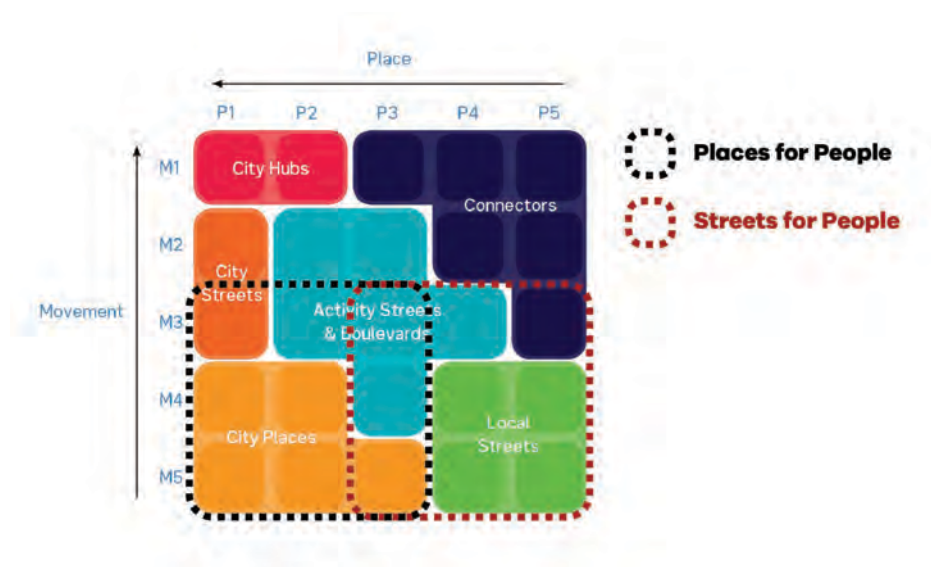
Background

Defining Civic Spaces and Streets

Civic spaces are a type of open space that can include urban plazas, squares, pedestrian malls and forecourts in our activity centres. They are ideally located to support the large numbers of people from across our city who work in and visit civic facilities, commercial centres and cultural destinations, providing them with a place to spend time while out and about, to connect with others, and to participate in public life.

Civic streets are streets in activity centres that perform an important 'place' role, beyond the function of a transport corridor, as defined through the Movement and Place Framework, (see diagram below). They are important pedestrian connectors and have the space and character to encourage and allow people to dwell, stay and enjoy a variety of civic uses.

Civic spaces and streets vary in scale and function across our activity centres. To understand the types of civic spaces and streets we have in Merri-bek and those that we want more of we have defined 4 programs for civic spaces: Arrival Spaces, Anchor Spaces, Civic Streetscapes and Intercept Spaces.



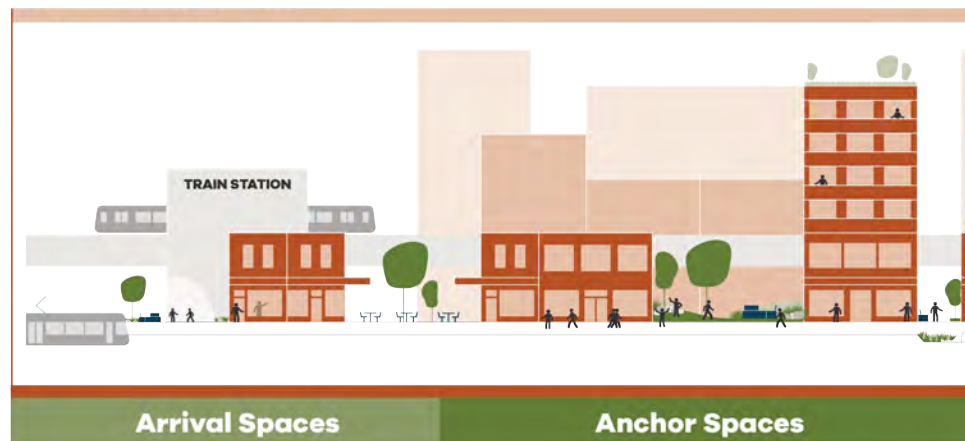
Movement and Place Framework

Civic Space Programs

The four types of civic space programs give an idea of the role civic spaces play across the different centres, and each program encompasses a variety of space typologies, as seen in the diagram below. Not all programs are suitable across all activity centre types, due to the varying scale and function of local, neighbourhood and major centres.

The diagram below outlines the types of recommendations and civic spaces contained in this plan and the following pages outline the four civic space programs in detail.

Major Activity Centres



The scale of actions for the activity centres



Arrival Spaces

Arrival spaces mark the entry or gateway into an Activity Centre, destination or anchor. These are usually co-located with transport stops and precinct anchors, and include station forecourts, precinct anchor forecourts and spaces located at key gateways into the activity centre.

There are several forecourts cross our activity centres that serve as arrival spaces. They are destinations for waiting, resting, social gathering and in some cases community events – typically when interfacing with community infrastructure. These forecourts help to activate spaces around buildings and train stations and can contribute to a sense of safety through lighting, clear sightlines and the presence of people. They are often designed with features such as seating, landscaping, trees and public art.

Examples of arrival spaces include Jewell Station forecourt, Mechanics Institute forecourt, and Coburg Civic Centre forecourt.



Mechanics Institute forecourt, Brunswick



Jewell Station forecourt, Brunswick



Public Art in civic spaces

Public art adds vibrancy and meaning to civic spaces, enriching the identity of a place by reflecting the stories, history and culture of the local community. It also creates valuable opportunities to collaborate with and support local artists and creatives.

Public art can take many forms including murals, sculptures, and creative installations that can be installed permanently or temporarily. Public art can also be fully integrated into the design of a space, adding layers of meaning to functional design elements.



Glenroy Community Hub, Glenroy

Anchoring Spaces

Anchoring spaces are larger civic spaces which people seek out for social gatherings, cultural events, civic activities, play and rest. They are centrally located and designed for community use. They serve as a space to hold a range of community events including markets, performances, interactive activities and cultural gatherings as well as a space for community discourse and social action all of which contribute to a sense of community and place identity.

These spaces are often landmarks for an area and contribute to a place's identity and character. Anchoring spaces can directly support economic activity through active edges and providing space for outdoor dining. Anchoring spaces include civic squares, urban pocket parks and pedestrian malls.

They are often designed with features such as seating, landscaping, trees, public art, event-based infrastructure including amphitheatres, projection walls, large open areas suitable for crowds, and interactive elements including water features, sculptures, and digital displays.

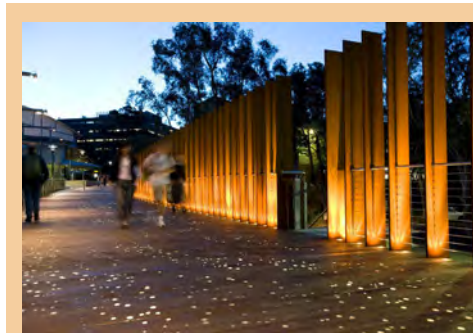
Examples of anchoring spaces in Merri-bek include Pentridge Piazza, Victoria Mall, Michelle Guglielmo Park and Saxon Street Pocket Park.



Pentridge Piazza, Coburg



Victoria Mall, Coburg



Layered lighting in civic spaces

Layered lighting is the use of different types of lighting in various locations within a public space for practicality, safety and ambience. By balancing functional and atmospheric light, it shapes the mood and character of a civic space and enables it to be enjoyed at all times of day and night.



Michelle Guglielmo Park, Brunswick



Saxon Street Pocket Park, Brunswick

Civic Streetscapes

Civic streetscapes are streetscapes or pedestrian links within our activity centres that are designed to prioritise the pedestrian experience in busy shopping areas with active frontages. Civic streetscapes have a high demand for pedestrian activities and lower levels of vehicle movement. They support and contribute to the pedestrian friendly nature of place through providing space for rest, infrastructure for safe movement via walking and cycling and slower vehicular speeds.

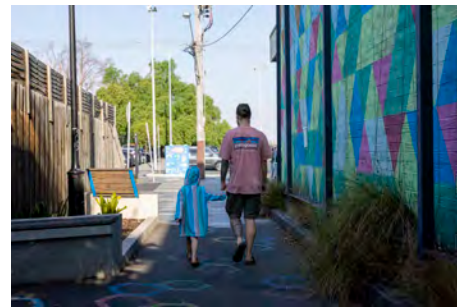
Civic Streetscapes are often designed with features such as widened footpaths, shared zones, seating, landscaping, stormwater tree pits, raingardens and other WSUD features integrated with bike hoops, street trees and public art.

Pedestrian links are a form of civic streetscapes that can delivered through streetscape projects but also in isolation. Pedestrian links provide safe pedestrian pathways and connections and are typically delivered through closing existing laneways to vehicle traffic or large development sites.

Civic streetscapes are often delivered in collaboration with transport planners. Examples of civic streetscapes include parts of Melville Road and, Dawson Street and Wilson Avenue.



Wilson Avenue, Brunswick



Dunnes Lane, Coburg



The importance of outdoor dining

In civic streetscapes, outdoor dining plays an important role as it activates the street, provides opportunities for social connection and passive surveillance. Outdoor dining supports economic activity by expanding trading space for businesses and providing a relaxed atmosphere that encourages visitors to linger.

Intercepting spaces

Intercepting spaces are smaller spaces that people come across rather than seek out - they invite people to pause. Intercepting spaces provide a place for people to stop and rest in the shade as well as contributing to street greening. These spaces are often within kerb outstands or on a wide footpath and are simple in design with features including landscaping and seating.

There are very minimal intercepting spaces currently across our activity centres, however, there are plenty of kerb outstands that have the potential for improved seating and landscaping, creating places for people to rest and relax.

Intercepting spaces can be delivered as part of civic streetscapes as well as a standalone project. They can be delivered through on existing kerb space, through kerb extensions, and in some cases carparking can be converted to provide an intercepting space. On Pascoe Vale Road a bay of parallel parks were converted to footpath to create the kerb space, pictured below. Other examples of intercepting spaces include Walsh Street seat, and Bonwick Street shopping strip.



Pascoe Vale Road, Glenroy



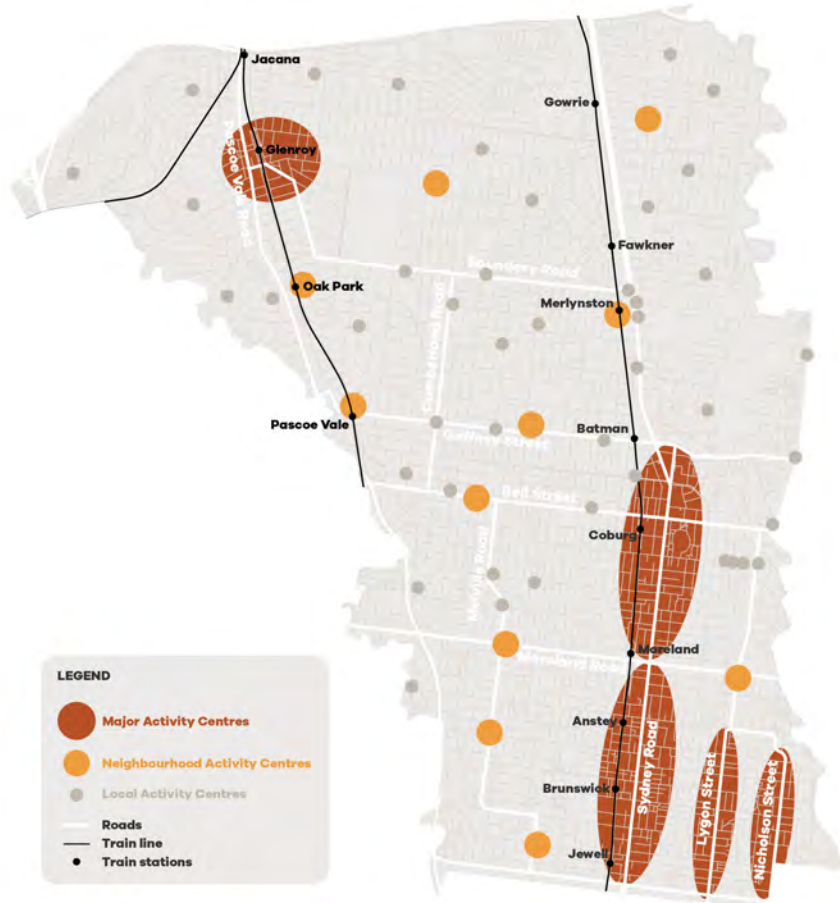
Walsh Street seat, Coburg



Bonwick Street Shopping Strip, Fawkner

Activity Centres

Our activity centres vary greatly in scale, function and features and therefore require different approaches to civic space and levels of investment. This plan defines the different types of activity centres; the civic space programs present in the activity centres and the civic space drivers that define parameters for well-located civic spaces.



	Major Activity Centres (MACs)	Neighbourhood Activity Centres (NACs)	Local Activity Centres (LACs)
Definition	Major Activity Centres (MACs) provide a broad variety of retail and comparison shopping, economic investment and cultural activity, and are well serviced by public transport. They service large catchments (beyond LGAs boundaries) and are important destinations for all Merri-bek residents for cultural and creative exchange as well as community gathering and social connection. There are 3 MACs – Brunswick, Coburg and Glenroy.	Neighbourhood Activity Centres (NACs) have a mix of uses to meet the daily and weekly needs of the local community. This can include shops, supermarket, small businesses, cafes. They can also play an important community-based role in providing medical/health and community services and a place to meet and socialise in the local area. In Merri-bek there are 12 NACs.	Local Activity Centres provide access to small local shopping services. These centres service the daily convenience needs of nearby residents and often include a small convenience store and services such as dry cleaners, hairdressers and coffee shops. There are 40+ Local Activity Centres in Merri-bek.
Place Description	MACs occupy large areas encompassing lengths of main streets / high streets, some local streets, and blocks of commercial and mixed-use land experiencing significant growth.	NACs cover smaller areas, typically one to two city blocks. They mostly consist of a shopping strip within a largely residential neighbourhood experiencing some infill and low scale development.	LACs vary in size from just a couple of shopfronts in a local street to a block or two of shops in a residential neighbourhood. They form part of the local urban fabric.
Catchment	30,000 – 50,000 residents, workers and visitors beyond.	8,000 – 10,000 residents	Few thousand residents (<5000)
Shops	1,865 shop fronts	384 shop fronts	383 shop fronts
Civic Space Drivers	MAC civic spaces should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within or near commercial activity that generates street life. • Adjacent to civic and cultural anchors and destinations. • Distributed along major activity streets so walking distance between spaces is not greater than 200m (or a three-minute walk) 	Depending on the scale of the NAC there may be the opportunity for small civic spaces which should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within or near commercial activity that generates street life. • Where pedestrian space allows for small gathering or resting points. 	LACs will not typically contain civic spaces but depending on size and character will have some street furniture and streetscape infrastructure to support business activity and community use.
Eco Drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent retailers • Creative Precincts • Bridal and Jewellery Precincts • Dining Precincts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily goods and services, combined visits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short visits for convenience needs
Typologies	Civic squares; Urban Pocket Parks; Pedestrian Malls; Pedestrian links; Forecourts; Civic Streetscape, Kerb Spaces, Outdoor Dining Areas, Public Art	Pedestrian links; Forecourts; Civic Streetscape; Kerb Spaces; Outdoor Dining Areas; Public Art	Kerb spaces; Outdoor Dining Areas; Public Art

Overview and methodology approach to civic spaces in Activity Centres.

Allocating Investment

Given the concentration of economic activity (71% of shops in Merri-bek are in major activity centres), wide attraction of visitors, connection to civic and community infrastructure, and scale of catchment served by MACs, it makes sense for Council to direct most public realm investment into these centres, where all community members can experience the benefits. Further economic analysis can be found in the Appendix 2 Economic Baseline Summary.

The civic space projects in MACs are naturally larger, more complex, and take longer to deliver. This Plan considers the spaces within MACs individually and within the unique context and character of each MAC. It establishes prioritisation criteria to help decide which project should occur first.

NACs and LACs also require investment in important day-to-day streetscape amenities such as street furniture and tree planting to ensure our local shopping strips are pleasant places to be and encourage locals to visit. This plan recommends in any given budget period that a portion of spend goes towards NACs and LACs to ensure upgrades continue to occur in these areas with consideration to the opportunities and constraints of each centre.

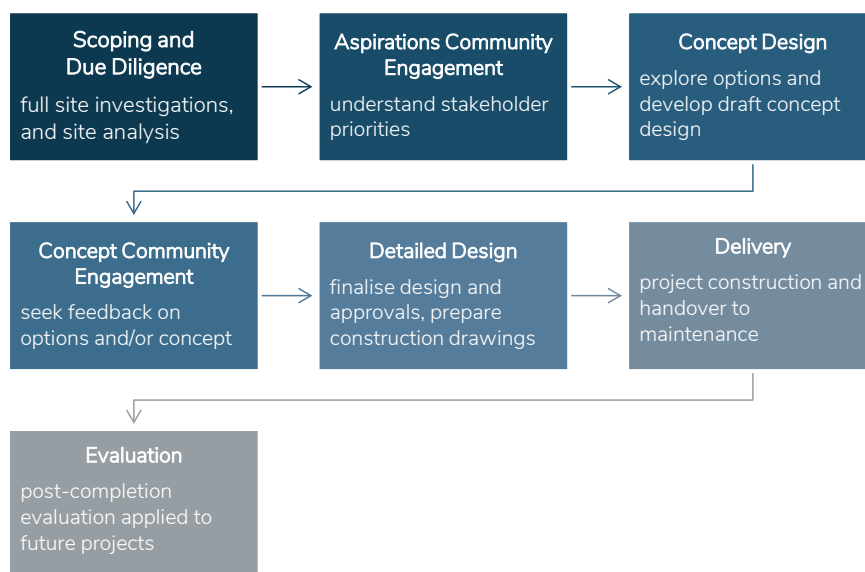
The allocation for each project and each centre will be considered annually through the adoption of the Capital Works Program, using the prioritisation criteria outlined in this Plan.

Additional programs and projects may be supported subject to external funding. Council will continue to pursue state and federal grants to support public realm improvements for the city.

Implementation Process

The following flow chart provides an overview of the steps that will be followed for the implementation of individual projects or upgrades. As each project is unique and varies in scale and complexity, we will tailor this general approach to fit the needs of each project and its stakeholders.

Temporary spaces may also be created parallel to this process to trial and test changes or interventions in simple and low-cost ways. This approach known as 'tactical urbanism' can play an important role in creating more public space, activating underutilised land and complementing the community engagement process.



Implementation process flowchart

Supporting Implementation

In addition to the capital works and civic space projects identified in this plan, which provide a vital element of the physical public realm, Council provides ongoing operational and community services which help to make our activity centres great places to be. These services and programs continue to evolve to meet the needs of our growing population and local economy and undergo regular planning and review.

Program or Plan	Purpose
Merri-bek Economic Development Action Plan	Themes for focus and actions to support businesses and the local economy.
Merri-bek Public Place Service Improvement Plan	Improvement initiatives for most important services that help keep Merri-bek's public spaces clean, safe and inviting.
Merri-bek Public Art and Murals Program	Guides the integration of public art in civic spaces to beautify, engage and excite.
Festival, Events and Place Activation	Festivals, events, and place programming designed to activate Council's public spaces, engage and connect the community and support local businesses.
Transport Safety Programs	Programs and initiatives to make streets and movement corridors safer for everyone including upgrading crossings, speed limit reductions and traffic calming strategies.



What is tactical urbanism?

Tactical urbanism involves implementing low-cost, temporary urban interventions to improve public spaces and influence long-term change. Examples include pop-up parks, painted shared zones, makeshift bike lanes and temporary street furniture.

Tactical urbanism can be a great way to activate a space or test ideas for future permanent designs and uses. It is a cost effective way to engage the community in trialling and evaluating changes to the public realm.



The Sydney Road Corridor in Coburg

Major Activity Street Corridors

The characters of the Brunswick, Coburg and Glenroy activity centres are dominated by the linear nature of our main activity streets, Sydney Road, Lygon Street and Pascoe Vale Road.

The physical form of these streets is often constrained by the tramlines managed by Yarra Trams and the associated clearways managed by the Department of Transport and Planning. These clearways mean that the existing narrow footpaths can't currently be widened to make additional space for pedestrians and street greening.

Both Sydney Road and Lygon Street require accessible tram stops to serve the needs of our community and this is a major advocacy agenda for Council. Once achieved, the introduction of accessible tram stops will transform the configuration and character of these streetscapes.

Until the Victorian Government invests in accessible tram stops or transforms clearways, Council is limited in the meaningful change it can make to the public realm along Sydney Road, Lygon Street and Pascoe Vale Road. Given these limitations, our interim approach to these streets is to:

- Maximise greening opportunities adjacent to Sydney Road and Lygon Street through a continuing program of kerb outstands and intercepting spaces for cumulative impact along the corridors.
- Focus on improvements in local streets leading to Sydney Road and Lygon Street to enhance the movement network to reach these centres, as outlined in the Streets for People Plan.
- Continue to advocate to the Victorian Government for improved pedestrian crossing times and frequency to aid pedestrian movement and connectivity across these streets.
- Improve the amenity of Sydney Road through focussed cleansing, street furniture renewal and decluttering of footpaths by the removal of redundant signs and infrastructure through the 'Love Sydney Road' program.
- Continue to advocate and implement 30km/h speed limits on major roads as trialled on Lygon Street.

Aligned Opportunities on Private Land

This Plan focuses largely on new and improved civic spaces within Council's direct control. There will also be opportunities for new civic spaces that evolve from the eventual development of large strategic sites in our MACs. These new mixed-use developments can provide quality public spaces and links which will contribute to the network as part of their open space or public works contribution. Council will continue to work towards these strategic outcomes through the planning process.

There is also the opportunity for partnerships with other landowners for shared use and maintenance of private land that can benefit our community. For example, there are several forecourts in front of landmark heritage buildings on Sydney Road which have the potential to contribute additional greening and informal civic space. Council will pursue partnerships with these institutions where space can meet the objectives and design guidelines for civic space.



Green pedestrian link created as part of a Nightingale development which links to the Upfield Bike Path.



Forecourts on private land, such as the Penny Black forecourt on Sydney Rd, provide opportunities for partnerships for more civic space.

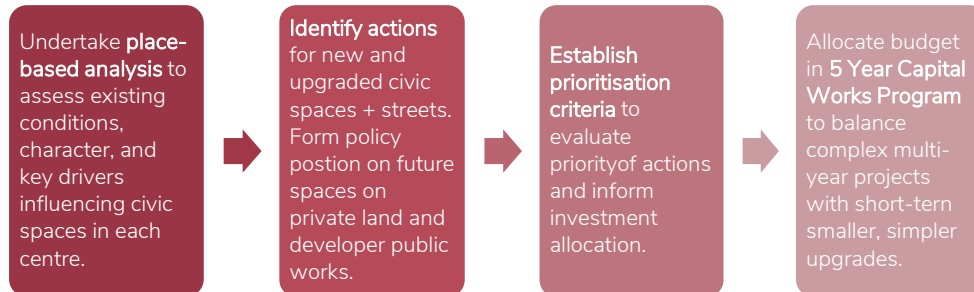


Small pocket park created at the end of Duckett Street as part of Nightingale Village. This space contributes to street greening and seating to create a pedestrian focused space. The area is used for community events and gathering.

Major Activity Centres

Merri-bek has three Major Activity Centres – Brunswick Activity Centre, Coburg Activity Centre and Glenroy Activity Centre. The following chapters detail the place analysis, actions and prioritisation for each of the Major Activity Centres.

Methodology for Major Activity Centres



Place Analysis

The Place Analysis involved analysing the existing conditions in each of the activity centres through reviewing past documents and mapping key spatial aspects of the centres including the existing civic spaces, precinct anchors and civic space drivers. The civic space drivers outline where civic spaces are best located in activity centres, see the table below.

Mapping the drivers along with existing spaces and anchors provides a framework for identifying and assessing actions. Some of the actions have been identified in past strategic documents and structure plans and have been incorporated into this analysis.

Civic Space Drivers	Mapping
Civic spaces are located within or near commercial activity that generates street life.	Areas of commercial activity that generates street life.
Civic spaces are located adjacent to or near civic and cultural anchors and destinations.	Destinations such as civic centres, community hubs, arts spaces.
Civic spaces are distributed along major activity street corridors to ensure walking distance between civic spaces is not greater than 200m (or a three-minute walk)	Gap areas where civic spaces are more than 200m away.

Civic Space Drivers

Prioritisation

The prioritisation criteria have been developed to assess the actions identified in each of the MACs. The criteria cover five themes, under which there are key questions, as outlined below.

In addition, prioritisation will consider

Criteria	Key Questions
Project cost & time	What is the approximate cost scale of the project?
	How long will the project take to complete?
Community impact	What is the scale of impact on the public realm?
	Will the project close a spatial gap? Civic space and/or open space gap
Economic Impact	Will the project contribute directly to economic activation?
	Number of businesses and dwellings in surrounding area.
Strategic alignment	Does the project align with other Council projects?
	Does the project align with State Government projects?
	Could the project leverage private strategic development sites?
Environmental benefit	Can the project deliver meaningful outcomes for tree canopy, deep soil planning, WSUD and pervious surfaces?
	Can the project contribute to climate risk and resilience?
Ease of deliverability	Are there land encumbrances?
	Are there other project risks or complexities?

Cross Centre Actions

The following actions are important for creating better outcomes for the public realm across all the major activity centres.

Action	Description	Delivery method
Improve wayfinding	Improve wayfinding to contribute to accessibility, easy navigation, and place identity.	Adoption of Merri-bek signage suite. Iterative rollout of improved wayfinding signage through related capital works and asset renewal.
Improve quality and consistency of street materials palette	Deliver incremental upgrades (pavements, tree planting, furniture) through Council projects and private developments to steadily improve the quality and consistency of streetscape fabric across the major centres.	Preparation of Merri-bek Streetscape Design Guidelines. Iterative rollout through street renewal program and developer public works plans.
Identify land acquisitions for new public space	Identify land for potential acquisitions to create new public space and urban pocket parks in open space gap areas.	Park Close to Home Program, funded through Open Space Reserve.

Brunswick Activity Centre

Sydney Road Today

Population	5,779
Economic output	\$2,668M
Jobs	10,949
Businesses	1,806

Brunswick Activity Centre, centred on Sydney Road, is a vibrant and dense urban centre that reflects its creative, culturally diverse community.

The built form is a mix of fine grain heritage facades and high-density apartments, complemented by a small number of quality public spaces that provide residents and visitors with civic space and community facilities. The civic heart around the Town Hall, Library, Counihan Gallery, Brunswick Baths, and Balam Balam Place, is a hive of activity supported and enhanced by the surrounding precinct anchors.

The main shopping strip of Sydney Road is dominated by independent retailers with an eclectic blend of arts venues, multicultural dining and retail businesses. The Brunswick Design District and RMIT University anchor the creative activity evident in the galleries, businesses and murals that add vibrancy to Brunswick. The commercial landscape is trending towards high quality dining experiences, retail and services, with some speciality retail, notably the growing Bridal precinct.

Despite its economic success, leading urban initiatives and reputation as a creative and cultural destination, Sydney Road itself is dominated by vehicular traffic and is lacking in street greening and open space, while the narrow Upfield corridor and heavily utilised shared path feels cramped and congested. In addition, the presence of vacant and underutilised shop fronts contributes to a unkept, gritty landscape.

Sydney Road in the future

The Brunswick Level Crossing Removal Project (LXRP) will transform the Upfield corridor, linking neighbourhoods either side of the rail line, and creating a new substantial open space corridor. The project will bring excellent opportunities for new civic spaces aligned with the new and heritage stations, along with a smaller urban pocket parks in the adjacent streets, as documented in Council's [Upfield Urban Design Framework](#). Council will advocate for these spaces to be delivered as part of the LXRP.

Given Sydney Road is state owned with managed clearways, Council is limited in the level of change it can currently bring to the streetscape. Major state investment in accessible tram stop is desperately needed and will bring the opportunity to transform the corridor into a more vibrant and people friendly street with ample space for greening and active street life. Council will continue to advocate for this State-level investment in Sydney Road.

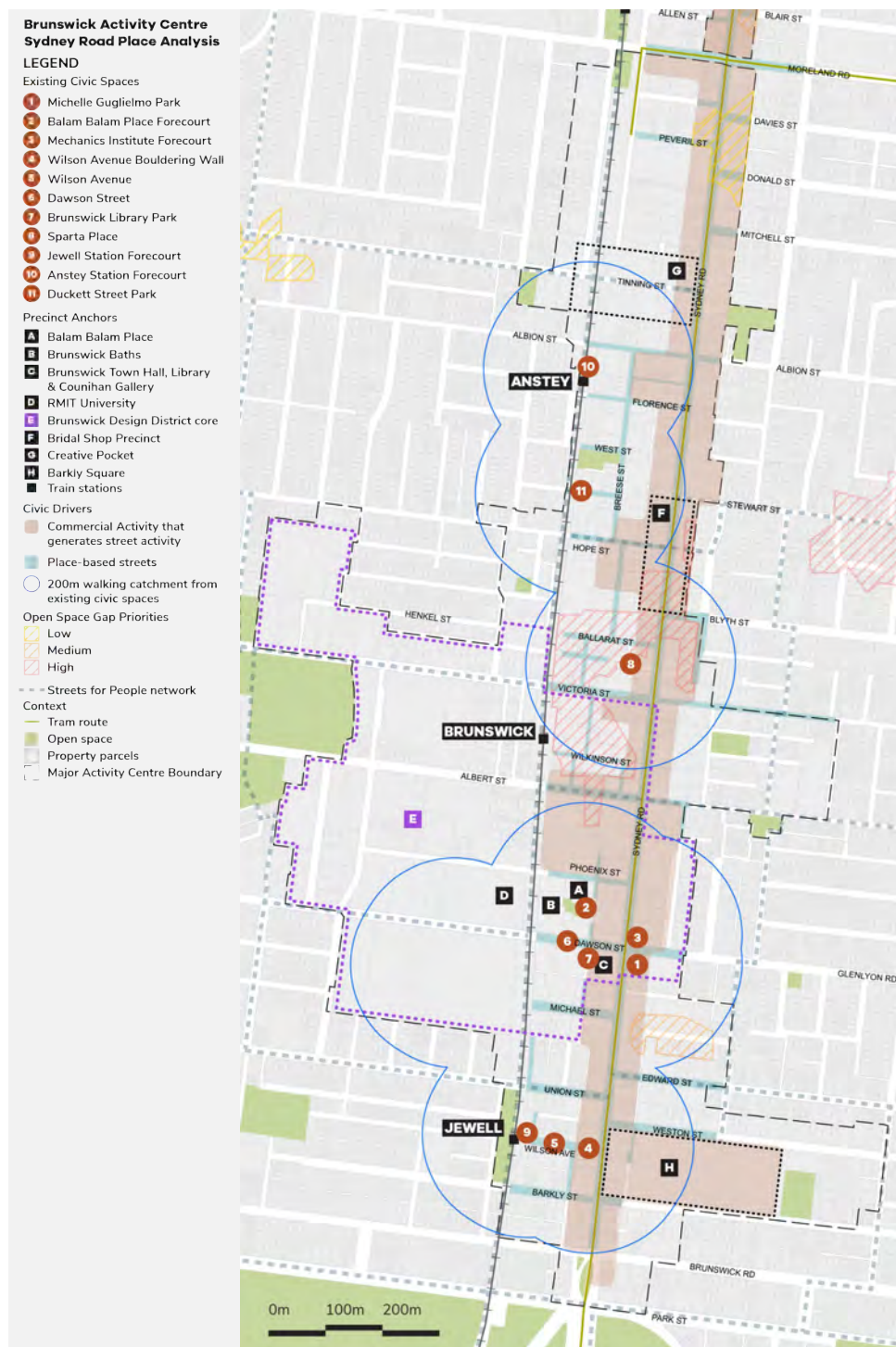
In the meantime, the established, fine-grained urban fabric of Brunswick means that Council's approach in this corridor is to build upon the provision of smaller civic spaces along the main activity street, to create a strong network of special spaces that provide welcome breaks in the built form, and frequent green and cool places of respite and connection.



Heritage buildings on Sydney Road













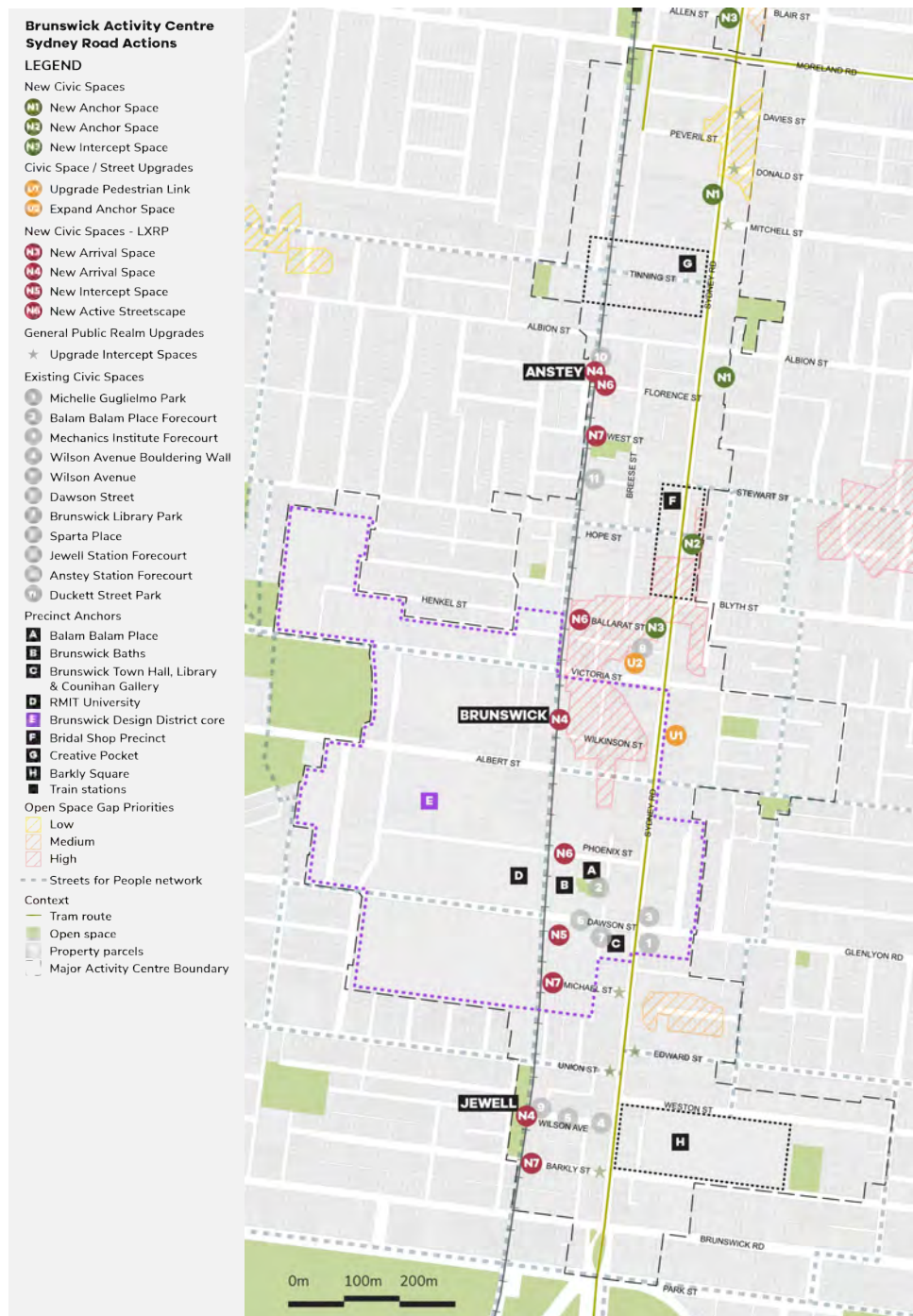
Nightingale Village



Sydney Road Actions

Actions identified in the Sydney Road corridor in Brunswick include upgrades and expansions of existing civic spaces and sites and streets that do or have the potential to play an important 'place' role.

Action	Description
New spaces	
 New Anchor Space at 568 Sydney Road.	Provide a new anchor space on Council owned land at 568 Sydney Road.
 New Anchor Space	Explore enlarging and upgrading existing forecourts at 682 Sydney Road and 797 Sydney Road.
 New Intercept Space at Ballarat Street	Explore the potential for a new intercept space or small anchor space at Ballarat Street.
New spaces in alignment with the Level Crossing Removal Project (LXRP)*	
 New Arrival Spaces at the former stations	Create new arrival spaces in and around heritage station buildings at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anstey Station • Brunswick Station • Jewell Station
 New Arrival Space at Dawson Street	Investigate creation of new arrival space in proximity to the new Southern Station as gateway to the civic precinct.
 New Intercept Spaces abutting the Upfield shared path	Explore the creation of new intercept spaces at the end of streets interfacing with LXRP at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ballarat Street • Phoenix Street • Florence Street
 Upgrade Streetscapes on streets leading to the Upfield shared path	Explore upgrading the following streets to create civic streetscapes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Street • Michael Street • Barkly Street • Tinning Street • Wilkinson Street
*As identified in the Level Crossing Removal Project Urban Design Framework.	
Upgrade spaces	
 Pedestrian Link to Frith Street Park	Explore upgrading council owned laneway to provide a pedestrian link to Frith St Park.
 Expand Anchor Space	Explore the potential to expand Sparta Place
 Upgrade Intercept Spaces	Explore the potential to upgrade corner intercept spaces at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Davies Street • Donald Street • Mitchell Street • Michael Street • Edward Street • Union Street • Barkly Street



Lygon Street and Nicholson Street Today

Population	8,532
Economic output	\$1,188M
Jobs	4,633
Businesses	1,103

The Lygon Street and Nicholson Street corridors are diverse in their offering and character and therefore require different approaches when it comes to civic spaces and the public realm. Brunswick East has the highest rate of shop vacancies of the major activity centres.



Outdoor dining on Lygon Street

Lygon Street is a long shopping strip with a variety of modern restaurants, local bars, local supermarkets and shops. At the southern end of Lygon Street the vibrant dining area is supported by wide footpaths, kerb outstands, minor street greening and established parklets. There are opportunities to further improve the public realm and amenity in this area to build upon its existing character and identity as a culinary hub, to create a standout alfresco dining precinct.

Towards the north, there are several high-density developments, and the commercial offering is geared more towards local services and businesses. The footpaths are narrower, and the street greening is very limited, however there is considerable open space nearby, including Methven Park and Fleming Park. Public realm improvements have been implemented around Fleming Park to deliver a new shared zone to improve safety and amenity for people walking and riding around Fleming Park.

Nicholson Street is a more fragmented spine with pockets of commercial activity amongst stretches of residential homes, creating a corridor with low levels of street activation that largely caters to vehicular traffic and residential access. The small strips of shops offer a mix of cafes and local services, that cater more to residents over visitors to the area. The recently completed East Brunswick Village has established a commercial anchor that provides a large supermarket as well as entertainment, retail and dining services.

Lygon Street and Nicholson Street in the Future

There is a key opportunity to capitalise on the success of the southern section of Lygon Street through upgrading the streetscape to provide improved pedestrian amenity, street greening and new civic spaces. This area is likely to continue to attract traders offering quality dining experiences and boutique retail. Opportunities in the northern section of Lygon Street are limited by the narrow footpaths. Council is advocating for accessible tram stops to deliver wider footpaths, frequent pedestrian crossings and new space for greening to contribute to a better public realm. There is some opportunity to create new civic space within side streets in this section of the corridor. Council is currently trialing reduced speeds to 30km/h on the Lygon Street corridor and will continue to advocate for reduced speeds on Nicholson Street.











East Brunswick Village

Given the dominance of detached housing and lack of consistent commercial interfaces, Nicholson Street is unlikely to develop into a continuous spine of activity, and it is anticipated that new residential development is more likely to be medium density housing on existing residential lots. East Brunswick Village is evolving into a larger precinct and defines somewhat of a shift from a residential towards a mixed-use area, however, the opportunities are extremely limited on Nicholson Street.



Lygon Street and Nicholson Street Actions

Actions identified on Lygon and Nicholson Street are largely upgrades to kerb spaces and potential road closures. There are very limited existing civic spaces with opportunities to upgrade or expand, the only space that has been identified is the Child & Maternal Health Centre forecourt.

Action	Description
New Civic Space	
 New Intercept Space at Jarvie Street	Explore the potential for a new intercept space at Jarvie Street.
 New Intercept Space at Piera Street	Explore the potential for a new intercept space at Piera Street.
 New Anchor Space	Investigate land purchasing opportunities through Park Close to Home to address the open space gap area at the southern end of Lygon Street.
 New Anchor Space	Investigate land purchasing opportunities through Park Close to Home to address the open space gap area at the northern end of Lygon Street.
 New Anchor Space	Investigate land purchasing opportunities through Park Close to Home to address the open space gap area around the intersection of Nicholson Street and Blyth Street.
Civic Space Upgrades	
 Upgrade Lygon Street south streetscape	Upgrade the southern end of Lygon Street to create a new civic streetscape.
 Upgrade Arrival Space	Explore enlarging and upgrading existing forecourt at the Child & Maternal Health Centre.
General Public Realm Improvements	
 Upgrade Intercept Spaces	<p>Explore the potential to upgrade corner intercept spaces at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barkly Street (Intersection with Nicholson Street) • St Phillip Street • Weston Street • Edward Street • Stewart Street



Coburg Activity Centre

Coburg Today

Population	1,640
Economic output	\$574M
Jobs	5,258
Businesses	850

Coburg Activity Centre is a unique, unpretentious and evolving activity centre that reflects the cultural diversity and rich history of the area. The tapestry of building typologies and scales creates an authentic charm and reflects the sentiment that all are welcome in Coburg. Rows of heritage shopfronts sit alongside light industrial buildings on Sydney Road, larger commercial buildings with generous carparking occupy the centre, while high-density apartments stand on the historic Pentridge Prison site.



Carparking in Central Coburg

The heart of Coburg is somewhat fragmented with the civic anchors being spread out from the buzz of activity generated from the multicultural food and retail offerings on Sydney Road and Victoria Mall. The large areas of surface parking between Sydney Road and the station create a barrier to the walkability of the centre. At the southern end of Sydney Road there is a lack of cohesion due to the inconsistent built form, street wall and land use. This reduces the walkability of the area as commercial destinations are limited and widely spaced. Sydney Road Coburg is increasingly becoming a destination for jewellery shopping, contributing to the commercial identity of the centre.

The quality of public realm varies across the activity centre. Successful initiatives range from the iconic Victoria Mall to smaller interventions such as the Dunnes Lane pedestrian link, providing a key connection to Coburg Leisure Centre and Bridges Reserve. The same limitations relating to Sydney Road itself, and the need for accessible tram stops iterated previously, apply through Coburg.

The quality of public realm varies across the activity centre. Successful initiatives range from the iconic Victoria Mall to smaller interventions such as the Dunnes Lane pedestrian link, providing a key connection to Coburg Leisure Centre and Bridges Reserve. The same limitations relating to Sydney Road itself, and the need for accessible tram stops iterated previously, apply through Coburg.

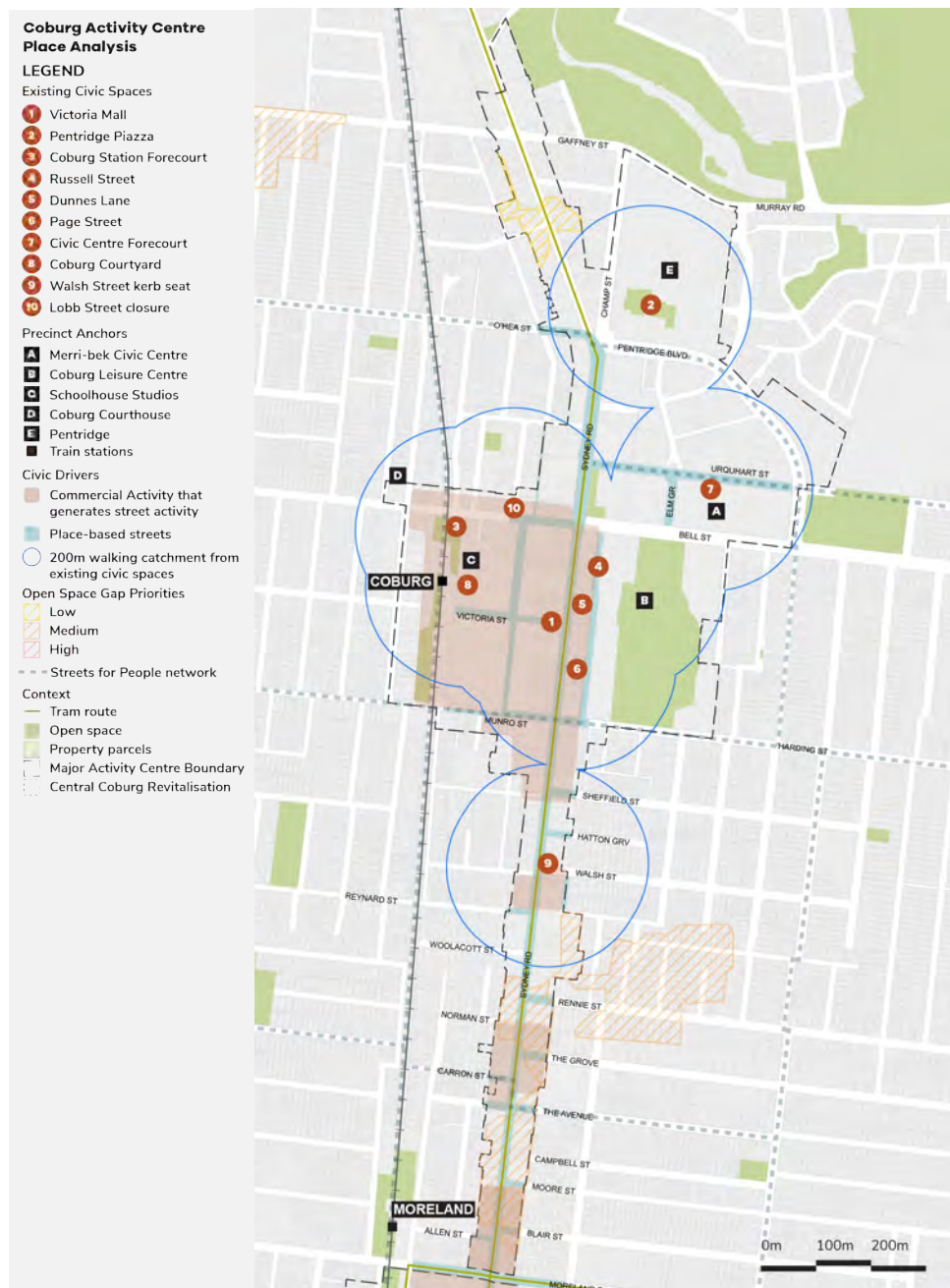
Coburg in the Future

Central Coburg will undergo significant transformation through Council's program of Revitalising Coburg. The new Coburg Library and Piazza will establish the heart of Coburg and provide a stage for public life, to better connect the centre and the community. This catalyst project along with the future of the Council owned sites will deliver a variety of significant public realm improvements.

The new Coburg Health Hub on Urquhart Street will also attract many visitors in need of quality public space, and significantly intensify the level of activity around the civic centre. Coburg is beginning to see some high-density development along the Sydney Road corridor, and with growing pressure on housing supply, it is likely that development will increase given the opportunities that larger commercial sites offer. This development should create a more consistent street wall and fine grain commercial interface, leading to a more activated and walkable spine. With the anticipated density it is essential that public realm improvements keep up to accommodate the growing residential population and civic spaces are provided for rest, gathering and play. This plan identifies streetscape upgrades, civic space upgrades and street closures that provide opportunities to create new and improved civic spaces to support the community and economy in Coburg.




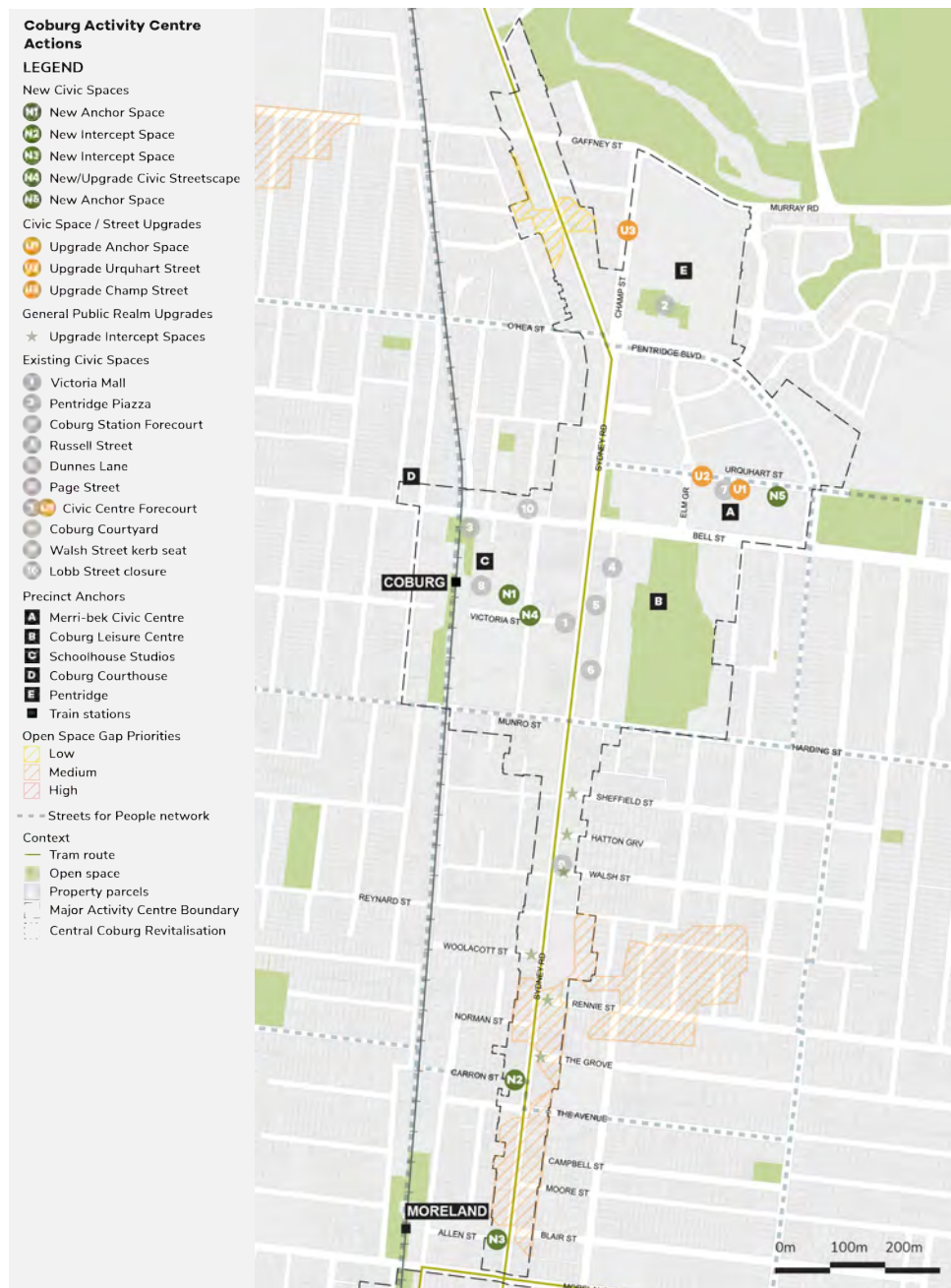
Victoria Mall



Coburg Actions

The actions include upgrades and expansions of existing civic spaces and sites or streets that are within or adjacent to the Locational Principles that have potential for delivering new civic spaces and streets.

Action	Description
New Civic Space	
N1 New Anchor Space in Central Coburg (Coburg Revitalisation)	A new anchor space is planned to be delivered through the Coburg Revitalisation catalyst project – Coburg Library and Piazza
N2 New Intercept Space at Carron Street	Explore the potential for a new intercept space at Carron Street.
N3 New Intercept Space at Allen Street	Explore the potential for a new intercept space at Allen Street.
N4 Civic Streetscapes in Central Coburg (Coburg Revitalisation)	New and upgraded civic streetscapes in Central Coburg will be considered as part of the Coburg Revitalisation project.
N5 New Anchor Space at Coburg Health Hub	New anchor space to be delivered through Coburg Health Hub development.
Civic Space Upgrades	
U1 Upgrade Anchor Space	Explore upgrade of the existing forecourt at the Civic Centre.
U2 Upgrade Urquhart Street	Upgrade Urquhart to create new civic streetscape, linking Coburg Health Hub, civic centre, and schools.
U3 Upgrade Champ Street	Upgrade Champ Street to create a new civic streetscape that provides a green link to Coburg Lake.
General public realm improvements	
 Upgrade Intercept Spaces	Explore the potential to upgrade corner intercept spaces at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheffield Street • Hatton Grove • Walsh Street • Woolacoot Street • Rennie Street • The Grove



Glenroy Activity Centre

Glenroy Today

Population	853
Economic output	\$516M
Jobs	1,987
Businesses	333

Glenroy is a fragmented activity centre that is divided by the major arterial roads Pascoe Vale Road and Glenroy Road. The area features a mix of fine grain commercial and big box retail, but large surface car parks dominate the core of the activity centre, and the high volume of vehicular traffic isolates the areas of commercial activity.



Pascoe Vale Road

Wheatsheaf Road and Post Office place are charming local shopping strips offering a mix of cafes, small restaurants and predominately local services. These strips are walkable and provide some greening, contributing to a local shopping experience that has great potential to be improved through streetscape projects. While Pascoe Vale Road provides a variety of commercial services, the pedestrian experience is unpleasant, as the street is dominated by two-lane traffic and void of greenery. The lack of public transport and limited crossing points contributes to uninterrupted flow of traffic, further reducing the walkability and connectivity of the activity centre. Glenroy Road provides a similar experience and there is little within Council control that can change these conditions.

The Glenroy Hub is a key anchor that provides valued community services. However, improved walking access is needed to better connect the hub to the core of the activity centre. Council is advocating for improved road safety at the intersection of Wheatsheaf Road and Plumpton Avenue.

The renewal of Glenroy Station through the Level Crossing Removal provided open space that has contributed to the greening of the centre but these areas are currently underutilised. These spaces can be enhanced to improve the pedestrian experience and practicality of the spaces.

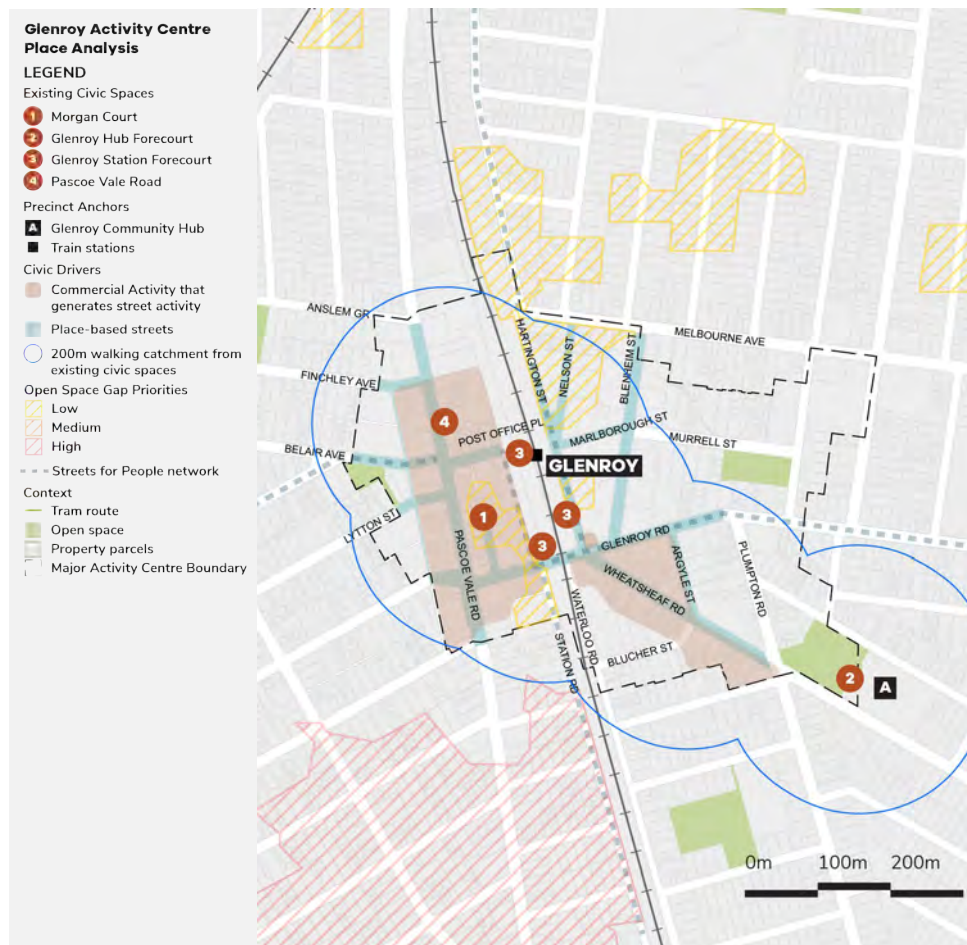
Glenroy in the Future

Glenroy is yet to experience considerable development that transforms existing large private sites into mixed use developments that contribute to the commercial activity of the centre. There are sites with future development opportunity, but it is unclear as to when and if these sites will develop. Until some key sites change land use or redevelop the opportunities in Glenroy are largely limited to further enhancing the existing commercial areas that are functioning well.



Glenroy Station forecourt

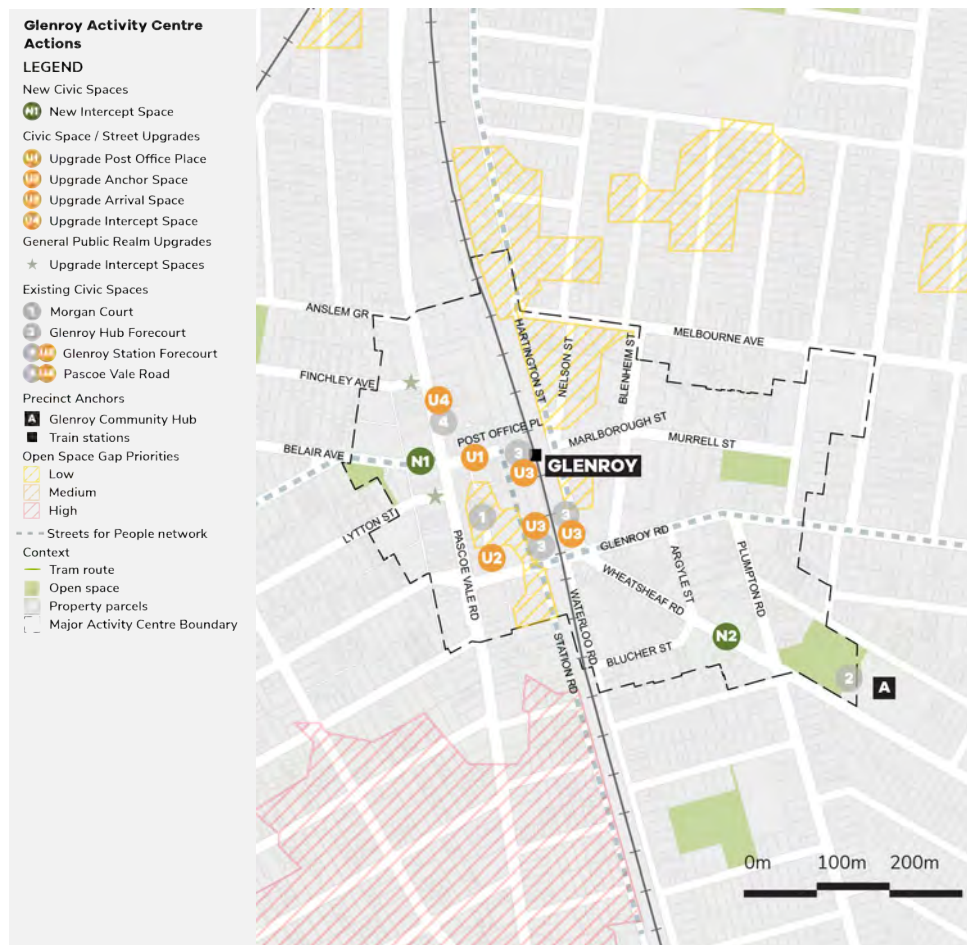
The Coles site presents a carpark to the Glenroy Road frontage and a blank wall to Morgan Court. Through development this site has the potential to introduce active edges, more street life and residential and commercial activity. Similarly, the key site to the east of the station represents a great opportunity for a mixed-use development incorporating new civic space and activated pedestrian links adjacent to the station and along Hartington Street. For major transformations to be successful in Glenroy it is critical that pedestrian infrastructure such as appropriate crossing points are considered and complement public realm projects. Until some of these key sites change, the approach in Glenroy is to focus on those streets which offer high potential for pedestrian amenity and street life due to the adjacent built form, lower levels of traffic and proximity to the station.



Glenroy Actions

The opportunity areas include upgrades and expansions of existing civic spaces and sites or streets that are within or adjacent to the Locational Principles that have potential for delivering new civic spaces and streets.

Action	Description
New Civic Space	
N1 New Intercept Space at Belair Avenue	Explore the potential for a new intercept space at Belair Avenue.
Civic Space / Street Upgrades	
U1 Upgrade Post Office Place	Upgrade Post Office Place to create a new civic streetscape.
U2 Upgrade Anchor Space	Explore the potential to upgrade Morgan Court and the streetscape south of the pedestrian mall.
U3 Upgrade Arrival Spaces at Glenroy Station	Explore the potential to upgrade the station forecourts around Glenroy Station.
U4 Upgrade Intercept Space on Pascoe Vale Road	Explore the potential to upgrade the intercept space on Pascoe Vale Road.
General Public Realm Upgrades	
★ Upgrade Intercept Spaces	Explore the potential to upgrade corner intercept spaces at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finchley Avenue • Lytton Street



Neighbourhood Activity Centres

Merri-bek has 12 Neighbourhood Activity Centres (NACs) across the municipality. These activity centres have been the focus of significant investment and capital improvement over the past ten years through the Shopping Strip Renewal Program.

Shopping Strip Renewal Program

The Shopping Strip Renewal Program 2015 – 2025 (SSRP) aimed to deliver economic development initiatives and urban design improvements to improve business performance and activate public spaces across neighbourhood shopping strips in Merri-bek.

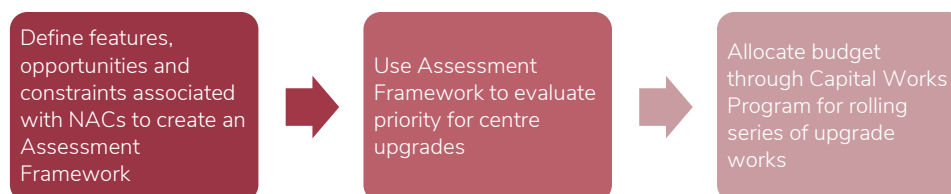
Throughout the program there have been substantial public realm upgrades delivered in five NACs as well as direct investment and support programs to enhance business and economic activity in these centres. There is one more centre approaching delivery which will mark the completion of the program as it stands. This plan will continue the legacy of the SSRP by defining a replicable framework to assess the NACs moving forward and a method of determining when upgrades are required.

An evaluation of projects completed through the SSRP found that:

- The capital upgrades have delivered some substantially improved quality of streetscapes and small civic spaces in the NACs, with additional pedestrian space created for the community to enjoy.
- While capital work upgrades can improve the access, circulation and aesthetics of the shopping strips, there are often still operational issues that require ongoing attention and improvement through Council services and business initiative, such as waste management.
- It is difficult to measure the economic benefit of the upgrades as numerous factors continue to impact on different businesses, and Council's economic development services for businesses remain an essential component to supporting vibrant NACs.
- The remaining NACs that have not had a capital upgrade generally have very limited potential for public realm upgrades due to state road control and constrained civic space opportunity.



Methodology for Neighbourhood Activity Centres



Assessment Framework

The following framework is to be used as a guide when assessing NACs for upgrade or capital works.

Feature	Evaluation
Condition	When did the centre last receive capital investment?
	What is the condition of existing assets such as street furniture?
	What is the extent of street greening and tree canopy cover?
Constraints	Does Council manage and control the street?
	Is there the opportunity to increase pedestrian space and greening within the street?
	Is the centre located in an area subject to flooding / SBO?
	Is the centre located in an Urban Forest Priority Area?

Recommendations

Based on the recent substantial investment in NACs through the SSRP, it is recommended to pursue smaller upgrades in the coming program, distributed more broadly and consisting of smaller interventions such as:

- Additional tree planting and greening where space allows
- Additional seating and street furniture upgrades

These works would form part of a combined rolling program of upgrades to NACs and LACs. It is recommended the annual capital program should allocate approximately 10-15% of the Activity Centre capital budget to this program.

The allocation between centres will be considered annually through the adoption of the capital works program.

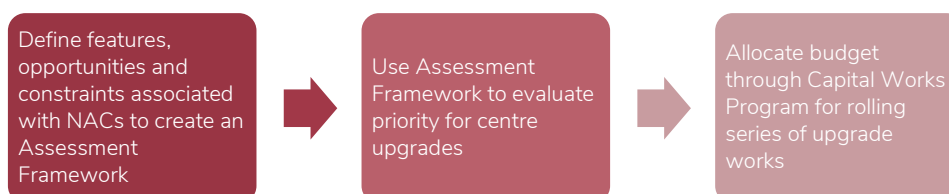
Local Activity Centres

Merri-bek has 43 Local Activity Centres (LACs) across the municipality.

The LACs vary significantly in size and character, from two shops up to nearly 20 businesses in some, occupying one or two local street blocks. Some of the LACs attract frequent visitation and pedestrian activity, creating important nodes for street life and activity within our neighbourhoods.

Some LACs have the space and opportunity for intercept spaces such as kerb outstands with seating areas, whereas others are limited to simple streetscapes incorporating standard street furniture to support the local businesses, including litter bins, seats, bike racks. Some also have space for garden beds and tree planting which contributes to the local character and climate resilience of the area.

Methodology for Local Activity Centres



Assessment Framework

The following framework is to be used as a guide when assessing LACs for upgrade or capital works.

Feature	Evaluation
Size	How many businesses are there operating?
Character	Does the nature of the businesses generate pedestrian activity and street life?
Condition	When did the centre last receive capital investment
	What is the condition of existing assets such as street furniture?
	What is the extent of street greening and tree canopy cover?
Constraints	Does Council manage and control the street?
	Is there the opportunity to increase pedestrian space and greening within the street?
	Is the centre located in an area subject to flooding / SBO
	Is the centre located in an Urban Forest Priority Area?

Recommendation

It is recommended that there be a combined rolling program of upgrades to NACs and LACs. It is recommended the annual capital program should allocate approximately 10-15% of the Activity Centre capital budget to this program.

This budget is anticipated to be allocated to a mix of minor upgrade works in the higher priority centres, with two centres expected to receive upgrades each year.

Upgrades are anticipated to include street furniture renewal and enhanced greening including new street trees wherever space allows.

The allocation between centres will be considered annually through the adoption of the capital works program.



39



Appendix 1 - Design Principles

These principles have been developed to guide the design of civic spaces and streetscapes in Merri-bek. Each principle contains strategies to be applied to the design of Council's civic space projects and to those delivered by third parties.

Each principle is expanded to include a set of strategies and metrics to be applied to the design of civic spaces and streetscapes as relevant. The planning and design process will also incorporate extensive community engagement to shape the design of each space, as outlined in figure 5. Implementation Process.

The principles are:

- 1. Accessible and Connected**

Civic spaces and streets should contribute to the interconnected network of open spaces, active transport corridors and public transit routes to ensure accessibility and encourage sustainable transport. They are well linked to the surrounding area, easy to reach, and accessible to people of all abilities.

- 2. Safe and Welcoming**

Civic spaces and streets should be welcoming, inclusive and safe for people of all ages, genders, backgrounds and abilities. Design must consider security and perceptions of safety through all elements of the space.

- 3. Activated and Flexible**

Civic spaces and streets should vary in size and function, providing for a diverse variety of experience and activity. They should be engaging and beautiful destinations of public life, supporting the economic vibrancy of our city.

- 4. Comfortable and Meaningful**

Civic spaces and streets should reflect the culture and creativity of the surrounding community, to create meaning and inspire community pride. Design should cater to human comfort to create well-loved and used spaces.

- 5. Sustainable and Future Focussed**

Civic spaces and streets should aim for climate positive design and to mitigate climate impacts on our city, contributing to a more liveable and resilient urban environment.

Principle 1: Accessible and Connected**Strategies**

Locate spaces wherever possible on key pedestrian routes

Make it safe and easy to arrive and enter the space.

Create clear entrances, exits, and pathways for intuitive navigation.

Provide a universally accessible space.

Metrics

- Multiple points of arrival/entry to the space
 - Points of entry are clearly visible on approach
 - Wayfinding signage effectively assists people with finding the space and nearby destinations
 - Access to the space via active travel modes is considered and supported –
eg. pedestrian priority crossings provided where possible
 - Space is accessible by people of all abilities and is DDA compliant
- *Checklist: conduct a DDA audit at concept and detailed design stages



Greville Street Plaza, Prahan - provides an open and welcome street edge with a pedestrian priority shared zone



RMIT Academic Street, Melbourne –
locates spaces on key pedestrian routes

Principle 2: Safe and Welcoming

Strategies

Create a universally welcoming environment that ensures no community members are excluded due to any element of the design or infrastructure.

Create a well utilised space that encourages day and night-time activity, where appropriate, for plentiful passive surveillance.

Consider the experience of all community members in using the space.

Utilise lighting carefully to enhance perceptions of safety.

Metrics

- Full breadth of community members who will use and experience the space are considered and engaged in a variety of ways that embrace co-design elements.
* Checklist: conduct a multi-lens, intersectional Gender Impact Assessment
- Clear sightlines and views maintained into and throughout the site
* Checklist: conduct a CPTED review of the design
* Checklist: understorey planting to be no higher than 1.0m and trees to have clean trunks
- Layered lighting for safe wayfinding and for nighttime ambience and character, is designed to minimise contrast and glare.
* Checklist: ensure lighting meets appropriate Australian Standards for the space (P3 – P7)
- Abundant seating provided for people watching and passive surveillance
- No hostile architectural elements exclude access or use



Wharf Promenade, Auckland – integrated lighting is layered through design features and spaces



Northern Plaza, Monash University – a variety of furniture types and seating provide passive surveillance over the space

Principle 3: Activated and Flexible**Strategies**

Locate spaces wherever possible near commercial or cultural anchors that generate street life.

Provide space for programming by Council and community, allowing for a range of day and evening activation and a variety of events.

Spark interest and joy through special design features, attracting informal games or play.

Metrics

- Space provided for outdoor dining and commercial activity, where ground floor activity exists along edges, (Consider delineating this space through subtle landscape detailing.)
- Open areas provided that can be used for a variety of events that don't feel vacant when not in use by large groups.
- Local businesses consulted on opportunities to activate the space and space designed to allow for flexibility in function so businesses can contribute to their own activation.
- Elements considered to support Council programs and events –
eg. Small lawn areas, flexible stage or platform elements, bleacher seating.
- Diverse amenities incorporated to appeal to all ages –
eg. Water, integrated public art features, sculptural play elements.



Alkmaar, Netherlands – provides space for active edges with different zones delineated by furniture and landscape



Superkilen, Copenhagen – integrates activities such as games into street furniture

Principle 4: Comfortable and Meaningful**Strategies**

Reflect and respect the cultural heritage of place through engagement and design with Traditional Owners.

Provide a 'human scale' space with comfortable room for a range of group sizes – both larger events and smaller gatherings.

Provide both sunny and shady spaces for seasonal comfort and choice.

Integrate public artwork to imbue meaning, creativity and a unique sense of place.

Metrics

- Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung engaged early on planning, design and naming of spaces.
- Local cultural and creative groups engaged to influence the meaning of place through design and artwork.
- Tactile and natural materials are used, along with fine-grained design details including integrated public art.
- Variety of seating, furniture and shelter provided including weather protection through trees, awnings and/or colonnades.
- A reasonable area of usable/occupiable space receives winter sunlight
*Checklist: ensure 50% of the space receives sunlight 11am to 2pm on the winter solstice.



Bendigo Law Courts uses natural materials and integrated artwork by First Nations artists to tell the story of this place



Emma Gardens, Barcelona – contains a variety of spaces in scale and character including some smaller more intimate areas

Principle 5: Sustainable and Future Focussed

Strategies

Design for net positive climate outcomes over the life cycle of the space.

Provide expansive tree canopy and understorey planting.

Fully integrate stormwater management and use it as a valuable resource.

Contribute to local ecology and biodiversity through planting and permeable surfaces.

Mitigate the urban heat island effect in the local area.

Incorporate distributed WSUD elements (raingardens, tree pits, infiltration planters) as standard inclusions in civic spaces.

Metrics

- Large canopy trees planted wherever possible, ensuring adequate soil volume and integrating stormwater-fed passive irrigation systems to support healthy long-term growth.
- All stormwater that falls on the space (and adjacent sites wherever possible) is treated and used
- Permeable and vegetated surfaces maximised to enable infiltration, reduce heat stress and improve soil moisture
- Local, recycled and low carbon materials used
- 'Designing with Country' principles employed for a holistic approach to sustainable landscapes
- Biodiverse and predominantly local indigenous plant palette used to support a wide range of life including insects and birds



Skandiagade, Copenhagen – incorporates multi-functional stormwater detention basins into the landscape



Monash University Flowering meadow – tests and showcases a diverse native plant palette

Appendix 2 – Merri-bek’s Activity Centres Economic Baseline Summary

Merri-bek’s retail strips and commercial centres within Activity Centres make a substantial contribution to the overall economy and provide a major share of Merri-bek’s local jobs. They are where the vast majority of Merri-bek’s customer facing businesses are located – such as shops, places to eat and drink, hairdressers, banks, travel agents, allied health, gyms and much more.

These centres enable Merri-bek’s residents to obtain the vital goods and services they need, as well as attracting visitors to the municipality. Notably, spending data¹ shows, visitors to Merri-bek spend more in-store than local residents, see below. However, despite this economic success, there remains a missed opportunity, with residents spending more outside of the municipality and online than they do locally, see below.

In-store spending in Merri-bek – Local residents vs. visitors.

Type of in-store spending	Total (\$)
Spending by local residents	\$1.1 billion
Spending by visitors	\$1.31 billion

Lost opportunity: Escape & Online Spending by Merri-bek residents

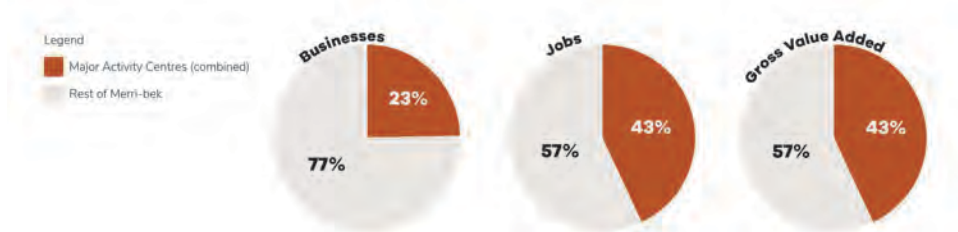
Type of spending	Total (\$)
Escape spending (outside of Merri-bek)	\$2.11 billion
Online spending	\$2.47 billion

Building on Merri-bek’s economic success through Places for People

This plan aims to build upon the economic success of our activity centres by delivering well-designed civic spaces that support and enhance local businesses and attract locals and more visitors to Merri-bek. It also encourages people to linger and spend more time in public spaces, for example by providing generous seating opportunities and outdoor dining space for hospitality businesses. The following economic analysis presents the evidence underpinning investment in civic spaces within our activity centres.

The economic significance of our major activity centres

Merri-bek’s major activity centres provide a major contribution to Merri-bek’s economy, comprising of almost one quarter of all Merri-bek businesses. They also contribute almost a half of all jobs and gross value added to Merri-bek’s economy as shown in the diagram below. The proposed actions in this plan are designed to capitalise and build upon the economic strength of our major centres, while also recognising the importance and contribution of smaller neighbourhood and local centres.



Figures are for financial year 2023-24 as the latest available data².

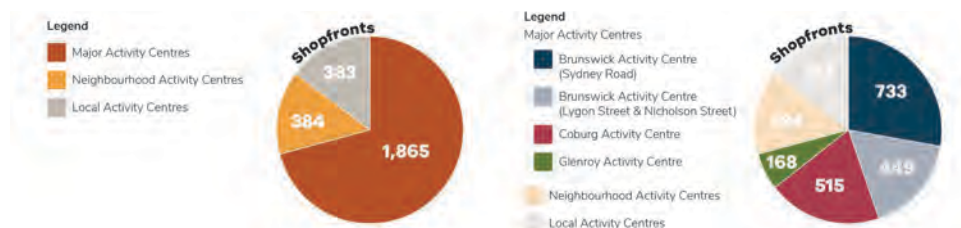
¹ Source: 'SpendMapp' by Geografia Pty Ltd, analysed by Merri-bek Council.

² Source: Analysis by id. Consulting and Merri-bek economic profile; Available at: [Economic profile | Merri-bek | economy.id](#)

Commercial activity that contributes to street life and activation

Merri-bek has nearly 60 activity centres³ of various sizes and configurations, ranging from major activity centres with hundreds of shops to the very smallest local activity centres that comprise only of 2 or 3 shops. Shop fronts facilitate street activation and enhance the pedestrian experience. The majority of Merri-bek's shop fronts are located within major activity centres, therefore actions in these centres include creating additional space for business activation and enhanced street life.

The diagram below shows the breakdown of shop fronts across the major activity centres, with Brunswick Activity Centre accounting for most shop fronts. Despite having the least shop fronts, Glenroy indicates high activity by having the lowest vacancy rate of the major centres at 5.4%, followed by Brunswick at 10.4%, Coburg at 11.7% and Brunswick East at 14.5%, as of 2024⁴.



Top 5 Spending categories in Merri-bek businesses in-store - Overall

Category	Total (\$)
Grocery stores & supermarkets	\$527.9 M
Dining & entertainment	\$428.7 M
Professional services	\$324.7 M
Specialised & luxury goods	\$309.05 M
Transport (incl. petrol)	\$259.97 M

Beyond shop fronts, different business types contribute to street activation in different ways. Dining and entertainment venues have the strongest impact, supporting outdoor dining, longer dwell times and activity during the day and night. There is a demand for these types of businesses, with dining and entertainment being the second highest spending category and 21% of overall spend, as shown above.

Beyond the formal hierarchy of major, neighbourhood and local centres, the data can also be viewed by centres commonly recognised by the community. For example, the Coburg Activity Centre spans Central Coburg, Sydney Road south of Sheffield Street and Pentridge. Likewise, the cluster of larger and smaller retail stores along Gaffney Street, North Coburg effectively function as a single retail precinct. The table opposite uses this precinct-based view to show the ten largest activity centre precincts in Merri-bek.

Top 10 Largest activity centres and commercial clusters by number of shops

#	Activity Centre/Precinct	No. shops
1	Sydney Rd, Brunswick & contiguous side streets	733
2	Lygon St, Brunswick East	341
3	Central Coburg (excl. Pentridge & Sydney Rd south of Sheffield St)	298
4	Sydney Road (Moreland Rd to Sheffield St), Coburg	192
5	Glenroy Activity Centre	168
6	Melville Rd (Victoria St to Albion St), West Brunswick	64
7	Bell St & Melville Rd, Pascoe Vale South	55
8	Gaffney Street, North Coburg (Batman Train Station to Sussex St)	50
9	Nicholson St & Holmes St / Moreland Rd, Coburg / Brunswick	45
10	Bonwick Street, Fawkner	44

³ Source: Analysis by Merri-bek Council.

⁴ Source: Vacant Shop Survey Nov 2024, Merri-bek Council.

7.2 SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC HOUSING STATEMENT

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade

City Design and Economy

Officer recommendation

That Council:

1. Writes to the Victorian Minister for Housing to acknowledge *the Standing together for public housing: Call for support*, September 2025 statement (Statement) (Attachment 1) and advise that Council:
 - a) Supports Request 1, including the commission and public release of structural assessments for all public housing towers, and the construction of replacement public housing nearby or on the same estate before any resident relocation.
 - b) Broadly supports the State utilising suitable surplus land to deliver social and affordable housing, and the adoption of more inclusionary zoning that mandates the provision of social and affordable housing in private developments.
2. Provides a copy of the letter to the *Standing Together for Public Housing* campaign authors.

REPORT

Executive summary

The Victorian Government's 2023 announcement regarding the demolition and future redevelopment of all 44 of Melbourne's high rise public housing towers by 2050 has prompted public debate about the future of public housing in Victoria.

In July 2025 a group of housing academics, workers and advocates published *the United Housing Statement*, since renamed *Standing together for public: Call for support*, September 2025 (Statement) (**Attachment 1**). The Statement includes three requests to the Victorian Government relating to the assessment, future use and renewal of public housing assets:

1. Release of information about the physical conditions of all public housing towers proposed for demolition, and that any new facilities be built on the same sites.
2. All surplus state land to be used to build more public housing.
3. Introduce mandatory public housing in new multi-unit developments on private land.

The Statement has since received support from several advocacy groups, housing, health and legal organisations, housing focussed university groups and one Council.

Merri-bek has a well-established policy framework that supports increasing the supply of public, community and affordable housing. This report responds to Council's resolution of 10 September 2025, which sought an assessment of the alignment between the Statement and Merri-bek's existing policy positions. Officer analysis concludes:

1. **Request 1 is consistent** with Council's longstanding advocacy, including Council's March 2025 submission to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the public housing tower redevelopment program.
2. **Request 2 is not aligned** with Council policy as it requires all surplus government land to be used exclusively for public housing. This may result in unintended consequences for other potential high value uses; and many surplus sites are not suitable for housing. Council's current policy position is to advocate for public housing, community housing managed by Not-for-Profit registered agencies, and other forms of affordable housing.

3. **Request 3 is partially aligned** with existing policy as Council has long supported mandatory inclusionary planning contributions.

It is proposed that Council acknowledges the Statement by writing to the Minister for Housing outlining its support for the first request.

Previous Council decisions

Notice of Motion - Support for public Housing Statement - 10 September 2025

That Council receives a report on the implications of signing the United Housing Sector Statement with the report to address the alignment with Merri-bek's existing policies in relation to the three demands of the statement:

- a) *Commission and release detailed evaluations of the structural conditions of all the towers. If and when a strong case is made for demolition, build replacement public housing nearby or elsewhere on the estate first, and relocate the tenants when complete.*
- b) *End all 'surplus' public land sales and use that land to build more public housing.*
- c) *Introduce inclusionary zoning on private land for a mandatory component of public housing.*

1. Policy context

Merri-bek's policy framework supports increasing the supply of public, community and affordable housing, and strengthening partnerships with Victorian Government and registered housing providers.

Council Plan 2025-29

The Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-29 has the following strategy, initiatives and priorities relevant to the recommendation:

Strategy

Support the housing and wellbeing needs of all in the community particularly those on lower incomes to have access housing in Merri-bek.

Initiatives and priorities

- 2.15 *Partnering with government and housing providers to develop accessible, inclusive housing, including First Peoples on Council land including in Central Coburg and other locations, as well as advocating for more public and community housing*
- 2.16 *Advocate for more social and affordable housing stock. Including crisis, transitional and permanent housing options through planning policy, partnerships and direct engagement with developers and by supporting local responses to homelessness*

Merri-bek Planning Scheme

Key sections are specific to the recommendation include:

Clause 16 (Housing)

Planning for housing should include the provision of land for affordable housing.

Clause 16.01-2L (Housing Affordability Merri-bek)

Encourage developments to include affordable housing to be owned and managed by a registered housing association, registered housing provider or the Director of Housing.

Affordable Housing Action Plan 2022-26

The Affordable Housing Action Plan 2022-26 has the following points relating to housing provision, providers and partnership opportunities.

- 1.1 *Facilitate affordable housing provision in planning permit applications*
 - *Negotiate affordable housing to be provided as part of large development projects*
- 1.5 *Support registered housing providers and other non-profit housing projects*
 - *Assist registered housing agencies and non-profit affordable housing in navigating their projects through the planning system*
- 2.3 *Explore partnership opportunities with Homes Victoria, other state agencies, residential developers and housing providers*
 - *Work with Homes Victoria, registered housing providers, Not For Profit organisations, philanthropy and private organisations to partner on affordable housing developments and renewal projects, including Crisis/Emergency Accommodation, Transitional Housing and Housing First housing models.*

2. Background

Policy context

State Government context

On 20 September 2023 the Victorian Government released its *Victoria's Housing Statement: The Decade Ahead 2024-2034* (Housing Statement), which included a decision to demolish all high-rise public housing towers in metropolitan Melbourne by 2050. An uplift of at least 10% in social housing across the 44 sites was promised.

The Housing Statement promised to “unlock surplus government land” and proposed that 45 sites across the state will enable 9000 new homes to be built with at least ten per cent of these “affordable homes”.

Currently surplus State government land is subject to significant and competing policy pressures. Not all surplus land is suitable for residential use – the State’s surplus land register contains many sites in remote or industrial locations. For surplus sites that could be suitable for residential purposes, three are often a range of high value uses to consider – including hospitals, educational facilities and recreational spaces.

Council policy context

Council closely monitors housing need in Merri-bek. Currently there is a gap of over 4,000 affordable housing dwellings across the municipality. Council supports increasing public, community and affordable housing in Merri-bek to meet this gap.

Following the Victorian Government’s release of the *Housing Statement*, Council expressed concern that the proposed social housing uplift may not meet local need and encouraged that lower-impact renovation and retrofit options be considered for older residents, including those at 351 Barkly Street, Brunswick.

On 12 March 2025 Council endorsed a submission to the Victorian Parliament’s *Inquiry into the redevelopment of Melbourne’s public housing towers*. The submission made a number of recommendations, including asking the State government to:

- Halt the demolition program until a transparent, evidence-based assessment is completed.
- Publicly release all supporting information, including engineering reports used to justify demolishing the 44 towers rather than renovating them.

Council's broader housing advocacy, guided by *the Affordable Housing Action Plan 2022–26*, focuses on increasing public, community and affordable housing through partnerships with the State and registered housing providers.

Council also has a long-held position calling for mandatory social and affordable housing development contributions through inclusionary zoning mechanisms. Consistent with M9, MAV and other local governments, Council advocates for contributions that deliver public housing, community housing and affordable housing for lower-income households.

Council examples of high value use of surplus Victorian Government land

Council supports the use of suitable surplus Victorian Government land for public, community and affordable housing. Council also supports other high value uses. For example, Council has previously acquired surplus Victorian Government land to deliver important community infrastructure, such as Harmony Park (a former TAFE site) and the Glenroy Community Hub (a former primary school). These are illustrated below.



Image 1: Glenroy Community Hub



Image 2: Harmony Park

The statement: Standing together for public housing – call for support

In July 2025, a group of housing academics, workers and advocates released the *United Housing Statement*, now renamed *Standing together for public housing: Call for support, September 2025* (the Statement) (**Attachment 1**).

The Statement includes three requests to the Victorian Government relating to the assessment, future use and renewal of public housing assets:

1. **Request 1:** *Commission and release detailed evaluations of the structural conditions of all the towers. If and when a strong case is made for demolition, build replacement public housing nearby or elsewhere on the estate first, and relocate the tenants when complete.*
2. **Request 2:** *End all 'surplus' public land sales and use that land to build more public housing.*
3. **Request 3:** *Introduce a mandatory component of public housing in new multi-unit developments on private land.*

Other support for Statement

Based on published information, a range of small organisations, academics, grassroots housing advocacy groups and some prominent individuals have publicly supported the Statement. The City of Yarra's support was authorised by officers.

The Victorian Public Tenants Association, as the peak body representing public housing residents, has not supported the Statement. The Community Housing Industry Association Victoria (CHIA Vic) and all but two smaller CHPs have also not supported the Statement.

3. Issues

Assessing the statement

Officers have assessed each of the three requests in the Statement with regard to existing policy positions.

Request 1 is consistent with Council's current policy position, most recently stated in the Council-endorsed submission to the Victorian Parliament's *Inquiry into the redevelopment of Melbourne's public housing towers* which was endorsed by Council on 12 March 2025.

Request 2 is not currently supported by Council policy. It would create a new policy and advocacy position seeking that the Victorian Government require all surplus land to be used exclusively for the purpose of delivering public housing.

Firstly, this may result in unintended consequences for other high value uses of public land. For example, Merri-bek Council has previously acquired surplus State government land to deliver public facilities such as the Glenroy Community Hub. Additionally, officers note, not all surplus sites will be suitable for residential uses.

Secondly, not all surplus State government land is suitable for housing. Surplus land is published for sale on the State government's website. While much is suitable for housing, a significant volume is in remote and regional locations, or in industrial or otherwise tricky sites.

Thirdly, Council's current policy position (as set out in the current Council Plan 2025-29, the Affordable Housing Action Plan 2022-26, and endorsed advocacy submissions) is to advocate for public housing, community housing managed by Not-for-Profit registered agencies, and other forms of affordable housing. Council does not limit its advocacy to public housing alone.

Community housing is a significant contributor to the provision of quality secure homes to families in Merri-bek and many community housing providers have a track record of working collaboratively with Council. Exemplary projects delivered by Community Housing Providers (CHP) include the Reynard St Townhouse project (Women's Property Initiatives), newly completed cooperative housing at Wilson Avenue (Common Equity Housing), and Pascoe Vale social housing (Housing Choices and Aboriginal Housing Victoria).

CHPs are subject to more detailed and transparent regulatory reporting than Homes Victoria-run public housing. Performance reporting on measures such as resident satisfaction, repair resolution time and vacancy levels is published for each CHP by the Housing Registrar annually. The report of the Social Housing Regulatory Review in 2022 identified multiple areas for improvement in the management and regulation of both public and community housing and broadly recommended a consistent approach across the social housing sector. In late 2024 the Victorian Government published its response and supported the bulk of the review's recommendations.

Request 3 is inconsistent with Merri-bek policy. Council has had a long-held position calling for mandatory social and affordable housing development contributions through the planning system. However, Council's policy position supports inclusionary contributions to deliver public housing, community housing managed by registered not-for-profit agencies, and genuinely affordable housing for households not eligible for social housing. Homes Victoria does not work with private developers to include public housing in new developments.

This approach plays out in Merri-bek where CHPs are delivering social housing in private developments. In Merri-bek in 2024–25, planning permits were issued for new developments that included 389 affordable dwellings; all the social housing within this provision will be owned by CHPs, backed by government funding.

Officer recommendation summary

In summary, officer analysis finds the Statement is partially aligned with Council's existing policies.

1. **Request 1** aligns with Council's longstanding advocacy for transparent structural assessments and replacement public housing to be delivered before any resident relocation.
2. **Request 2** does not align with Council policy, as surplus government land may also be required for other essential public uses and for a mix of public, community and affordable housing.
3. **Request 3** does not align, though Council supports mandatory inclusionary contributions that deliver public, community and affordable housing—not public housing alone.

Officers recommend that Council acknowledge the Statement, support Request 1, and provide qualified support for Requests 2 and 3 in line with adopted policy positions.

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 report is in line with these requirements.

4. Community consultation and engagement

This report considers existing policy positions such as the Council Plan 2025-29 and the Affordable Housing Action Plan 2022-26 for which there was community consultation processes before adoption by Council.

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 work to prepare a letter can be undertaken within existing staff resourcing.

7. Implementation

An advocacy letter will be drafted from the Mayor to the Minister for Housing, and forwarded to the authors of the United Housing Statement.

Attachment/s

- 1 [!\[\]\(5a0d662075632df1b39c9e3427a70093_img.jpg\)](#) Standing Together for Public Housing (United Housing Statement) D25/570343

Standing Together for Public Housing call for support, September 2025



The intent of this statement is to establish a common base for the Victorian housing sector, from tenants' associations and advocacy groups to community housing associations and the established peak bodies. In addition, the call is being made to community legal centres, residents' associations, neighbourhood houses, religious centres, unions, universities and so on. All groups agreeing to these basic principles are invited to a public meeting on Thursday 23 October, 6pm at the Capitol Theatre, 113 Swanston St. Melbourne, to discuss ways of proceeding. The authors of this statement are not an alternative group, they are just the engine behind this specific campaign.

Australia is in the worst housing crisis in its history. The effects of this are felt mainly and most severely by low and moderate-income households. The State of Victoria has the lowest level of public and community housing in Australia, at 2.8 percent. Over 58,000 households remain on the State public housing waiting list; many more remain in over-priced substandard private rental accommodation.

In this worsening situation, the State government plans to demolish Melbourne's 44 public housing towers. No evaluations of the structural conditions of the buildings have been released. Expert proposals to retrofit the towers with minimal disruption to residents have been ignored. The demolitions will displace more than 10,000 people with no relocation plans other than to be pushed to the front of the waiting list, meaning those already on the list will have to wait longer.

Meanwhile, other tracts of public land deemed surplus to government requirements are being sold to private companies for market-rate residential development. Just 10 percent of this housing is required to be 'affordable' (i.e. it will sell or rent at 90% of market price – NOT affordable to households on less than \$100K p.a.). Residential developers on private land are not required to build ANY below market-rate housing. This impoverished policy landscape in Victoria cannot be allowed to continue.

We call on the Victorian Labor government to:

- Commission and release detailed evaluations of the structural conditions of all the towers. If and when a strong case is made for demolition, build replacement public housing nearby or elsewhere on the estate first, and relocate the tenants when complete.
- End all 'surplus' public land sales and use that land to build more public housing.
- Introduce a mandatory component of public housing in new multi-unit developments on private land.

**For information on how to endorse this statement and further details
please see overleaf**

Authored by:

Dr Kate Shaw, urban geographer, University of Melbourne
 Dr Maree Parry, anthropologist, Deakin University
 Prof Libby Porter, Director Centre for Urban Research, RMIT
 Meredith Gorman, homelessness network coordinator
 Mark Smoljo, community housing advocate

If you or your group wishes to endorse this statement please get in touch with

Kate kates@unimelb.edu.au,
 Maree maree.parry@deakin.edu.au
 or Eric erichthomson5@gmail.com

Endorsed to date (this page is being updated weekly) by:



Centre for
Urban Research



OFFICE



Kevin Bell, retired supreme court judge
 Dr David Hayward, Emeritus Professor of Public Policy and the Social Economy, RMIT
 Peter McIntyre, architect
 Richard Cameron, architect
 Sue Bolton, Merri-bek city councillor



7.3 SUBURB BOUNDARY REALIGNMENT - BARINA ROAD, GLENROY/OAK PARK

Director Business Transformation, Sue Vujcevic

Financial Services

Officer Recommendation

That Council authorises the realignment of the Oak Park/Glenroy suburb boundary to incorporate properties at 26, 28 and 30 Barina Road, Glenroy, into the suburb of Oak Park.

REPORT

Executive Summary

The need for a minor realignment of a suburb boundary has emerged due to the subdivision of land on parcels previously attributed to Waterloo Road Glenroy. The new land parcels front and are addressed to Barina Road. Aside from the three highlighted properties/parcels in Glenroy, the remainder of Barina Road sits within Oak Park. The current and proposed suburb boundary realignment is indicated in the maps in the background and issues sections of this report.

This recommendation is independent of any current or future planning processes or decisions, and the owners of all three affected properties are in support of the amendment. There is no budget impact of this report.

As the naming and numbering authority, Council is responsible for the maintenance of suburb boundaries. The proposed re-alignment is the most effective solution, which will include the entirety of Barina Road within the suburb of Oak Park.

Previous Council Decisions

Proposed suburb boundary realignment between Glenroy and Oak Park – 26 August 2002

Council resolve:

1. *To adopt the boundary between Glenroy and Oak Park as shown in Attachment 1 of the report.*
2. *That all people who made a submission and all owners and residents of Victoria Street, Charlotte Street, Barina Road, Rhodes Parade (west of Watt Street) and the Oaks Estate be notified in writing of the decision made by Council.*
3. *To notify the Geographic Place Names Committee and other relevant authorities of the realignment of the Suburb Boundary between Glenroy and Oak Park.*

1. Policy Context

Merri-bek Council is a Naming Authority under the *Geographic Place Names Act 1998* (the Act) and is the first point of contact for adding or changing names for places, features and roads within the municipality.

The *Naming rules for places in Victoria 2022* (The Naming Rules), are the statutory guidelines provided for under section 5 of The Act that provide standardised naming conventions and clear naming procedures. Any naming proposal must conform to these guidelines.

Once assessed the proposal is assessed against 'The Naming Rules' including Australian Standards AS NZS 4819-2011 Rural and Urban Addressing (The Standards). If approved the proposal will be forwarded to the Registrar of Geographic Names for consideration. The relevant sections of 'The Standards' and 'The Naming Rules' are shown below.

Under 'The Naming Rules' applications should assess and address any impact to the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names resolutions, Sustainable Development Goals and Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework goals, where relevant.

AS NZS 4819-2011 Rural and Urban Addressing

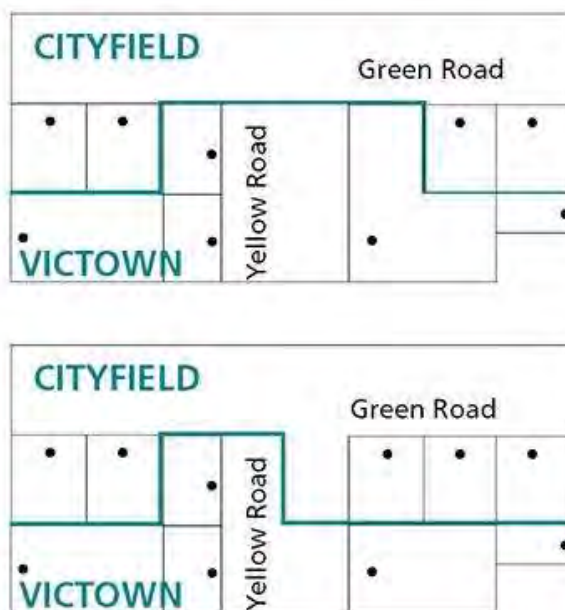
Section 3.4.2 Review of localities

Boundaries of localities in areas that are subject to development should be reviewed and amended where appropriate.

Official Naming Rules for Places in Victoria

Section 5.2.1

5. If a property is situated on a corner and the block is subdivided with one or more of the new properties accessed from a road generally being addressed to a different locality, the locality boundary should be changed to incorporate the new subdivided properties.



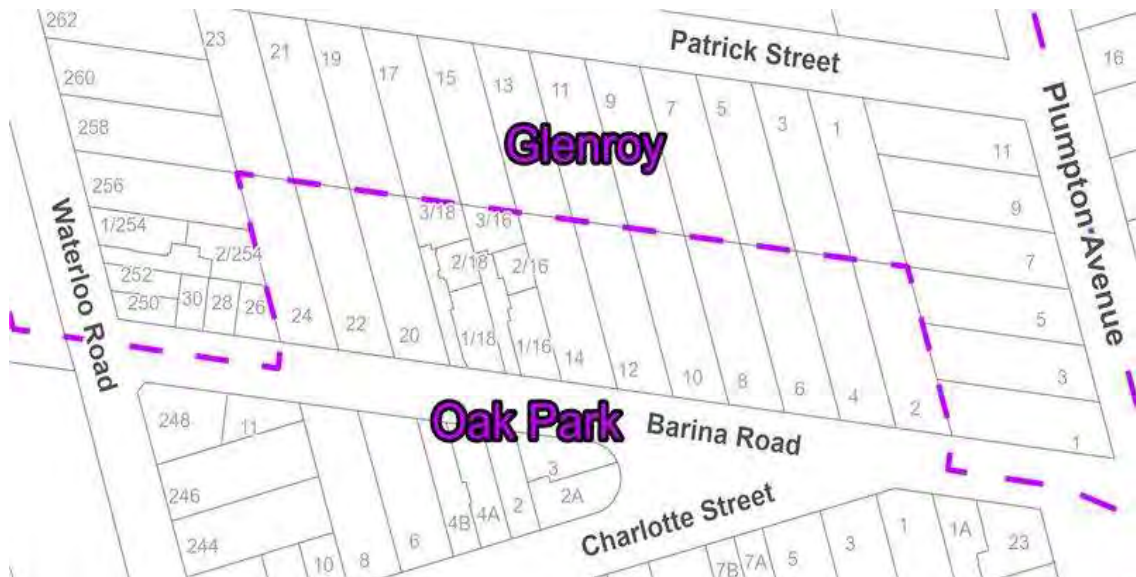
2. Background

In seeking to formally define suburb boundaries for the first time, the Geographic Place Name Committee in January 1997, provided proposed suburb boundaries for Council's consideration. On 19 May 1999 Council adopted these suburb boundaries.

In 2002 residents received letters confirming their new official addresses. However, many residents along the Oak Park and Glenroy border objected to their Glenroy address on the basis they were always known as Oak Park. As historical recognition was a major consideration for the boundaries, community consultation was undertaken, and community support was received for an amendment to the boundary that included all properties in Charlotte Street, Victoria Street, Barina Road and Rhodes Parade to be included in Oak Park. This was subsequently approved at the 19 August 2002 Council meeting.

Development has since occurred on a block facing Waterloo Road Glenroy, creating three new properties that front and are addressed to Barina Road. The current suburb boundary is shown in the map below. As the current suburb boundary outlines below, their land parcels are in Glenroy. These three new properties are currently addressed to Barina Road Glenroy while existing properties to Barina Road Oak Park.

Current boundary



Relevant Building Permits

252 Waterloo Road, Glenroy Property Applications:

- MPS/2010/13, Development of the land for three dwellings (two double storey dwellings to the rear of existing dwelling).
- Occupancy Permit for 2 rear dwellings received February 2013. Registration at Land Use Victoria 15/02/2014.
- Property Applications: PBS/2018/268, Construction of Three attached double storey dwelling.
- Property Applications: SP/2018/215, 3 lot subdivision - Registered at Land Use Victoria 30/08/2023.

The owners of all three new properties (26, 28 and 30 Barina Road) have contacted Council citing Council's responsibility as maintainer of the boundaries; to request integration with the rest of the street into Oak Park.

'The Standards' and 'The Naming Rules' both require suburb boundaries are reviewed and amended where appropriate. Section 5.2.1 of 'The Naming Rules' states:

'If a property is situated on a corner and the block is subdivided with one or more of the new properties accessed from a road generally being addressed to a different locality, the locality boundary should be changed to incorporate the new subdivided properties'

Proposed Boundary

In accordance with Section 5.2.1 of 'The Naming Rules' it is recommended is to amend the locality boundary to incorporate the new subdivided properties into the suburb of the road they are accessed from.

Council officers have assessed that this proposal meets all relevant statutory requirements including the following:

- Conforms to the statutory requirements in Section 5.2 of 'The Naming Rules'.

- [illegible]

3. Issues

By realigning the boundary as per officer recommendations, council will bring the Barina Road fully into Oak Park as per Section 5.2.1 of the Official Naming Rules for Places in Victoria.

No other members of the community are affected by the suburb boundary adjustment.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

Economic sustainability implications

Legal and risk considerations

88

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 there are no implications associated with this report.

4. Community Consultation and Engagement

Council's Community Engagement Policy 2024 requires community engagement when community impact is anticipated. Considering this proposed boundary realignment has a negligible impact on the community, nor can the realignment be influenced significantly by the community; the identified affected persons have been contacted directly.

A public notice was displayed on Conversations Merri-bek for 60 days and letters were sent to directly affected residents and ratepayers as well as those residents and ratepayers in properties adjacent to the proposed new boundaries. This was done in accordance with '*The Naming Rules*'.

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.

Impacted ratepayers and residents at 26, 28, and 30 Barina Road Glenroy were directly contacted via email and letters. Letters were also sent to all ratepayers and residents of adjacent properties to the new suburb boundary line inviting submissions.

A public notice was published on the Conversations Merri-bek Page, inviting submissions for 60 days exceeding the minimum 30 days as required by '*The Naming Rules*'. Support was received from all three owners of directly impacted properties, and no objections were received.

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 implications of this report. The lodgement to Geographic Names Victoria and re-issuing of street numbers reflecting the suburb boundary change can be completed with the current resources in the Financial Services budget.

7. Implementation

Should Council support the recommendation of this report, Council officers will submit the resolution to Geographic Names Victoria Registrar for finalisation and gazettal whereby the Land Victoria maps are amended.

Once complete, the address of the three impacted properties will be updated to Oak Park, and other relevant government departments, Yarra Valley Water and Australia Post notified.

Attachment/s

There are no attachments for this report.

7.4 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 OCTOBER 2025

Director Business Transformation, Sue Vujcevic

Financial Services

Officer Recommendation

That Council notes the Financial Management Report for the period ending 31 October 2025, at Attachment 1 to this report.

REPORT

Executive Summary

This report presents the Financial Management Report for the financial year to date period ending 31 October 2025. A detailed financial review was undertaken across the organisation at the end of September 2025. The results of this review are included in this report as the Full Year Revised Forecast.

The 31 October 2025 Income Statement shows that Council has recorded a surplus of \$144.7 million, \$1.6 million higher than the year-to-date budget of \$143.1 million, as a result of higher overall revenue. This difference is considered largely timing in nature. 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 \$13.6 million on capital expenditure, which is tracking below the year-to-date (YTD) budget of \$14.8 million, with \$80.3 million budget remaining.

Previous Council Decisions

2025-26 First Quarter Financial Report – 12 November 2025

That Council,

1. *Notes the 2025-26 First Quarter Financial Report for the period ending 30 September 2025, including operating performance and capital performance at Attachment 1.*
2. *Notes the status of the capital works program for 2025-26.*
3. *Notes the increase to the full-year forecast for operating income of \$9.2 million and the increase to operating expenditure of \$6.0 million arising from the 2025-26 First Quarter Financial Review.*
4. *Approves a decrease of \$2.7 million to the transfer to the Significant Projects Reserve (to \$1.8 million) in 2025-26 to fund additional expenditure relating to the Elevate Transformation Program and the bring forward of the Coburg basketball feasibility study. This reduction will be offset by a corresponding increase to the reserve in the 2026-2030 budget.*
5. *Endorses the full-year capital expenditure forecast of \$102.9 million, arising from the 2025-26 First Quarter Financial Review.*
6. *Carries forward the following capital project funding to the 2026-27 Capital Works Program:*
 - a) *Fully or partially grant funded projects to be carried forward if the funding is secured and received this financial year:*
 - *AG Gillon Stormwater Harvesting - \$1,000,000*
 - *Coburg Bluestone Cottage Complex Redevelopment - \$611,324.*

- b) *Rates funded projects:*
- *Bin Purchases (waste charge funded) - \$2,258,519*
 - *West Street Neighbourhood Streetscape - \$1,000,000*
 - *DeChene Reserve - Gender Inclusive Facilities - \$700,421*
 - *Coburg Outdoor Pool - 8 X 15 Toddlers Pool - \$175,000*
 - *Fawkner Library Upgrade Works - \$70,000.*
7. *Brings forward the following capital project funding to the 2025-26 Capital Works Program:*
- *Brunswick Early Years Hub (grant funded) - \$261,663*
 - *Coburg Olympic Pool - Repainting - \$135,000*
 - *Balfe Park Sportsfield Redevelopment - \$50,000.*
8. *Approves funding for the following new projects in the 2025-26 Capital Works Program:*
- *Fawkner Netball Club Roof (grant funded) - \$4,560,000*
 - *Jukes Rd & William St, Fawkner - Priority Crossing (grant funded) - \$437,000*
 - *Blackspot Project - Intersection of Widford St & View St, Glenroy (grant funded) - \$263,900*
 - *Raised Crossing - Everett St & Moreland Rd (SLRSP) (grant funded) - \$184,000*
 - *Electric Vehicle Chargers (externally funded) - \$170,000 (previously budgeted as operating)*
 - *Emergency Road Works - Ivy St, Brunswick - \$104,010*
 - *Blackspot Project - Intersection of Albert St & Wilkinson St, Brunswick (grant funded) - \$57,330*
 - *Brunswick Bowls Club - \$16,646*
 - *Albion St/Lillian St Rectification - \$15,000*
 - *Glenroy Community Hub - Electrical Works - \$10,815*
 - *Coburg Lake Bridge Rectification Works - \$10,620.*
9. *Approves additional funding for the following existing projects in the 2025-26 Capital Works Program:*
- *Mitchell Parade Retaining Walls (grant funded) - \$1,068,852*
 - *Drainage, Moama Crescent and Jhonson Street - Hot Spot No 21 - \$381,650*
 - *Victoria St - Streets for People (grant funded) - \$374,000*
 - *York Street Park Close to Home (reserve funded) - \$265,374*
 - *Rehabilitation, Moonee Pde from Jewel to Union - \$245,000*
 - *Wombat Crossings - Barrow St & Blair St, Coburg - \$200,000*
 - *Brunswick City Baths Repainting & Renewal - \$174,345*
 - *Road Reconstruction, Katawa Grove from Cooraminta to Dead End - \$168,000*
 - *40 km/h Rollout - Traffic Calming - \$100,000*
 - *South Street - Engeny Hot Spot No 12 - \$99,404*
 - *Richards Reserve Natural Turf Renewal - \$85,485*
 - *South Street from Jensen to West, Road Reconstruction - \$82,866*
 - *Fawkner Leisure Centre Redevelopment - \$55,195*
 - *South Street from Dickinson to Everitt, Road Reconstruction - \$51,421*
 - *Park Renewal - Soudan St (reserve funded) - \$48,599*
 - *Building Maintenance - Capital Purchases - \$28,138*
 - *Fallon St From Union to Collier Both Carriageways - \$16,889*
 - *Park Renewal - Beccles / Oulton Reserve (reserve funded) - \$12,974*
 - *Tyson Street from Jukes Rd to Denys Street, Road Reconstruction - \$12,028*
 - *Mobile Phone Purchases - \$15,408*
 - *Shade Sail Installation - Anne Sgro Child Care (grant funded) - \$6,302.*

10. *Notes savings realised from the following existing projects in the 2025-26 Capital Works Program:*

- *Road Reconstruction, O’Hea Street from Lonsdale St to Clifton Grove - \$548,786*
- *Road Reconstruction, O’Hea Street from Montefiore St to Lonsdale St - \$425,878*
- *Road Reconstruction, O’Hea Street from Sussex St to Bishop St - \$356,397*
- *Road Reconstruction, O’Hea Street from Bishop St to Montefiore St - \$350,514*
- *Road Reconstruction, Dalgety Street from Hope to Whitby - \$325,000*
- *Road Reconstruction, Devon Street from View to Oak - \$300,000*
- *Park Renewal, Cox Reserve, including playground upgrade (reserve funded) - \$227,239*
- *School Active Travel and Safety Infrastructure - \$200,000*
- *Road Reconstruction, Garden Street from Belfast to Glenlyon (both Carriageways) - \$165,237*
- *Road Safety and Amenity Improvements Program - \$143,000*
- *Wombat Crossing - Albion to Melville - \$115,000*
- *Coburg North Sports Hub Upgrades - \$95,755*
- *Patterson Street from Tinning to Albion, Road Reconstruction - \$26,760*
- *Parker Reserve - Baseball - Change Room & Refurbishment - \$25,000*
- *Snell Gve-Public Toilet-Snell Gve, Oak Park - \$15,859*
- *Fawkner Community Hall - CB Smith Reserve - \$7,000.*

2024-25 Financial Statements and Performance Statements – 10 September 2025

That Council, in accordance with the recommendations of the Audit and Risk Committee, and having considered Council’s Financial and Performance Statements for 2024-25 Statements at Attachments 1 and 2 to this report:

1. *Approves ‘in principle’ the Financial and Performance Statements 2024-25.*
2. *Authorises the Mayor, Cr Helen Davidson, Deputy Mayor, Cr Helen Politis, and the Chief Executive Officer, Cathy Henderson, to certify the Financial and Performance Statements for 2024-25 in their final form.*
3. *Carries forward the \$473,339 of tied operating funding that were not spent as of 30 June 2025.*
4. *Carries forward the \$32,410,329 of capital project funds into the 2025/26 Capital Works Program.*
5. *Authorises the Principal Accounting Officer to implement any minor administrative changes to the Financial and Performance Statements for 2024-25 if recommended by the Auditor-General upon final review, for approval by the Chief Executive Officer.*

1. Policy Context

The 2025-2029 Budget was adopted by Council on 23 June 2025. The Budget sets out the resources required to deliver the Council Plan, services and Capital Works Program for the 2025-26 financial year.

This report supports Council’s continuing commitment to open and accountable management of the financial resources of Merri-bek on behalf of its ratepayers.

2. Background

The Financial Management Report at Attachment 1 provides Council’s financial statements for the year to date (YTD) period ended 31 October 2025. The actual results are compared to the budget in the Executive Summary and compared to the revised forecast in all other parts of the report, which include carry forwards from 2025-26 and the outcome of the First Quarter Financial Review.

Relevant Council Plan action, strategy, policy, or resolution

This report supports Council's continuing commitment to open and accountable management of the financial resources of Merri-Bek on behalf of its ratepayers.

3. Issues/Discussion

Council ended October 2025 with a surplus operating result of \$144.7 million which is \$0.8 million (1%) more than the year to date (YTD) forecast of \$143.8 million.

It is important to note that the \$144.7 million operating surplus does 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.

As described above, significant amounts of surplus are restricted by legislation or must be used for future infrastructure investment.

Significant variance explanations are provided below to clarify where the current YTD variances are expected to be a timing or permanent difference by 30 June 2026. A timing variance is a current difference between actual result and forecast which is expected to be resolved before the end of the financial year. A permanent variance is a current difference between actual result and forecast which will continue to the end of the financial year.

The main items contributing to the overall variance are:

Revenue

- **User Fees** ended \$0.9 million (28%) unfavourable primarily due to the timing of the issuing of Environmental Health registrations.

Expenditure

- There was no expenditure that was favourable or unfavourable that reached the reportable threshold for the 4 months ends October. Expenditure has been on track since the budget was phased in July and rephased at Quarter 1 forecast in October.

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.

Capital Projects – Capital Expenditure

Council has spent \$13.6 million on capital expenditure year to date which is tracking \$4.0 million (23%) below the YTD forecast of \$17.6 million, with \$89.3 million (87%) of the revised budget remaining.

Cash

Council's cash assets were \$94.5 million as at 31 October 2025. This is a \$1.6 million decrease on 30 June 2025 cash levels.

Cash fluctuates frequently over the year due to a number of factors, mainly due to the timing of when the rates instalments fall due.

Solvency Assessment

Council officers have reviewed Council's liquidity (Current Assets divided by Current Liabilities), and the revised forecast is 1.9. 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 will continue to be monitored and managed. The progress of the capital works program will continue to be monitored and managed.

Attachment/s

- 1 [!\[\]\(3292f5442e3b4027aa0bb60988f9fc82_img.jpg\)](#) Council Monthly Financial Management Report - October 2025 D25/611006



Council Monthly Financial Management Report

4 Months Ended October 2025

Contents

Executive Summary	Page
Operating Performance	1
Capital Works Program	1
Cash & Investments	1
 Operating Performance	
Income Statement	2
YTD Operating Result	3
Capital Works	3
Debtors	3
Rates Collection	4
Investments	4
 Financial Sustainability	
Financial Sustainability Ratios	5
Treasury Corporation of Victoria (TCV)	5
 Standard Statements	
Comprehensive Income Statement	6
Statement of Financial Position	7
Statement of Cashflows	8
Statement of Capital Works	9

Executive Summary

Operating Performance

For the four months ended 31 October 2025, Council recorded an operating surplus of \$144.7 million which is \$1.6 million (1%) more than the year to date (YTD) budget of \$143.1 million. This comprises total revenue of \$227 million which is \$2.3 million (1%) more than the YTD budget of \$224.8 million and total expenditure of \$82.3 million which is \$0.7 million (1%) unfavourable compared to the YTD budget of \$81.7 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	227,016	224,765	2,251	1%	281,292	290,487	9,195
Total Expenses	82,344	81,684	(660)	(1%)	237,964	243,947	(5,983)
Surplus/(Deficit)	144,673	143,081	1,592	1%	43,328	46,540	3,212

YTD favourable variance in revenue is primarily driven by \$1.0 million relating to Rates and Charges and \$0.3 million relating to Capital Government Grants. YTD unfavourable variance in expenses of \$0.7 million due to the decrease in the Net Book Value (NBV) of various Council assets (\$0.7 million).

Capital Works Program

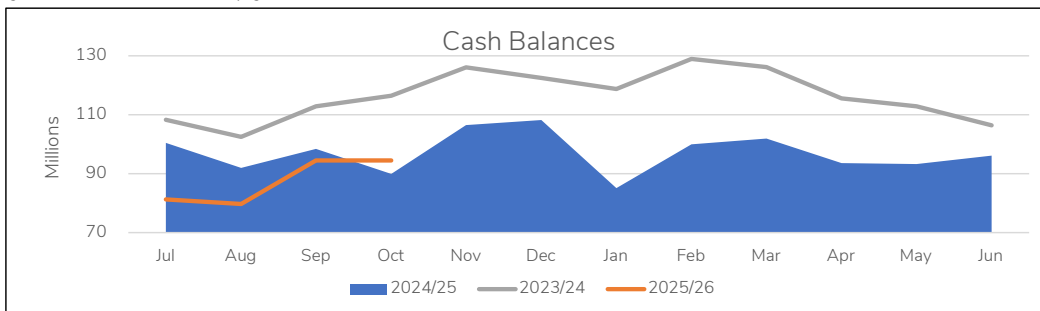
Council has spent \$13.6 million on capital expenditure to 31 October 2025, which is \$1.2 million (8%) less than YTD original budget, with \$80.3 million (85.6%) of the full year budget remaining. The variance is driven by underspends in Recreational, Leisure & Community Facilities projects (\$1.7 million), Roads projects (\$1.0 million) and Footpaths and Cycleways projects (\$0.6 million). This is offset by overspends to the budget for Open Space & Streetscapes projects (\$1.9 million) and Building Improvements projects (\$0.9 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	1,893	1,402	(491)	(35%)	12,345	12,903	(558)
Asset renewal expenditure	8,146	9,099	954	10%	60,648	62,638	(1,990)
Asset upgrade expenditure	3,528	4,297	769	18%	20,894	27,337	(6,443)
Total capital works expenditure	13,567	14,799	1,232	8%	93,887	102,878	(8,991)

Cash & Investments

Cash assets are \$94.5 million as at 31 October 2025. This is a decrease of \$1.6 million on 30 June 2025 cash levels, mainly as a result of due to cash outflows including capital works and financing (\$14.5 million) being higher than the net operating cash inflows (\$12.8 million). Cash fluctuates frequently over the year due to a number of factors, mainly due to the timing of when the rates instalments fall due.

Of the \$94.5 million cash assets, \$84.5 million is convertible to cash in less than 60 days and \$67.0 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 Forecast \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	YTD Variance %	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
Revenue								
Rates and charges		203,393	202,390	▲ 1,002	0%	202,778	202,802	■ 24
Statutory fees and fines		7,397	7,235	■ 161	2%	19,323	19,665	■ 342
User Fees	1	2,357	3,294	▼ (937)	(28%)	8,899	9,138	■ 239
Contributions - Monetary		3,310	3,191	■ 119	4%	8,232	9,773	▲ 1,541
Grants - Operating		5,771	5,738	■ 33	1%	21,205	21,373	■ 167
Grants - Capital		1,596	1,211	▲ 385	32%	12,964	19,648	▲ 6,684
Other Revenue		3,182	2,777	▲ 405	15%	7,797	7,983	■ 186
Asset Sales		12	39	▼ (27)	(70%)	92	105	■ 13
Total Revenue		227,016	225,876	▲ 1,141	1%	281,292	290,487	▲ 9,195
Expenses								
Employee Benefits		40,838	40,551	■ (288)	(1%)	116,144	116,766	▼ (622)
Contracts, Materials & Services		25,253	24,926	■ (327)	(1%)	73,199	78,093	▼ (4,894)
Depreciation		13,707	14,540	▲ 833	6%	43,621	43,621	-
Amortisation		79	79	0	0%	236	236	0
Bad and doubtful debts		1,391	1,527	■ 136	9%	3,153	3,633	■ (480)
Net loss on disposal of assets		644	-	▼ (644)	100%	-	-	-
Finance Costs		273	274	■ 1	0%	820	831	■ (11)
Other Expenses		159	154	■ (5)	(3%)	790	767	■ 23
Total Expenses		82,344	82,051	■ (293)	(0%)	237,965	243,947	▼ (5,983)
Net Result		144,673	143,825	▲ 848	1%	43,329	46,540	▲ 3,212

Notes

Revenue

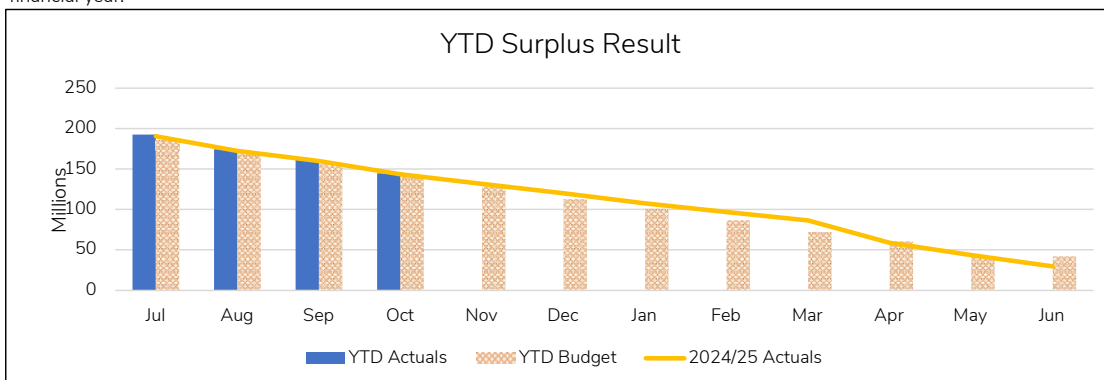
1. **User Fees** ended \$0.9 million (28%) unfavourable primarily due to the delay in issuing Environmental Health registrations. This is a timing issue which will rectify itself in November.

Expenses

There was no expenditure that was favourable or unfavourable that reached the reportable threshold for the 4 months ending October. Expenditure has been on track since the budget was phased in July and rephased at Quarter 1 forecast in October.

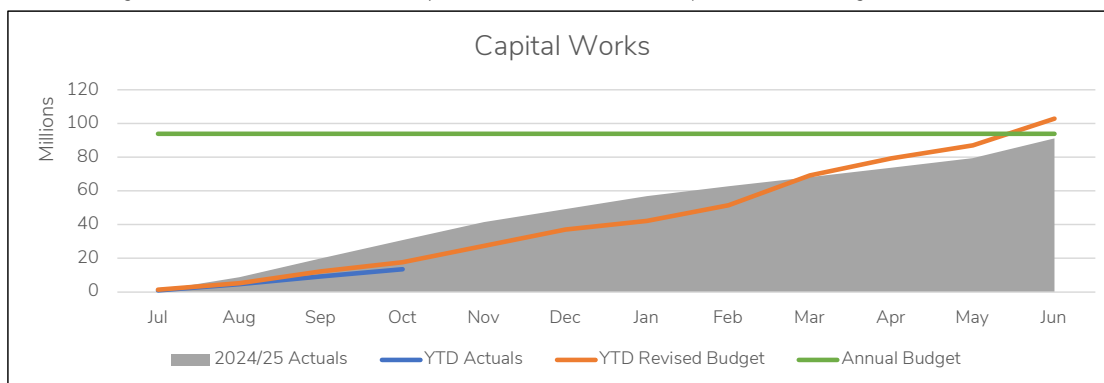
YTD Operating Result

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.

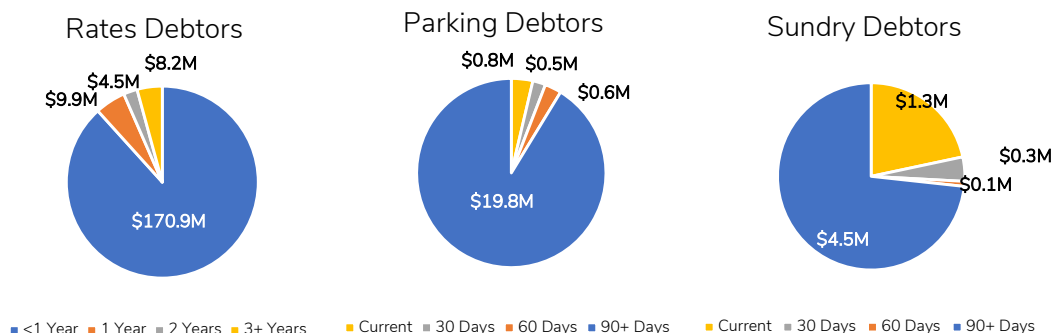


Capital Works

Council has spent \$13.6 million on capital expenditure to 31 October 2025 which is \$4 million (23%) lower than the YTD revised budget, with \$80.3 million (86%) of the full year budget remaining. The capital revised budget of \$102.9 million reflects the adopted 2025-26 budget, an additional \$8.4 million of carry forwards from 2024-25 and Q1 variations totalling \$0.7 million.

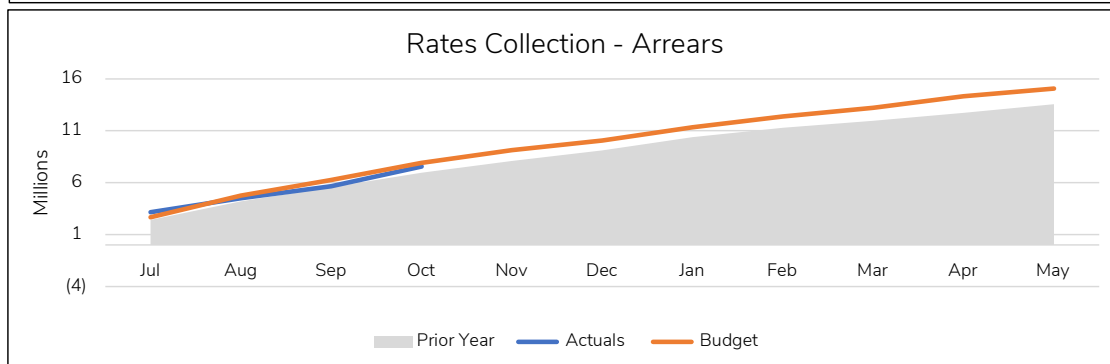
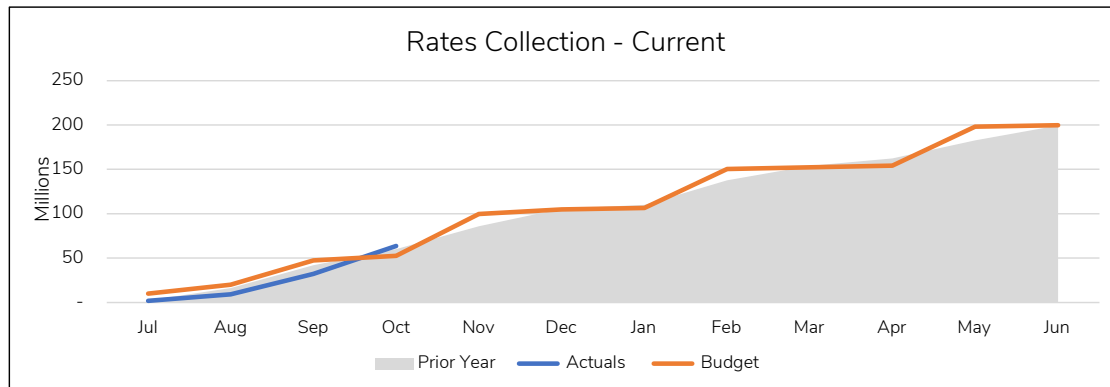


Debtors



Rates Collection

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



Investments

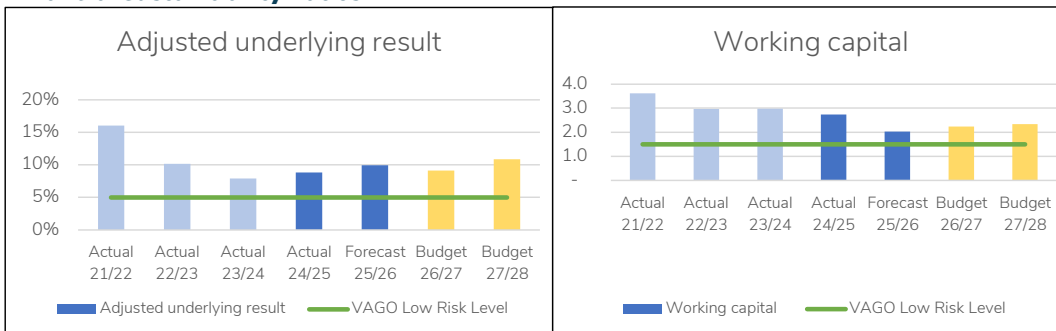
Of the \$94.5 million cash assets, \$84.5 million is convertible to cash in less than 60 days and \$67.0 million (100%) is held in green investments. The portfolio is in compliance with Council policy which requires at least \$20.0 million to be convertible to cash and green investments to make up greater than 70% of all investments.

Bank	Maturity Date	Green %	Interest Rate %	S & P short term rating	Amount \$'000	Ratio %
Minor Cash*	N/A		N/A	N/A	112	
Westpac	N/A		4.20%	A-1+	17,256	
Westpac	N/A		4.30%	A-1+	10,121	
ME Bank - 2	18/11/2025	100%	4.00%	A-2	5,000	25.4%
ME Bank - 2	30/12/2025	100%	3.85%	A-2	5,000	
ME Bank - 2	17/02/2026	100%	3.95%	A-2	7,000	
Bendigo Bank - 2	23/12/2025	100%	3.90%	A-2	5,000	22.4%
Bendigo Bank - 2	18/11/2025	100%	4.00%	A-2	5,000	
Bendigo Bank - 2	8/01/2026	100%	4.00%	A-2	5,000	
Suncorp - 3	23/12/2025	100%	3.81%	A-1	10,000	14.9%
IMB - 3	6/01/2026	100%	4.05%	A-2	10,000	22.4%
IMB - 3	8/01/2026	100%	4.05%	A-2	5,000	
Westpac - 6	27/02/2026	100%	4.14%	A-1+	6,000	14.9%
Westpac - 6	10/04/2026	100%	4.17%	A-1+	4,000	
Total		100%			94,490	100.0%
Green					67,000	100.0%

* Minor cash includes NAB holding account and Petty Cash

Financial Sustainability

Financial Sustainability Ratios

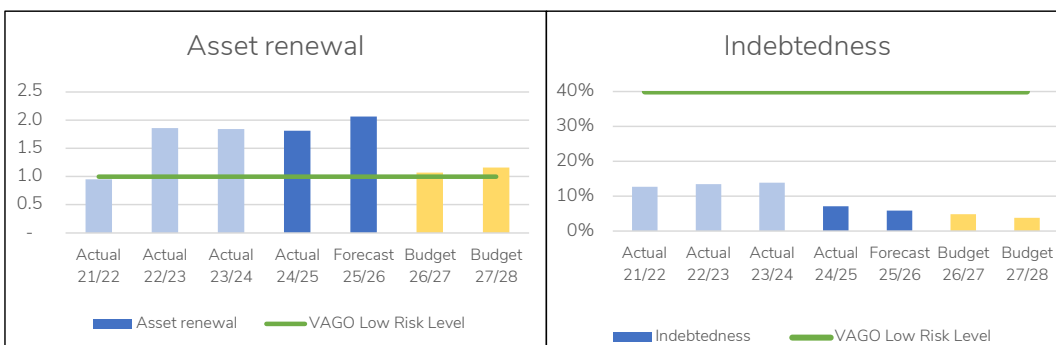


Adjusted underlying surplus (deficit) / adjusted underlying revenue

This ratio measures an entity's ability to generate its own cash. A positive result indicates a surplus, and the larger the percentage, the stronger the result. The result highlights Council's challenges in generating enough cash to fund future capital works without borrowing.

Current assets / current liabilities

Compares current assets to current liabilities, which provides a measure of the ability to pay existing liabilities in the next 12 months. This year's result expected to be in the low-risk range.



Renewal & upgrade spend/ depreciation

Ratios higher than 1.0 indicate that spending on existing assets is faster than the depreciation rate. This year's result is expected to stay in the low-risk range.

Non-current liabilities / own-source revenue

Measures Council's ability to pay the principal and interest on its borrowings as due from the funds it generates. This year's result is expected to stay in the low-risk range.

Treasury Corporation of Victoria (TCV)

TCV loan requirements		Target	Forecast
Interest Cover	EBITDA/Interest Expense	> 2	108
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 Forecast \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
Revenue						
Rates and charges	203,393	202,390	1,002	202,778	202,802	24
Statutory fees and fines	7,397	7,235	161	19,323	19,665	342
User Fees	2,357	3,294	(937)	8,899	9,138	239
Contributions - Monetary	3,310	3,191	119	8,232	9,773	1,541
Grants - Operating	5,771	5,738	33	21,205	21,373	167
Grants - Capital	1,596	1,211	385	12,964	19,648	6,684
Other Revenue	3,182	2,777	405	7,797	7,983	186
Asset Sales	12	39	(27)	92	105	13
Total Revenue	227,016	225,876	1,141	281,292	290,487	9,195
Expenses						
Employee Benefits	40,838	40,551	(288)	116,144	116,766	(622)
Contracts, Materials & Services	25,253	24,926	(327)	73,199	78,093	(4,894)
Depreciation	13,707	14,540	833	43,621	43,621	-
Amortisation	79	79	0	236	236	0
Bad and doubtful debts	1,391	1,527	136	3,153	3,633	(480)
Finance Costs	273	274	1	820	831	(11)
Other Expenses	159	154	(5)	790	767	23
Total Expenses	82,344	82,051	(293)	237,964	243,947	(5,983)
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	144,673	143,825	848	43,328	46,540	3,212

Underlying Result	YTD Actuals \$'000	YTD Forecast \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
Surplus for the Year	144,673	143,825	848	43,328	46,540	3,212
Other Comprehensive Income						
Net asset revaluation	-	-	-	49,206	49,206	-
Total Comprehensive Result	144,673	143,825	848	92,534	95,746	3,212
Non Operating Income and Expenditure						
Net loss on disposal of assets	632	(39)	671	(92)	(105)	(13)
Contributions Capital (cash & non-monetary)	(134)	(128)	(6)	(32)	(1,569)	(1,537)
Grants - Capital	(1,596)	(1,211)	(385)	(12,964)	(19,648)	(6,684)
PRRLF Reserve	(3,012)	(3,058)	46	(8,200)	(8,200)	0
DCP Reserve	(163)	(5)	(159)	-	(5)	(5)
Net asset revaluation	-	-	-	(49,206)	(49,206)	-
Total Capital Income	(4,274)	(4,441)	167	(21,289)	(29,526)	(8,238)
Underlying Result	140,399	139,384	1,015	22,040	17,014	(5,026)
Less						
Loan Principal Repayments	674	674	-	14,212	14,209	3
Additional Rates Funded CAPEX	3,231	3,231	-	13,041	9,693	3,348
Transfers to Reserves - Operating	163	5	(159)	7,783	8,100	(317)
Transfers from Reserves - Operating	-	-	-	(13,500)	(16,640)	3,140
Carry Forwards processed into FY27	2,393	2,393	-	-	2,393	(2,393)
Total Transfers & Other	6,461	6,302	(159)	21,536	17,756	3,780
Unrestricted Surplus/(Deficit)	133,937	133,081	856	504	(741)	(1,245)

Statement of Financial Position

Statement of Financial Position	YTD Actuals \$'000	30/06/25 Actuals \$'000	Movement Inc/(Dec) \$'000	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
Current assets						
Cash and cash equivalents	27,490	36,116	(8,626)	89	282	193
Trade and other receivables	205,748	41,679	164,069	45,793	45,801	8
Other financial assets	67,000	60,000	7,000	73,107	67,607	(5,500)
Inventories	690	690	-	659	659	-
Prepayments	5,096	3,160	1,936	2,429	2,429	-
Non-current assets classified as held for sale	25,153	22,975	2,178	-	-	-
Other assets	3,865	4,156	(290)	2,208	2,208	-
Total current assets	335,042	168,776	166,267	124,284	118,985	(5,299)
Non-current assets						
Unlisted Shares	2	2	-	2	2	-
Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	2,632,175	2,635,161	(2,985)	2,983,191	2,992,182	8,991
Right-of-use assets	763	813	-	128	128	-
Investments	37,232	37,232	-	36,024	36,024	-
Total non-current assets	2,670,173	2,673,207	(2,985)	3,019,345	3,028,336	8,991
Total assets	3,005,215	2,841,983	163,281	3,143,629	3,147,322	3,692
Current liabilities						
Payables						
Payables	43,134	20,543	22,592	18,753	18,753	-
Revenue Received in Advance	2,822	2,302	519	6,898	6,898	-
Provisions	21,220	20,923	297	27,110	27,591	480
Interest Bearing Loans and Borrowings	14,209	14,209	-	2,172	2,172	-
Trust Funds & Deposits	1,068	5,822	(4,754)	6,384	6,384	-
Lease liabilities	85	121	(36)	-	-	-
Total current liabilities	82,538	63,920	18,617	61,318	61,798	480
Non-current liabilities						
Provisions	2,416	2,510	(93)	2,603	2,603	-
Interest-bearing liabilities	12,992	12,961	31	11,437	11,437	-
Lease liabilities	460	457	4	-	-	-
Trust Funds & Deposits	706	706	-	-	-	-
Total non-current liabilities	16,575	16,633	(58)	14,040	14,040	-
Total liabilities	99,113	80,554	18,559	75,358	75,838	480
Net assets	2,906,102	2,761,430	144,673	3,068,272	3,071,484	3,212
Equity						
Asset revaluation reserves	1,871,459	1,871,459	-	-	-	-
Other reserves	49,213	66,701	(17,488)	2,151,921	2,153,032	1,111
Accumulated surplus	985,431	823,270	162,161	916,351	918,452	2,101
Total equity	2,906,102	2,761,430	144,673	3,068,272	3,071,484	3,212

Statement of Cashflows

Statement of Cash Flows	YTD Actuals \$'000 Inflows (Outflows)	Annual Budget \$'000 Inflows (Outflows)	Annual Forecast \$'000 Inflows (Outflows)	Annual Variance \$'000 Inflows (Outflows)
Cash flows from operating activities				
Rates and charges	37,664	199,737	199,759	23
Statutory fees and fines	4,924	18,357	18,692	335
User fees	1,867	8,721	8,960	239
Grants - operating	5,771	21,205	21,373	167
Grants - capital	2,115	12,964	19,648	6,684
Contributions - monetary	3,310	8,232	9,773	1,541
Interest received	1,880	-	128	128
Trust funds and deposits taken	34,771	41,524	41,524	-
Other receipts	3,042	7,797	7,855	57
Net GST refund/(payment)	683	-	-	-
Payments to Employees	(43,372)	(113,670)	(114,292)	(622)
Payments to Suppliers	(33,167)	(73,167)	(78,061)	(4,894)
Trust funds and deposits repaid	(6,469)	(41,414)	(41,414)	-
Other payments	(173)	(790)	(767)	23
Net cash (used in) / provided by operating activities	12,845	89,497	93,179	3,682
Cash flows from investing activities				
Payments for property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	(13,602)	(93,886)	(102,877)	(8,991)
Proceeds from sale of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	110	92	105	13
Payments/(Proceeds) for investments	(7,000)	4,993	4,993	-
Net cash used in investing activities	(20,492)	(88,801)	(97,780)	(8,979)
Cash flows from financing activities				
Finance costs	(270)	(816)	(827)	(11)
Repayment of borrowings	(675)	(14,212)	(14,209)	3
Interest paid - lease liability	(4)	-	-	-
Repayment of lease liabilities	(32)	(20)	(20)	-
Net cash used in financing activities	(980)	(15,048)	(15,056)	(8)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash held	(8,626)	(14,352)	(19,656)	(5,304)
Cash at beginning of period	36,116	14,441	36,116	21,675
Cash at end of period	27,490	89	16,460	16,371
Cash Position				
Non-restricted Cash at 1 July 2025	36,116	14,441	36,116	21,675
Other Financial Assets at 1 July 2025	60,000	78,100	60,000	(18,100)
Cash & cash equivalents at beginning of financial year	96,116	92,541	96,116	3,575
Non-restricted Cash at end of financial period	27,490	89	282	193
Other Financial Assets at end of financial period	67,000	73,107	67,607	(5,500)
Cash & cash equivalents at end of financial period	94,490	73,196	67,889	(5,307)

Statement of Capital Works

Statement of Capital Works	YTD Actuals \$'000	YTD Forecast \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
Property						
Land	2	-	(2)	-	-	-
Buildings	947	1,297	350	8,910	5,828	3,082
Building Improvements	1,790	1,265	(526)	7,535	13,062	(5,528)
Total property	2,739	2,561	(178)	16,445	18,891	(2,446)
Plant and equipment						
Plant, machinery and equipment	652	698	46	5,877	6,460	(583)
Fixtures, Fittings and Furniture	31	31	-	171	176	(4)
Computers and telecommunications	111	324	214	1,125	1,200	(75)
Artworks	1	4	3	47	47	0
Library books	469	494	25	1,082	1,082	0
Total plant and equipment	1,264	1,551	287	8,302	8,965	(663)
Infrastructure						
Roads	3,107	4,393	1,286	27,223	29,897	(2,674)
Bridges	39	54	15	3,334	3,369	(35)
Footpaths and cycleways	1,378	1,648	269	6,662	7,605	(943)
Drainage	345	268	(77)	2,946	3,123	(177)
Recreational, leisure & community facilities	1,268	2,741	1,473	14,025	14,648	(623)
Waste management	145	196	50	2,183	269	1,914
Parks, open space and streetscapes	3,280	4,173	893	12,767	16,113	(3,346)
Total infrastructure	9,564	13,474	3,910	69,140	75,023	(5,883)
Total capital works expenditure	13,567	17,586	4,019	93,887	102,878	(8,991)
Represented by:						
New asset expenditure	1,893	2,523	630	12,345	12,903	(558)
Asset renewal expenditure	8,146	10,415	2,270	60,648	62,638	(1,990)
Asset upgrade expenditure	3,528	4,648	1,120	20,894	27,337	(6,443)
Total capital works expenditure	13,567	17,586	4,019	93,887	102,878	(8,991)

7.5 GOVERNANCE REPORT - DECEMBER 2025 - CYCLICAL REPORT

Director Business Transformation, Sue Vujcevic

Governance and Strategy

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the Records of Meetings, at Attachment 1 to this report.
2. Notes responses to a question taken on notice during Public Question Time at the 8 October Council meeting, provided as Attachment 2.
3. Sets the dates and times for Council meetings in 2026 as outlined in this report and designates those meetings indicated for consideration of Planning and Related Matters in accordance with the Governance Rules.
4. Sets the date and time for the election of the Mayor for 2026/27 as 18 November 2026 at 6.30 pm.
5. Appends the schedule of Council meetings to the minutes and publishes it on the Council website.
6. Appoints Portfolio Councillors, known as 'Councillors Responsible For...', for the 2025/26 Mayoral year as follows:

Arts and Culture	Cr
Climate and Nature	Cr
Early Years and Young People	Cr
Economic Development	Cr
Human Rights and Multiculturalism	Cr
Multiculturalism	Cr
Older Persons	Cr
Sport and Recreation	Cr
Transport and Getting Around	Cr
Urban Planning	Cr
Women (Gender Equality)	Cr

7. Appoints Councillors to internal, advisory groups, network and external committees for the 2025/26 Mayoral year as follows:

Internal Committees	
Audit and Risk Committee	Cr Cr Cr
CEO Employment and Remuneration Matters Committee	All Councillors
Central Coburg Oversight Committee	Mayor (Chair) Cr/s
Activity Centres Advisory Group	Cr (Chair) Cr/s

Internal Committees	
Merri-bek Community Recognition Committee (Merri-bek Awards)	Cr Cr Cr
External Committees	
Friends of Aileu Community Committee	Cr
Merri Creek Management Committee	Cr Cr (substitute)
Metropolitan Transport Forum	Cr Cr
Municipal Association of Victoria (Representative)	Cr Cr (substitute)
M9 Committee	Mayor
Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) Executive	Cr Cr (substitute)
Northern Councils Alliance	Mayor; and Cr (substitute)

8. Appoints Councillors to advisory committees and reference groups for the 2025/26 Mayoral year as follows:

Advisory Committees	
Merri-bek Arts Advisory Committee	Cr (Chair)
Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience Advisory Committee	Cr (Chair)
First Peoples Advisory Committee	Cr (co-Chair)
Liveability Advisory Committee	Cr (Chair)
Health, Wellbeing and Social Inclusion Advisory Committee	
Reference Groups	
Strategic Transport Reference Group	Cr (Chair)
Older Persons Reference Group	Cr
Disability Reference Group	Cr
Gender Equality Reference Group	Cr
LGBTIQA+ Reference Group	Cr

9. Notes the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 - Year 4 Annual Review and Evaluation at Attachment 3 to this report.

REPORT

Executive Summary

The Governance report is prepared as a monthly standing report to Council which provides a single reporting platform for a range of statutory compliance, transparency, and governance related matters.

This Governance report includes:

- Records of Meetings, with a recommendation that Council notes the records.
- A response to a Public Question Time item taken on notice at the 8 October 2025 Council meeting, with a recommendation that Council notes the responses.
- Adoption of the Council Meeting Dates for 2026.
- Appointments to Portfolios, Internal Committees, Advisory Committees, Reference Groups and other External Bodies.
- A review and evaluation of the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 – Year 4 actions.

Previous Council Decisions

Governance Report – December 2024 – Cyclical Report - Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 – Year 3 Annual Review – 11 December 2024

That Council:

...

4. *Notes the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 - Year 3 Annual Review and Evaluation at Attachment 4 to this report.*

...

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.

The development of a Domestic Animal Management Plan is a requirement of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. Council adopted a Domestic Animal Management Plan for the period 2021-2025 at its November 2021 Council meeting (Council Report 7.2 Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025). It is also a requirement of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* that the Domestic Animal Management Plan is reviewed annually.

2. Background

The Governance Report is prepared as a monthly report to Council to provide a single reporting platform for a range of statutory compliance, transparency, and governance related matters.

In accordance with best practice principles and good governance practice, and to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Act, this report incorporates matters including reporting of Advisory Committees, records of meetings held under the auspice of Council, items relating to the delegation of Council powers and duties, and policy and strategy reporting.

3. Issues

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 1** as follows:

- Councillor Briefing – 10 November 2025
- Councillor Briefing – 17 November 2025
- Audit and Risk Committee – 18 November 2025
- Planning Briefing – 24 November 2025
- Councillor Briefing – 1 December 2025.

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 response to a question taken On Notice at **Attachment 2** to this report relates to a question from 8 October 2025 Council meeting regarding Pascoe Vale Outdoor Pool.

Adoption of Council Meeting Dates 2026

Council's Governance Rules provide that Council fixes the date, time and place of all Council meetings for the following calendar year, including meetings designated for Planning and Related Matters.

Council by resolution, or the Chief Executive Officer, may change the date, time or place of, or cancel, any Council meeting which has been fixed, or schedule an additional Council meeting and must provide notice of the change to the public.

The proposed Council Meeting Schedule for the period January to December 2026 has been prepared (refer to table below) to enable Council to effectively carry out its decision-making functions for the year. The schedule includes the times and dates for Council meetings and Council meetings designated for consideration of Planning and Related Matters.

Meetings are generally held on a Wednesday evening in Bunjil (Council Chamber) at the Merri-bek Civic Centre.

The election of the Mayor must be held on a day that is as close to the end of the one-year term as is reasonably practicable. It is proposed that the next meeting to elect the Mayor be held Wednesday 18 November 2026.

Meeting	Time	2026 Meeting Date
Council Meeting	6.30 pm	Wednesday 11 February Wednesday 11 March Wednesday 8 April Wednesday 13 May Wednesday 10 June Wednesday 8 July Wednesday 12 August Wednesday 9 September Wednesday 14 October Wednesday 11 November Wednesday 9 December
Council Meeting - Planning and Related Matters	6.30 pm	Wednesday 28 January Wednesday 25 February Wednesday 25 March Wednesday 22 April Wednesday 27 May Wednesday 24 June Wednesday 22 July Wednesday 26 August Wednesday 23 September Wednesday 28 October Wednesday 25 November Wednesday 16 December
Council Meeting - Mayoral election	6.30 pm	Wednesday 18 November

Appointments to Portfolios, Internal Committees, Advisory Committees, Reference Groups and other External Bodies

Each year, Council appoints Councillors to the roles of 'Councillor Responsible For...' and to Council convened networks, internal, advisory and external committees, and networks and external boards who have sought a Council representative for the Mayoral year.

For the 2025/2026 year, the Early Years and Young People portfolios have been combined, as have Human Rights and Multiculturalism (Social Cohesion), to create more strategic, integrated and efficient approaches. This consolidation enables coordinated service delivery and policy development under shared strategies, improving outcomes while reducing fragmentation.

Combining Early Years and Young People recognises their shared developmental, safety, wellbeing and education needs. It allows for a consistent and holistic approach that better supports transitions between life stages and aligns programs across different age groups.

The integration of Human Rights and Multiculturalism strengthens collective efforts around diversity, inclusion and social harmony. This coordinated approach enhances leadership, reduces duplication, aligns resources with shared goals, and facilitates unified advocacy and outcome measurement across connected communities and themes.

This report seeks appointments of those roles and representatives for the 2025/26 Mayoral Year. If required, Council may resolve to change the appointments during the year.

Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 – Year 4 Review and Evaluation

The Domestic Animal Management Plan guides Council's management of dogs and cats for the period of 2021-2025 and was designed to guide Council in its services to the community, increasing the likelihood of animals being reunited with their owners, encouraging responsible pet ownership, reducing the potential for nuisance caused by dogs and cats, and reducing the number of cats and dogs in shelters.

The Plan is principally an internally focused document that outlines the services, programs and policies the Council has developed and demonstrates how the requirements of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* are administered to manage dog and cat issues within the community.

It is a requirement of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* that the Plan is reviewed annually. The review and evaluation of the Year 4 objectives is a means of informing Council of the progress of the implementation of the 4-year Plan. The Plan contains 46 actions for Year 4 (December 2024 - November 2025) of which all have been completed.

The Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021–2025 has concluded, and the new Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025–2029 was adopted by Council at its November 2025 meeting

The Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 Year 4 Annual Review and Evaluation is included as **Attachment 3** to 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 Act 2006*.

4. Community consultation and engagement

Advisory committees provide a valuable communication and consultation link between the organisation, Councillors, Council and the community.

5. Officer Declaration for a Conflict of Interests

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflicts of interest in the matters contained therewith.

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:

- The schedule of Council meeting dates being published in Council's minutes and on Council's website.
- Council officers will formally advise the relevant Internal Committees, Advisory Committees, Reference Groups and other External Bodies of their appointed Councillor representative for the 2025-2026 Mayoral year.
- Providing a copy of the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 Year 4 Annual Review and Evaluation and Council resolution to the Secretary Department Energy, Environment and Climate Action.
- Publishing an evaluation of implementation of the Year 4 DAMP actions in the Council Annual Report.

Attachment/s

- | | | |
|---|---|------------|
| 1 | ↓ Records of Meetings - December 2025 | D25/632105 |
| 2 | ↓ Responses to questions taken On Notice - December 2025 | D25/636908 |
| 3 | ↓ Merri-bek Domestic Animal Management Plan Year 4 Annual Review and Evaluation 2021-2025 | D25/642951 |

Record of Meeting

Meeting: Councillor Briefing

Date: 10 November 2025

Meeting time: 6.00pm – 6.55pm



This Record is kept in accordance with the Governance Rules adopted by Council most recently on 10 April 2024.

Rule 9.1 provides that a record of the matters discussed at all **Hearing of Submission Meetings, Advisory Committee Meetings** and **Councillor Briefings** organised or hosted by Council will be kept.

The record will include the attendees at the meeting, including the organisations represented by external presenters, the title of matters discussed and any conflicts of interest disclosed and whether the person with the conflict of interest left the meeting.

Attendees	
Councillors	<div>Cr Helen Davidson, Mayor</div> <div>Cr Adam Pulford</div> <div>Cr Liz Irvin</div> <div>Cr Ella Svensson</div> <div>Cr Nat Abboud</div> <div>Cr Chris Miles</div> <div>Cr Helen Politis, Deputy Mayor</div> <div>Cr Jay Iwasaki</div> <div>Cr Sue Bolton</div> <div>Cr Katerine Theodosis</div>
Apologies	Cr Oscar Yildiz
Council Staff (name and position)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eamonn Fennessy, Acting Chief Executive Officer • Stefan Grun, Acting Director Community • Anita Curnow, Acting Director Business Transformation • Greg Rodwell, Acting Director City Infrastructure • Pene Winslade, Director Place and Environment
External participants (include organisation represented)	Nil

Items discussed	Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1 Council meeting agenda	-	-

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: 17 November 2025

Meeting time: 6.00pm – 7.30pm



This Record is kept in accordance with the Governance Rules adopted by Council most recently on 10 April 2024.

Rule 9.1 provides that a record of the matters discussed at all **Hearing of Submission Meetings, Advisory Committee Meetings** and **Councillor Briefings** organised or hosted by Council will be kept.

The record will include the attendees at the meeting, including the organisations represented by external presenters, the title of matters discussed and any conflicts of interest disclosed and whether the person with the conflict of interest left the meeting.

Attendees	
Councillors	<div>Cr Helen Davidson, Mayor</div> <div>Cr Adam Pulford (online)</div> <div>Cr Liz Irvin</div> <div>Cr Ella Svensson</div> <div>Cr Nat Abboud</div> <div>Cr Helen Politis, Deputy Mayor</div> <div>Cr Chris Miles</div> <div>Cr Jay Iwasaki</div> <div>Cr Katherine Theodosios</div>
Apologies	<div>Cr Sue Bolton</div> <div>Cr Oscar Yildiz</div>
Council Staff (name and position)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eamonn Fennessy, Acting Chief Executive Officer Stefan Grun, Acting Director Community Anita Curnow, Acting Director Business Transformation Greg Rodwell, Acting Director City Infrastructure Pene Winslade, Director Place and Environment Mike Collins, Principal Advisor Social and Affordable Housing Alayna Chapman, Unit Manager Strategic Planning Indivar Dhakal, Acting Manager City Design and Economy Bernadette Hetherington, Manager Community Wellbeing Nick Groves, Project Manager - City Services Transformation Catherine Dear, Manager City Services Seamus Lowe, Unit Manager Property
External participants	External presenters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair, Merri-bek Affordable Housing Executive Officer, Merri-bek Affordable Housing

Items discussed		Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1	Briefing with Merri-bek Affordable Housing and discussion of upcoming projects	Nil	
2	Homelessness Strategy Update	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
3	Kerbside Waste Reform: Fortnightly Trial Update	Nil	
4	Sale of 498-514 Bell Street, Pascoe Vale South	Nil	
6	Mayoral Election Process	Nil	

Name and title of Council officer completing record: Anita Curnow, Acting Director Business Transformation

This form is kept in accordance with the Information Privacy Principles and Merri-bek City Council's Privacy Policy and practices as stated on Merri-bek's [website](#).

Record of Meeting

Meeting: Audit and Risk Committee Meeting

Date: 18 November 2025

Meeting time: 6.00 pm



This Record is kept in accordance with the Governance Rules adopted by Council most recently on 10 April 2024.

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.

Where minutes are kept of a Meeting and made available to the community, an additional record is not required to be kept.

Attendees	
Councillors	Cr Helen Davidson, Mayor Cr Ella Svensson
Apologies	Cr Helen Politis, Deputy Mayor
Council Staff (name and position)	Eamonn Fennessy, Acting Chief Executive Officer Anita Curnow, Acting Director Business Transformation Greg Rodwell, Acting Director City Infrastructure Stefan Grun, Acting Director Community Pene Winslade, Director Place and Environment Jemma Wightman, Chief Financial Officer Yvonne Callanan, Manager Governance and Strategy Robert Raiskums, Manager Information Technology Brian Harris, Manager People and Safety (online) Sophie Barison, Unit Manager Governance and Risk
External participants	John Watson, Chairperson Marilyn Kierney, Independent Member (online) Lisa Tripodi, Independent Member Jeff Rigby, Independent Member Andrew Zavitsanos, Crowe Colin Fairweather, Independent Member of the IT Steering Committee, Elevate Transformation Program

Items discussed	Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1 Declaration of interests and/or conflicts of interest		
2 CEO update		
3 Confirmation of minutes		

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 (list topics discuss, excluding welcome & next meeting)		Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
4	Confirmation of items asterixed for discussion		
5	Elevate Transformation Program Report		
6	Finance Management Report		
7	Audit Actions Report		
8	Management and Governance of the Use of Data, Information and Knowledge		
9	Memorandum of Audit Planning and Audits Completed		
10	Council Plan 2021-2025 – Fourth Year Implementation		
11	Risk Management Report		

Name and title of Council officer completing record:

Sophie Barison – Unit Manager Governance and Risk

This form is kept in accordance with the Information Privacy Principles and Merri-bek City Council's Privacy Policy and practices as stated on Merri-bek's [website](#).

Record of Meeting

Meeting: Planning Briefing

Date: 24 November 2025

Meeting time: 6:00pm



This Record is kept in accordance with the Governance Rules adopted by Council.

Rule 9.1 provides that a record of the matters discussed at all **Hearing of Submission Meetings, Advisory Committee Meetings** and **Councillor Briefings** organised or hosted by Council will be kept.

The record will include the attendees at the meeting, including the organisations represented by external presenters, the title of matters discussed and any conflicts of interest disclosed and whether the person with the conflict of interest left the meeting.

Attendees	
Councillors	<div>Cr Nat Abboud, Mayor</div> <div>Cr Jay Iwasaki, Deputy Mayor</div> <div>Cr Katherine Theodosios</div> <div>Cr Adam Pulford</div> <div>Cr Liz Irvin</div> <div>Cr Ella Svensson</div> <div>Cr Helen Politis</div>
Apologies	<div>Cr Sue Bolton</div> <div>Cr Oscar Yildiz JP</div> <div>Cr Chris Miles</div> <div>Cr Helen Davidson</div>
Council Staff (name and position)	<div>Pene Winslade – Director Place and Environment</div> <div>Phil Priest – Group Manager City Development</div> <div>Mark Hughes – Unit Manager Urban Planning</div> <div>Aileen Chin – Planning Coordinator</div> <div>Alex Osborne – Principal Urban Planner</div>
External participants	Nil

Items discussed		Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1	City Development Activity Report (Sept Qtr)	-	-
2	MPS/2025/364 – 139 Loongana Avenue, Glenroy	-	-
3	MPS/2025/289 – 2-4 McColl Court, Brunswick West	-	-
4	MPS/2024/648/A – 27 Breese Street, Brunswick	1 Cr Jay Iwasaki 2. Material 3. Nature of the conflict: Location and association with neighbours (former Objectors)	Yes

Name and title of Council officer completing record: Phil Priest, Group Manager City Development

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: Monday, 1 December 2025

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	
Councillors	<div>Cr Nat Abboud, Mayor</div> <div>Cr Jay Iwasaki, Deputy Mayor</div> <div>Cr Liz Irvin</div> <div>Cr Chris Miles</div> <div>Cr Helen Politis</div> <div>Cr Helen Politis</div> <div>Cr Adam Pulford</div> <div>Cr Ella Svensson</div> <div>Cr Katherine Theodosis</div>
Apologies	<div>Cr Sue Bolton</div> <div>Cr Oscar Yildiz JP</div> <div>Cr Helen Davidson</div>
Council Staff (name and position)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eamonn Fennessy, Acting Chief Executive Officer • Stefan Grun, Acting Director Community • Sue Vujcevic, Director Business Transformation • Greg Rodwell, Acting Director City Infrastructure • Pene Winslade, Director Place and Environment • Lachlan McGowan, Central Coburg Project Manager • Peter Sagar, Program Director Central Coburg • Lisa Dempster, Manager Cultural Development • Seamus Lowe, Unit Manager Property • Mike Collins, Principal Advisor Social and Affordable Housing • Alayna Chapman, Unit Manager Strategic Planning • Caden McCarthy, Manager City Design and Economy • Sandra Troise, Manager Amenity and Compliance • Kim Critchley, Unit Manager Aquatic and Leisure Services • Christina Grayland, Acting Manager Community Wellbeing • Jarryd Murphy, Senior Projects Manager Aquatics
External participants	Nil

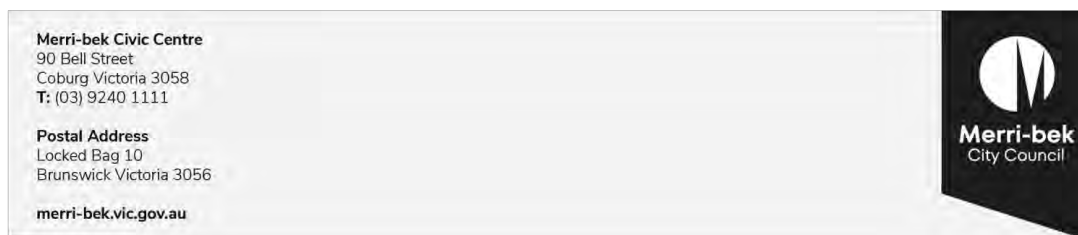
Items discussed		Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1	Central Coburg property matters		
2	Coburg Library Carpark		

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
3	Proposed Amendment to the Section 173 Agreement – Wilkinson Street, Brunswick Project		
4	Cat Confinement Support Program		
5	Aquatic and Leisure Strategy Review		

Name and title of Council officer completing record: Sue Vujcevic, 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](#).



XRef: D25/472284
Doc. No. D25/504030
Enq: B Hetherington

Greg Arnold
[REDACTED]

Dear Greg

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME ON NOTICE RESPONSE FROM OCTOBER 2025 COUNCIL MEETING

I write to you in response to your questions submitted to the 8 October Council meeting, as follows:

Investigation for Renewal of the Pascoe Vale Outdoor Pool

- **What is the scope of this investigation and what is the planned or expected outcome?**
- **What are the proposed steps of the investigation project and how will the principles of the Merri-bek Community Engagement Policy be applied for the project?**

At this stage, the project has not yet commenced. Our team is currently finalising a number of aquatic infrastructure commitments from the 2024/25 financial year, as well as some emergency works at some of our pools. These projects are in their final stages, and once complete, we will begin progressing the delivery of this year's scheduled works, including this important project.

Council will undertake a procurement process in line with its Procurement Policy to ensure transparency, and alignment with Council's strategic and operational objectives. As part of this process, Council will seek to engage a consultancy with demonstrated experience in the public aquatic facility space. The appointed consultants will also be provided with relevant background material, including previous investigative reports completed on the Pascoe Vale Outdoor Pool, to ensure an informed and comprehensive review.

I believe that my team are in contact with you regarding a response to a number of other related questions and are also arranging a meeting with a small group of your working group. These will be responded to separately and they will keep me updated on the outcomes.

If you require any further information, please don't hesitate to contact Bernadette Hetherington, Manager Community Wellbeing on [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Eamonn Fennessy

Director COMMUNITY
10 / 10 / 2025

Merri-bek City Council Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 - Year 4 Annual Review and Evaluation

	ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION	COMMENT	STATUS
OBJECTIVE 2.2: Ensure animal management officers have the skills necessary to support the community and effectively perform their regulatory role					
1.	Explore opportunities for ongoing training in partnership with the City of Darebin and City of Whittlesea	Ongoing	No. of training programs undertaken	Merri-bek hosted Occupational Violence Prevention Training which was attended by staff from Merri-bek, Whittlesea and Darebin Councils. Industry training is completed annually.	Completed
2..	Partner with City of Darebin and City of Whittlesea to hold an Animal Team Development Day	Annually	No. Animal Management team days delivered	Staff from the partner Councils participated in an Animal Team Development Day, held in March 2024 and hosted by Merri-bek.	Completed
3.	Maintain a training register for individual officers detailing completed and proposed training	Annually	Review of training register	Training register completed and maintained.	Completed
Programs to Promote and Encourage Responsible Pet Ownership and Compliance with Legislation					
OBJECTIVE 3.1&2: Promote responsible cat and dog ownership					
4.	Run a social media campaign to highlight the need for dogs to be socialised and receive training as required	Quarterly	Social media reach	Posts highlighting responsible pet ownership are put out regularly on our social media. Collectively our social media following is 30,000+. Posts targeting the need for dogs to be socialised and receive training were posted in December 2023. Postcards highlighting responsible pet ownership specific to dogs were also created in April 2025 and distributed at the Dog Walking in Merri-bek pop ups in May and June 2025. We have provided links on our website to information and resources prepared by RSPCA, LDH and Lort Smith	Completed
5.	Run a social media campaign about picking up after your dog	Quarterly	Complaint numbers & reach of social media campaign	Posts highlighting responsible pet ownership put out regularly on our social media. Collectively our social media following is 30,000+. Posts targeting picking up after your dog were posted in December 2023 and in February 2024.	Completed
6.	Audit the existing dog parks in terms of safety including	Annually	No. recommendation	Improvements and/or repairs are made as they are	Completed

Merri-bek City Council Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 - Year 4 Annual Review and Evaluation

	current fences and signage and making required improvements		s and improvements	identified e.g. installation of additional signage where existing signage is inadequate.	
7.	Attend Council run festivals and events where residents can meet the team and receive information on responsible pet ownership	Ongoing	No. participants	Representatives of the Animal Management Team attended several pop-ups about 'Dog Walking in Merri-bek' and the Domestic Animal Management Plan.	Completed
8.	Run a campaign about the importance of responsible pet ownership, sending information or QR codes for information out with renewal notices	Annually	No. nuisance complaints	The responsible pet ownership flyer was updated, refreshed, QR code added and sent it out with all renewal notices and new registrations. Social media campaigns have run throughout the year about responsible pet ownership. Registration renewal was promoted through a-boards, VMS board, stickers on Council vehicles, newsletters, posters in key Council facilities etc. We have provided links on our website to information and resources prepared by RSPCA, LDH and Lort Smith.	Completed
9.	Explore the development of webinars/educational videos in partnership with City of Darebin and City of Whittlesea and stakeholders on responsible pet ownership topics	Year 2 (deferred to Year 4)	No. participants	The City of Whittlesea created educational videos for residents around a number of animal management concerns and have shared these resources with Merri-bek.	Complete
10.	Partner with the City of Darebin and City of Whittlesea and local dog training businesses to encourage puppy/dog training and behaviour correction	Ongoing	Resources developed and shared on Council website	Representatives of the Animal Management Team attended several pop-ups and discussed training opportunities with residents, pointing them to local providers.	Complete
11.	Educate the community about their responsibilities if they find a lost animal	Annually	Social media reach	Posts highlighting responsible pet ownership are put out regularly on our social media. Information has been put up on our website about lost and found animals, including a link to the Pet Rescue page.	Completed
OBJECTIVE 3.3: Ensure adequate access to infrastructure/amenities for dogs					
12.	Review the need for additional dog parks as part of the refresh of the	Year 2 (deferred to Year 4)	Review completed	This was actioned as part of the Open Space Strategy which was adopted by Council	Completed

Merri-bek City Council Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 - Year 4 Annual Review and Evaluation

	Moreland Open Space Strategy (MOSS)			in April 2024 and through the implementation of the Dog Walking in Merri-bek Pilot, endorsed by Council at the July 2025 meeting.	
13.	Review Council order (on/off leash dog areas) as part of the refresh of the Moreland Open Space Strategy	Year 2 (deferred to Year 4)	Review completed	At the 9 July 2025 meeting Council endorsed the implementation of the Dog Walking in Merri-bek Pilot. The Council Order was reviewed as part of the Pilot.	Completed
14.	Identify suitable locations for dog poo bag dispensers	Ongoing	No. poo bag dispensers pre and post	Locations are considered as required or requested.	Completed
Programs to Address Overpopulation and High Euthanasia Rates					
OBJECTIVE 4.1: To decrease the number of stray, abandoned and unwanted cats					
15.	Partner with City of Darebin and City of Whittlesea to seek partnership/funding to conduct mobile desexing program	As grant funding is available	No. participants	Each of the partner Councils have been successful in securing State Government grants through the Targeted Cat Desexing Program. Merri-bek was awarded \$15,000 which will be used to bolster our ongoing desexing program which is now into its fifth consecutive year of operation. In 2025 this funding was used to fund free desexing at wat djerring Animal Facility for semi-owned cats, and funded 5 days of heavily subsidised desexing with The Vet Project, a mobile cat desexing van.	Completed
OBJECTIVE 4.2: To minimise the number of animals euthanised.					
16.	Consider extending the roster to cover after hours to reunite owners with their pets, based on data	As required	Hours amended according to demand and need	The core hours worked by the animal management team is 7.30am-6.00pm. We also have an after-hours service that seeks to reunite owners with their pets as well as responding to reports of dog attacks, stray animals etc. Regular reviews of the roster will take place as operational needs change.	Completed
17.	Encourage partnerships between shelters and rescue groups, through s. 84Y agreements	Ongoing	No. partnerships	Council has a contract with the City of Whittlesea for the provision of animal welfare services at the wat djerring Animal Facility. The City of Whittlesea partners with and has entered into section 84Y	Completed

Merri-bek City Council Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 - Year 4 Annual Review and Evaluation

				Agreements with a number of rescue groups. Merri-bek Council has separately entered into Section 84Y Agreements with a small number of rescue/welfare groups.	
18.	Partner with City of Darebin, City of Whittlesea and the EAWF to provide a cat desexing program	Ongoing	No. cats desexed	<p>Merri-bek has been running its own free cat desexing program since 2019. In the 2024-2025 financial year we provided free desexing for 172 cats. The program is continuing in the 2025-2026 financial year through partnerships with Cat Protection Society (CPS), Lost Dogs Home (LDH), Second Chance Animal Rescue (SCAR), and wat djerring Animal Facility. We are offering free desexing, microchipping and first year registration for concession card holders and a subsidised program (\$50) for non-concession card holders.</p> <p>Opportunities to partner with the cities of Whittlesea and Darebin to offer a joint desexing program will continue to be explored including opportunities to make joint grant applications. Each of the partner Councils have been successful in securing State Government grants through the Targeted Cat Desexing Program with Merri-bek being awarded \$15,000.</p>	Completed
OBJECTIVE 4.3: Promotion of cat containment					
19.	Run a campaign on social media about keeping cats out of others' properties	Annually	Social media reach	Council posts regularly about responsible cat ownership and keeping cats indoors. We have provided links on our website to information and resources prepared by RSPCA, LDH and Lort Smith. Our Animal Management team regularly engage with the	Completed

Merri-bek City Council Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 - Year 4 Annual Review and Evaluation

				public regarding cat containment also.	
Registration and Identification OBJECTIVE 5.1: Increase the number of cat and dog registrations					
20.	Promote registration through annual door knocks and communications e.g. variable message boards, a-frames, decals on vans	Annually	No. door knocks undertaken No. pets registered through door knock	We promoted the importance of pet registration throughout the year. We did this through social media posts and on hold phone messages, we conducted door knocks of properties, placed a-boards around the municipality, decals on Council vehicles, and attended pop-ups and festivals reminding residents to register their pets. We engaged with residents that failed to renew their registration by sending SMS, emails and reminder notices: by posting in newsletters and by calling residents. We have seen a significant increase in the number of renewals paid due to proactively engaging with resident and promoting the registration renewals.	Completed
21.	Partner with vets and key stakeholders to provide information to the community. Consider s. 84Y agreements with Vets to complete registrations	Annually	No. stakeholders engaged	Changes through the amendment of the Domestic Animals Act have meant 84Y agreements are no longer needed to allow vets to reunite animals. We are working with vets to increase communication and reporting of lost pets. Our desexing program partners (City of Whittlesea, CPS, SCAR, and LDH) provide information and assist residents with registration at the time of desexing.	Completed
22.	Promote registration discounts for concession card holders for desexed cats and dogs	Annually	No. discounted registrations	Merri-bek promotes its registration discounts on our website, social media and when residents interact with us face to face or over the telephone to register a new pet or renew an existing registration. We also provide free desexing, microchipping and first year registration for	Completed

Merri-bek City Council Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 - Year 4 Annual Review and Evaluation

				concession card holders through the desexing program.	
23.	Cross-reference microchip databases and Central Animal Records (CAR) information with current Council registration database	Annually	No. cats and dogs registered	We cross-reference our database with information obtained from CAR annually and write to residents that have a microchip but have not yet registered their pet.	Completed
Nuisance OBJECTIVE 6.1: Reduce the number of nuisance complaints that arise in the Municipality.					
24.	Review and adjust frequency of and increase patrols as required	Ongoing	No. patrols	Regular proactive patrols have been undertaken at parks, reserves and creeks. This is in response to Council staff observations and in response to complaints from the community. Patrols have been undertaken in the morning, evening and weekends. Patrol frequency and times/days adjust dependant on weather, season, demand and need. There has been an increase of officer presence and patrols at sporting fields and shared open spaces in response to increased complaints about dog and community use of shared open spaces.	Completed
25.	Run a program to promote exercising dogs to reduce barking complaints	Annually	No. barking complaints	We have redesigned and updated our barking dog booklet including suggestions on how to reduce barking. We have provided links on our website to information and resources prepared by RSPCA, LDH and Lort Smith.	Completed
OBJECTIVE 6.2: Reduce the number of instances of dog faeces being deposited in public space.					
26.	Review the number of waste bins located in highly frequented dog use areas and implement more as required	Annually	No. waste bins pre and post	Council tracks and respond to complaints lodged by residents about waste bins.	Completed
Dog Attacks OBJECTIVE 7.1: Decrease the number of confirmed dog attacks in the community					
27.	Provide proactive and visible patrols at dog off leash parks, creeks and reserves	Ongoing	No. patrols at off-leash parks No. official warnings/PINS issued	Regular proactive patrols have been undertaken at parks, reserves and creeks. This is in response to Council staff observations and in	Completed

Merri-bek City Council Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 - Year 4 Annual Review and Evaluation

				response to complaints from the community. Patrols have been undertaken in the morning, evening and weekends. Patrol frequency and times/days adjust dependant on weather, season, demand and need. Patrols are conducted out of a vehicle, on foot or on electric bikes which are used in parks, reserves, creeks and waterways.	
28.	Develop a system to capture and analyse the data to gain an understanding of trends relating to dog attacks. Implement strategies to address trends	Ongoing	System developed No. strategies implemented.	The questionnaire relating to dog attacks on our Customer Request System has been reviewed and changes made. The revised questionnaire allows us to gather additional information that highlights trends. This information is analysed using Power BI and assists in reviewing and implementing strategies to deal with dog attacks. Our GIS system has been updated to include information about where registered cats and dogs live. This will assist with dog attack investigations.	Completed
29.	Share case studies for best practice with the City of Darebin and City of Whittlesea	Ongoing	No. resources shared	Case studies are shared with partner council's when appropriate.	Completed
OBJECTIVE 7.2: Increase community awareness of how to report dog attacks					
30.	Partner with vets to notify Councils when they come across aggressive/risky dogs	Ongoing	No. notifications received	Council maintains good partnerships with local vets and encourages reporting of risky dogs.	Completed
Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs OBJECTIVE 8.1: Identify and register all declared dogs in Merri-bek					
31.	Ensure all declared dogs are recorded on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry (VDDR) and the VDDR is kept up to date	Ongoing	No. of dogs recorded	All declared dogs are recorded on the VDDR registry.	Completed
32.	Patrol industrial areas for guard dogs	Ongoing	No. patrols	Regular proactive patrols have been undertaken in industrial areas and in response to complaints.	Completed

Merri-bek City Council Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 - Year 4 Annual Review and Evaluation

OBJECTIVE 8.2: Ensure all declared dogs are compliant to relevant legislation and regulations					
33.	Conduct random property inspections of declared dogs to ensure compliance	Ongoing	No. random property checks	Inspections of all properties where known declared dogs are kept were conducted. Random inspections are carried out throughout the year.	Completed
34.	Partner with City of Darebin and City of Whittlesea to develop a standard operating procedure for checking property compliance and what to do if non-compliant	Year 1 (deferred to Year 4)	Procedure developed	Developed as part of Merri-bek's updated Animal Management Standard Operating Procedure.	Completed
35.	Partner with City of Darebin and City of Whittlesea to develop a consistent approach to declarations using the same point scoring matrix	Year 1 (deferred to Year 4)	Approach developed	Developed as part of Merri-bek's updated Animal Management Standard Operating Procedure.	Completed
Domestic Animal Businesses					
OBJECTIVE 9.1: Identify and register all Domestic Animal Businesses in the municipality					
36.	Identify businesses that should be registered Domestic Animal Businesses in the municipality and determine their registration status. Partner with Planning department to receive notification when a new animal related business is seeking a permit	Ongoing	No. Domestic Animal Businesses registered (100%)	We have audited and registered all known Domestic Animal Businesses. A referral system is in place to receive notification when a new animal related business is seeking a permit to operate within the municipality.	Completed
37.	Investigate any report of unregistered Domestic Animal Businesses	As required	No. reports investigated (100%)	Requests are investigated and acted upon within the allocated time frame.	Completed
OBJECTIVE 9.2: Annually inspect and audit all registered Domestic Animal Businesses					
38.	Conduct annual audits of all Domestic Animal Businesses within Merri-bek	Annually	No. audits conducted (100%)	We have audited and registered all known Domestic Animal Businesses.	Completed
39.	Where required, act promptly to address matters of non-compliance	As required	No. reports investigated (100%)	Requests are investigated and acted upon within the allocated time frame.	Completed
40.	Investigate and act upon public complaints about Domestic Animal Businesses	As required	No. reports investigated (100%)	Requests are investigated and acted upon within the allocated time frame.	Completed
OBJECTIVE 10.2: Emergency management planning for domestic animals (as part of Council's Municipal Emergency Management Plan)					
41.	Ensure animal management staff are involved in Council's Municipal Emergency Management Plan	Ongoing	Animal management addressed in the Municipal Emergency Management Plan.	The Animal Management team is involved in Council's Municipal Emergency Management planning and Animal Management Officers are aware of their duties to provide assistance if the need arises.	Completed

Merri-bek City Council Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 - Year 4 Annual Review and Evaluation

OBJECTIVE 10.3: Increase community awareness of the Animal Welfare Boarding Program					
42.	Promote the Animal Welfare Boarding Program to people experiencing family violence and relevant organisations	Ongoing	No. of participants	The Animal Welfare Boarding Program is promoted internally on Council's intranet, discussed with the Customer Service team and Animal Management team so they can make referrals and it is promoted amongst welfare agencies.	Completed
Annual Review of Plan and Annual Reporting OBJECTIVE 11.1: Comply with Section 68A(3)					
43.	Provide the Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan	Annually	Copy provided to Secretary	A copy of the Review and Evaluation document and the Council resolution will be sent to the Secretary post the Council decision in December 2025. There have been no amendments made to the Plan.	Completed
44.	Review the Domestic Animal Management Plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan	Annually	Plan reviewed annually	There have been no amendments made to the Plan.	Completed
45.	Publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in Council's Annual Report	Annually	Evaluation report published	Council's Annual Report includes an evaluation of the implementation of the Plan.	Completed
46.	Council will undertake a major review of the plan after four years	Year 4	Major review undertaken	The Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021–2025 has concluded, and the new Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025–2029 was adopted by Council at its November 2025 meeting.	Completed

7.6 CONTRACT EXTENSION: CONTRACT SS-08-2020 BANKING AND FINANCIAL SERVICES STATE PURCHASING CONTRACT

Director Business Transformation, Sue Vujcevic

Financial Services

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to extend the current contract with Westpac Banking Corporation (Westpac) (**Contractor**) under the State Purchasing contract SS-08-2020 for transactional banking services (**Contract**):
 - i. For a further two-year (2) term commencing 1 October 2026.
 - ii. For a maximum spend under the life of the contract of \$2,900,000 (excluding GST).
2. Notes that one further two-year option is available to extend under this contract and will not be entered into without further resolution from Council.
3. Notes there are currently no fossil-fuel free banking institutions that can meet Council's transactional banking needs.
4. Notes that the recommendation to continue engaging Westpac Banking Corporation partially does not align with the Environmental section of the Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) Procurement Considerations under Council's Procurement Policy 2025–2029.
5. Notes it will terminate the engagement with the Westpac Banking Corporation if it changes/reduces its public commitment to reduce thermal coal exposure to zero by 2030.
6. Notes it has committed through the Investment Policy to invest a minimum of 70 per cent of all short and long-term investments in green investments.

REPORT

Executive Summary

In November 2021, Council endorsed Westpac Banking Corporation (Westpac) as the preferred service provider to manage Council's transactional banking services. Council's current agreement with Westpac commenced on 1 October 2021 and is due to expire on 30 September 2026.

Officers recommend extending the contract for a further two years to 30 September 2028. The review of panel providers showed negligible differences in transactional costs. However, the costs and risks associated with transitioning to a new provider are significant, with estimated external costs of up to \$95,000 plus unbudgeted internal resourcing costs. Maintaining the arrangement with Westpac is therefore considered the lowest cost and risk option for Council.

This recommendation acknowledges that the banks appointed by the State Panel banks do not fully align with Council's Procurement Policy 2025–2029 and the objectives of the Fossil Fuel Divestment Strategy 2015–2025. To mitigate this, Council has consistently met its commitment to ensure that at least 70 per cent of all term deposits are held as green investments. The continuation of transactional services with Westpac does not affect these investment commitments.

Council will also maintain oversight of Westpac's commitments to phasing out thermal coal exposure, with a clear position that the contract will be terminated should the bank reduce or withdraw from its stated divestment commitments.

Previous Council Decisions

Banking and Financial Services State Purchase Contract –10 November 2021

That Council:

1. *Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to engage Westpac Banking Corporation (Westpac) (Contractor) under the State Purchasing contract SS-08-2020 for transactional banking services (Contract):*
 - i. *For a variable amount not to exceed \$1,300,000 (excluding GST)*
 - ii. *For a term commencing 1 October 2021 for an initial period of five (5) years.*
2. *Notes that a further two by two-year option to extend are available under this contract and will not be entered into without further resolution from Council.*
3. *Notes that the recommendation to engage Westpac Banking Corporation does not comply with the council's commitment to "excluding from future contracts, tenders or business dealings any companies involved in the Adani mine and associated rail infrastructure projects; and will be excluding from future contracts, tenders or business dealings from any companies involved in developing new coal mines." as required by the Council approved Procurement Policy 2021-2025.*
4. *Notes that Moreland will terminate the engagement with the Westpac Banking Corporation if it changes/reduces its public commitment to reduce thermal coal exposure to zero by 2030.*
5. *Notes that Council has committed through the Fossil Fuel Divestment Strategy to actively invest with fossil free financial institutions within the Investment Policy parameters and is consistently meeting the required target that ensures that a minimum of 70per cent of all term deposits held are a green investment.*

...

Fossil Fuel Divestment Options – 11 February 2015

That Council:

...

2. *Adopts a positive screening approach for Council's investment with financial institutions:*
 - a) *Actively invest with fossil free financial institutions within the Merri-bek City Council Investment Policy parameters;*
 - b) *Advocate for fossil free financial institutions to improve their credit rating and financial rate of return;*
 - c) *Work with large banks to improve their CSR and fossil free performance.*

...

Fossil Fuel Divestment – 8 October 2014

That Council:

1. *Commits to not directly invest in any company for whom the extraction, production, refining, or distribution of fossil fuels forms a core part of their business strategy, nor in any company whose principal business involves providing infrastructure or services to companies previously mentioned.*
2. *Affirms its decision to limit the current financial services contract to three years and deny any automatic renewals to the present provider (the Commonwealth Bank) if it has not divested from Fossil Fuels at the expiry of the initial three-year term.*

...

1. Policy Context

Procurement Policy 2025-2029

The Procurement Policy 2025–2029 was approved at the Council Meeting in June 2025.

As per the policy, Council aims to enhance achievement of the Council's objectives such as sustainable and socially responsible procurement, supporting local economies and obtaining value for money, leading to a better result in the provision of goods, services and works for the benefit of the community

The report considers the ability for the commitment to be met given the prevalence of indirect banking services to organisations in the Fossil Fuel Industry.

Fossil Fuel Divestment Strategy 2015–2025

Merri-bek City Council is concerned about the impact of the fossil fuel industry on greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, Council recognises the role of financial institutions in financing new fossil fuel projects in Australia.

This Strategy guides how Council invests its funds to ensure that it does not support the fossil fuel industry directly and influences investment by financial institutions away from the fossil fuel industry.

The Strategy outlines four specific strategic goals:

1. Continue to maintain ZERO direct investments (e.g. shares) in companies that finance fossil fuel projects
2. Actively invest with non-fossil fuel aligned Authorised Deposit-taking Institutions (ADIs) within the Merri-bek City Council Investment Policy parameters
3. Advocate for fossil free financial institutions to improve their credit rating and financial rate of return
4. Work with large banks to improve their CSR and fossil free performance

The report considers the ability for the objectives of the Divestment Strategy to be met given the prevalence of indirect banking services to organisations in the Fossil Fuel Industry.

Council has continued to advocate and work with our current and previous banking service providers to highlight the importance of this issue. It should be noted that all of the Major Banks have committed to the phasing out of services but are not yet fully divested at this time.

Local Government Act 2020

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 conduct 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

The Council's current services agreement with Westpac for the provision of banking services commenced on 1 October 2021. Rather than conducting a new competitive tender process, the Council opted to engage Westpac under the terms of the State Purchasing Contract – SPC SS-08-2020, which was concluded by the Victorian State Government. Banking Service required of Council include:

- cash management
- account management services

- council payment services
- receipting services
- Other banking services (not defined)
- Over-counter payment (added September 2017).

This followed a previous extension of Contract 620T until 30 September 2021.

The Victorian State Government (Department of Treasury and Finance, DTF) concluded the tender process for its Banking and Financial Services State Purchase Contract (SPC) in mid-August 2021. Following a competitive procurement process, the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (CBA), National Australia Bank (NAB) and Westpac Banking Corporation (Westpac) were appointed as the preferred panel of suppliers.

The contract was intended for five years, commencing 1 October 2021 and concluding on 30 September 2026.

The tender complies with section 109(1) of the Local Government Act 2020. However, the successful suppliers do not comply with elements of the Merri-bek Procurement Policy 2025–2029 and the objectives outlined in the Fossil Fuel Divestment Strategy 2015–2025.

3. Issues

Due to the complex nature of Council's transactional banking requirements, Council is recommending the appointment of a banking institution that does not comply with elements of the Merri-bek 2025-2029 Procurement Policy and objectives outlined in the Fossil Fuel Divestment Strategy 2015-2025.

While Suncorp Bank, Bendigo and Adelaide Bank, and Bank of Queensland (BOQ) align with the policy objectives, none are able to deliver transactional banking services at the level of complexity required by Council.

Table 1: Assessment of Fossil Fuel Compliance as reported on the Market Forces Website

Bank	Last Published Fossil Fuel Statement per Market Forces Website
ANZ Group Non-compliant	Committed \$2.6 billion in finance to fossil fuels in 2023, with a total of \$35 billion committed since 2016. Its policy is criticized for having loopholes that allow the financing of companies with fossil fuel expansion plans until at least October 2025.
National Australia Bank (NAB) Non-compliant	NAB committed \$2.4 billion in finance to fossil fuels in 2023. As of September 2024, NAB reported a total fossil fuel exposure of \$4 billion, although it has been criticised for not disclosing its exposure across the full fossil fuel value chain, including coal terminals and gas pipelines. From October 2025, NAB has stated it will require Paris-aligned transition plans from its fossil fuel clients. However, until that time, it remains open to financing new coal, oil and gas projects.
Westpac Non-compliant	Committed over AU\$1 billion in finance to fossil fuels in 2023. Its total reported fossil fuel exposure is \$9.2 billion (as of September 2024). Like its peers, Westpac is under pressure to close loopholes in its lending policy.
Commonwealth Bank (CBA) Non-compliant	Committed \$853.2 million in finance to fossil fuels in 2023. CBA implemented a 2024 policy update that has restricted its lending to fossil fuel expansion in a "huge win." However, Market Forces states remaining loopholes mean it continues to finance climate-wrecking expanders like Glencore.

Bank	Last Published Fossil Fuel Statement per Market Forces Website
Macquarie Bank Non-compliant	Committed \$1.3 billion in finance to fossil fuels in 2023. The bank is criticized for its increased oil and gas lending and for quitting the UN-convened Net Zero Banking Alliance in early 2025. Its latest reported exposure (FY23) was \$2 billion (oil and gas/coal).
Suncorp Bank Compliant	No record of funding fossil fuel projects since 2016. The bank's position is: "We don't lend to coal, gas or oil extraction or fossil fuel electricity generation."
Bendigo and Adelaide Bank Compliant	No record of funding fossil fuel projects since 2016 (Funding: \$0 in 2023). Its explicit commitment is: "Our Bank does not and will not provide finance directly to projects or large scale electricity generation in the following sectors: Coal; Coal seam gas; Crude Oil; Natural gas; Native forest logging."
Bank of Queensland (BOQ) Compliant	No record of funding fossil fuel projects since 2016 (Funding: \$0 in 2023). BOQ states that its lending portfolio has minimal exposure to fossil fuel extraction equipment and no exposure to fossil fuel power generation.
ING (International with Australian Retail Presence) Non-compliant	ING is listed among the major international banks with a retail presence in Australia that provided finance to fossil fuels in 2023. It formed part of the group of international banks that collectively provided AU\$66.2 billion in fossil fuel finance globally during that year. ING continues to fund expansion projects in coal, oil and gas.
Heritage Bank Non-compliant	No record of funding fossil fuel projects since 2016. Its statement notes that as a mutual bank, it does not lend directly to large corporate entities in the fossil fuel sector. However, it lacks transparency in emissions reporting and does not have a fossil fuel exclusion policy, leaving room for improvement in its sustainability practices.

The three banks in the State Purchase Contract (SPC) have made the below climate statements:

Table 2: Public statements of Climate Targets as reported on the Market Forces Website.

Bank	Last published Climate promises per Market Forces Website
Commonwealth Bank of Australia	We are committed to playing our part in limiting climate change in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement and supporting the responsible global transition to net zero emissions by 2050
National Australia Bank	We are aligning our business with the goals of the Paris Agreement: to keep global warming to less than two degrees Celsius, striving for no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and supporting a just transition to a net zero emissions economy by 2050.
Westpac	We are committed to managing our business in alignment with our support for the Paris Climate Agreement and the need to transition to a net zero emissions economy by 2050.

Costs associated with Transition to a new banking provider

There are considerable costs and risk that need to be managed if and when the Council transitions to a new banking provider. Majority of these costs will relate to configuration changes to the systems that generate payment files and direct debit services. These systems include Payroll, NAV (Finance system) and Pathway.

The estimated costs of transition to a new transactional banking provider could be as high as \$95,000 (external costs).

Social / Environmental / Local Implications

The Westpac services will be used for our transactional everyday banking. Surplus funds are invested in line with Council's investment policy.

Council has committed through the Fossil Fuel Divestment Strategy to actively invest with fossil free financial institutions within the Investment Policy parameters.

Currently, Council has committed to ensuring that a minimum of 70% of all term deposits held are a *green* investment.

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

This report has been prepared based on information provided by managers and reviewed by the Chief Financial Officer.

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 funds required to action this resolution is included in the adopted budget as part of normal banking services.

At the time of preparing the report, the contract spend to date (1 October 2021 – 31 October 2025) was \$1,288,000 (excluding GST). This report is seeking a maximum spend of \$2.9 million which allows approximately \$1.6 million for the remaining life of the contract, including this extension and the potential second extension option.

A review of the costs associated with all panel service providers found that the difference in transactional costs between them was negligible compared with the costs of transitioning. When factoring in the additional costs involved in switching providers, the recommendation to maintain the relationship with Westpac represents the lowest-cost option.

7. Implementation

The below outlines the next steps for Council Officers:

- Council to continue the contract arrangement (SS-08-2020) with Westpac for an additional two-year term, maintaining transactional banking services on a business-as-usual basis.
- Council will continue to meet (and aim to exceed) the investment commitments through the Fossil Fuel Divestment Strategy ensuring that a minimum of 70 per cent of all term deposits are held in a green investment.

Attachment/s

There are no attachments for this report.

7.7 CONTRACT VARIATION: RFT-2025-1 DUNSTAN RESERVE CHILDCARE CENTRE EXPANSION

Acting Director City Infrastructure, Greg Rodwell

Capital Works Planning and Delivery

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Approves an increase in the total contract sum for Contract RFT-2025-1 Dunstan Reserve Childcare Centre Expansion from \$2,467,079 to \$2,720,848 (excluding GST), for additional scope of works that arose during construction, noting that:
 - a) This proposed variation of \$253,769 (excluding GST) relates to:
 - Minor design changes required by relevant authorities
 - Additional temporary works required to maintain kindergarten operations
 - Additional works to the existing building due to latent conditions
 - Known but not yet costed variations due to latent conditions
 - b) The increase of \$253,769 will bring the variation allowance to a total of 10.3 per cent of the contract value
 - c) The contract variation is within the approved project budget of \$3,643,400 in the current capital works program.
2. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to approve the contract variation and related documentation as identified in point 1.

REPORT

Executive Summary

In August 2025, Council awarded the Contract RFT-2025-1 Dunstan Reserve Childcare Centre Expansion to Notion Partners for a lump sum of \$2,467,079 (excluding GST).

Construction commenced on 7 October 2025 and is scheduled for completion in June 2026.

This report seeks Council approval for a contract variation valued at \$253,769 (excl GST), addressing latent conditions, additional kindergarten operational requirements, and minor design changes required by relevant requirements. The key factor to the variation is a result of the significant amount of termite damage to the existing building found during the demolition stage. This amount includes some known variations which officers have reviewed and several additional issues identified but have not yet been fully costed.

The proposed variations do not exceed the total project budget amount of \$3,643,400.

Previous Council Decisions

RFT-2025-1 Dunstan Reserve Childcare Centre Expansion – 13 August 2025

That Council:

1. *Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to:*
 - a) *Make a formal offer to Notion Partners - ABN 30 328 629 266 (Contractor) to award to the Contractor contract RFT-2025-1 Dunstan Reserve Childcare Centre Expansion (Contract) on the following terms and otherwise subject to and in accordance with paragraph 1(b) of this Resolution for the lump sum of \$2,467,079.00 (excluding GST).*

- b) *Negotiate and finalise the terms of the Contract between Council and the 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:*
 - a) *Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to execute the Contract and any required documentation for the Contract; and*
 - b) *Advises all tenderers of Council's decision in relation to the Contract.*

1. Policy Context

This report is in keeping with Council's commitment to accountability and sound financial management. Contract variations exceeding Council's delegation to the CEO require Council approval.

2. Background

In August 2025, Council approved the award of Contract RFT-2025-1 Dunstan Reserve Childcare Centre Expansion to Notion Partners for a contract sum of \$2,467,079 (excluding GST).

Construction commenced on 7 October 2025 and is scheduled for completion in June 2026.

During construction, a number of minor changes to the work were required in response to latent conditions, authority requirements and kindergarten operational requirements. Notably, the presence of live termites and a significant amount of termite damage to the existing building were discovered during the demolition. Additional work is required to rectify the existing building issues.

This report seeks approval for a variation to the contract to rectify the issues and complete the remaining works associated with this project.

Details of variations for Contract RFT-2025-1

Item	Cost (GST excl)
Original contract sum RFT-2025-1 (incl provisional)	\$2,467,079
Variation requested – including anticipated variations (10.3% of original contract sum)	\$253,769
Proposed total contract sum RFT-2025-1-	\$2,720,848

3. Issues

There have been four main types of issues leading to variations for Contract RFT-2025-1:

Minor design changes due to authority requirements

Melbourne Water's flood zone approval, building over easement approval and planning permit were required for the project. Several minor changes to the design were made post tender to satisfy authority requirements.

These changes include:

- Arborist supervision to excavation works.
- Minor adjustment to veranda size.
- Replacement of standard concrete footpath next to the car park with permeable concrete.

Additional temporary works to maintain kindergarten operations

Dunstan Reserve Childcare Centre will remain fully operational for the duration of construction. A waiver licence from the Department of Education is required to ensure the kindergarten remains safe and functional throughout the works

Notion Partners is required to undertake additional temporary works, including:

- Power, water and sewer connections for the temporary children's toilet facility.
- Construction of compliant steps with balustrades to the temporary buildings.
- Provision of internet services to the portable kindergarten office.
- Provide an additional gate and fencing at the temporary kindergarten entry.
- Relocation of the security pad and system to the temporary office.

Additional scope of work due to latent condition

Live termites and significant termite damage were discovered in the existing building during demolition. In accordance with engineering instructions, the builder installed temporary propping to stabilise the structure. Additional termite investigation, treatment and replacement of termite-damaged building elements are required to be undertaken.

Beyond termite-related issues, the builder has identified other defects within the existing building. Additional rectification works are required to address structural issues and to install roof insulation.

Given the staged delivery of the project, further termite damage may be discovered as new areas become accessible. This will be reassessed when children are relocated to the new kindergarten room.

Other known but not yet costed variations

Several additional issues have been identified but have not yet been fully costed. These include insufficient roof insulation and minor structural issues within the existing building, and additional arborist supervision requirements. These items have been included in this variation to prevent delays and expedite the construction process.

The cost increases are summarised in the table below:

Type of Variation	Variation Amount (excl GST)
Minor design changes due to authority requirements	\$6,353
Additional temporary works to maintain kindergarten operations	\$15,916
Additional scope of work due to latent condition	\$181,500
Other known but not yet costed variation	\$50,000
Total	\$253,769

Social / Environmental / Local Implications

The Dunstan Reserve Childcare Centre Expansion project will benefit local families by providing a new kindergarten room with additional student places.

Notion has committed to engaging the locally based organisation Youthworx to assist with the project and has also sourced signage and PPE from the Indigenous-owned company Panku Safety Solutions Pty Ltd. Additionally, Notion has made a deliberate effort to foster an inclusive work environment by employing an individual recovering from a stroke.

Human Rights Consideration

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

4. Community Consultation and Engagement

The community consultation and engagement process for the kindergarten expansion project was completed during the early design phase. This report seeks approval for a financial variation to a Council-approved contract and does not require further community consultation or engagement.

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

The proposed contract variation as recommended by the officers will take the total value of the contract to \$2,720,848 (GST exclusive).

The total approved budget for this project in the Capital works plan is \$3,643,400 (GST exclusive). The additional funds required for the proposed contract variation are within the approved project budget.

Budget and Expenditure	Amount (excluding GST)
Approved Capital Works Budget	\$3,643,400
Less	
Project expenditure to date (excl Construction Contract)	\$270,000
Total Available Budget	\$3,373,400
Less	
Original contract sum	\$2,467,079
<i>Recommended contract variation (10.3% of contract sum)</i>	\$253,769
Committed cost (design, superintendent, authority)	\$150,000
Provision for unforeseen costs	\$150,000
Other costs outside of the current contract	\$352,552

7. Implementation and Timeline

Upon Council's approval of the contract variation, the variation will be executed, and project works will continue. Construction is expected to be completed in June 2026, subject to the identification of any further latent conditions. A subsequent 12-month defect liability period will apply.

Attachment/s

There are no attachments for this report.

7.8 CONTRACT AWARD: RFT-2025-46 WEST STREET SHOPPING STRIP RENEWAL PROJECT

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade

City Design and Economy

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to:
 - a) Make a formal offer to Multipro Civil Pty Ltd (**Contractor**) to award the Contractor contract **RFT-2025-46** for the **West Street Shopping Strip Improvement (Contract)** on the following terms and otherwise subject to and in accordance with paragraph 1(b) of this Resolution:
 - i. For the maximum lump sum of \$1,705,503 plus provisional sums of \$255,000, totalling \$1,960,503 (all figures excluding GST).
 - b) Negotiate and finalise the terms of the Contract between Council and the 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:
 - a) Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to execute the Contract and any required documentation for the Contract; and
 - b) Advises all tenderers of Council's decision in relation to the Contract.
3. Endorses, in accordance with the Road Management Act 2004, the removal of eleven car parking spaces from the West Street Shopping Strip to facilitate the essential safety improvements associated with the project.

REPORT

Executive summary

This report seeks the appointment of the preferred contractor, Multipro Civil Pty Ltd, for the construction of the West Street Shopping Strip Improvement in Hadfield.

Council undertook the design for streetscape and public realm improvements during 2023-24 through multiple stages of community, trader and stakeholder engagement, as part of the Shopping Strip Renewal Program. The resulting plan will deliver significant community benefit including pedestrian safety and access upgrades, new street furniture, landscaping and tree planting. While every effort has been made to retain carparking numbers at the shopping strip, some essential safety improvements result in the need to remove eleven car parking spaces. The total project budget over multiple years, including design is \$2.4 million.

A request for tender was released on 20 September 2025. The tender closed on 22 October 2025, and six conforming tenders were received. The tenders were evaluated, and Multipro Civil Pty Ltd has been identified as the preferred tenderer, achieving the highest score through the evaluation process and representing best value for money for Council.

The tender complies with Section 109(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Previous Council decisions

West Street Shopping Strip Streetscape Renewal Project, Round 2 Engagement Outcomes – 14 February 2024

That Council:

- 1. Notes the outcomes of the Round 2 Community engagement activities.*
- 2. Endorses the proposed next steps to develop a final concept plan.*

West Street Shopping Strip Streetscape Renewal Project – 20 June 2023

That Council:

- 1. Notes the outcomes of the Round 1 Community Engagement activities and the findings of the Traffic and Parking Study.*
- 2. Endorses the proposed next steps to develop a concept plan for renewal works, with Round 2 engagement outcomes provided in a future report to Council expected December 2023.*

1. Policy Context

Merri-bek Procurement Policy

This report is in keeping with Council's commitment to accountability and sound financial management. It also addresses Section 109(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* which requires Council to conduct 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), and Council's Procurement Policy.

Council Plan

The project supports the implementation of multiple themes and strategic objectives of the Council Plan 2025–2029 including:

Theme 1: Care for nature and climate resilience

1.1 Cool our city through planting and protecting canopy trees, increasing permeable surfaces, greening and beautifying our public and open spaces and optimising water capture and re-use to support plant growth.

Theme 3: Beautiful and liveable city

3.3 Ensure clean, safe, and inviting spaces and vibrant places, promoting responsible and civic engagement and greater neighbourhood pride, usage, and social connections.

3.7 Design, approve and develop public places that and promote universal access and personal safety for all.

Theme 4: Thriving economy and culture

4.2 Invest in great public spaces and streetscapes so they are accessible, clean, safe, and appealing and support vibrant activity centres and precincts and strengthen community connections.

4.3 Revitalise local shopping precincts by beautifying streetscapes, activating local community events, removing graffiti, installing public art, and improving amenity to create beautiful, accessible centres

Shopping Strip Renewal Policy

The upgrade for West Street Shopping Strip is part of Council's Shopping Strip Renewal Policy 2015 - 2025 (SSRP). The policy guides Council with key priorities and focuses on improving public realm infrastructure, to support business performance, and to activate the public spaces within local shopping strips.

2. Background

The purpose of the report is to award a tender for construction of West Street Shopping Strip Improvement to the preferred contractor, Multipro Civil Pty Ltd.

West Street shopping strip plays an important role as a busy neighbourhood hub to the surrounding suburbs of Hadfield and Glenroy, providing a mix of local goods and services. The improvement works will deliver pedestrian safety and access upgrades, new street furniture, landscaping and tree planting to improve the amenity, vitality and sustainability of the shopping strip.

Tender process

The tender was released on 20 September 2025. It was also advertised in *The Age* newspaper. The tender period closed on 22 October 2025, and six conforming tenders were received from the following contractors:

- CDN Constructors Pty Ltd
- Cole Civil Pty Ltd
- Evergreen Pty Ltd
- Kaizen Pty Ltd
- Multipro Civil Pty Ltd
- TDL Contractors Pty Ltd

Tenders were evaluated in accordance with Council's Procurement Policy and the approved Procurement and Probity Plan developed for this project. Tender evaluation criteria included cost, capacity, capability, social, economic and environmental sustainability considerations.

In assessing the tenders, consideration was given to the following predefined evaluation criteria:

Evaluation Criteria	Weighting
Risk/Compliance	Pass/fail
Price	40%
Capability, Experience & Past Performance	15%
Works Program and Methodology	15%
Quality	15%
Customer Service	5%
Social Sustainability	2.5%
Economic Sustainability	2.5%
Environmental Sustainability	5%

Membership of the tender evaluation panel was as follows.

Title	Speciality	Role
Unit Manager Urban Design	Project Manager (Chair)	Full voting
Senior Urban Designer	Generalist	Full voting
Senior Transport Engineer	Transport	Full voting
Principal Urban Designer	Generalist	Advisory
Senior Procurement Partner	Procurement	Advisory

The tender evaluation process identified Multipro Civil Pty Ltd as the preferred tenderer based on the results of the evaluation matrix, included within the Tender Recommendation Report, and attached as **Confidential Attachment 1**.

Interviews and reference checks were undertaken with the two highest scoring tenderers, Multipro Civil Pty Ltd and Kaizen Pty Ltd. Following this process Multipro Civil Pty Ltd was the preferred tenderer.

Multipro Civil Pty Ltd have previously undertaken civil works for Merri-bek and other Councils and successfully delivered the works to a high standard.

3. Issues

Collaboration

Section 109(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires that any Council report that recommends entering into a procurement agreement must include information about any opportunities for collaboration with other Councils or public bodies.

Under this contract there are no such opportunities as it is a locally based stand-alone public space construction project for which the onsite construction services are not provided by other Councils or public bodies.

Community impact

The project will enhance the amenity and accessibility of the West Street shopping strip, benefiting the local community and all visitors. Additional space for seating, gathering and outdoor dining will provide opportunities for more social interaction and connection. Combined, these will enhance the local identity and sense of place for West Street Shopping Strip.

Multipro Civil Pty Ltd contribute to the community through sponsorship of sports clubs and volunteering labour and plants to a Land Care group. Additional labour and suppliers will be sourced locally to the project wherever possible.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

The project incorporates passive irrigation, using kerb inlets to direct stormwater to garden bed areas. The planting of canopy trees will contribute to a reduction in the urban heat island effect.

Multipro Civil Pty Ltd has an Environmental Management Policy in place. Sustainability initiatives currently implemented in their offices include solar panels and battery storage, and GPS efficiency tracking of plant and operations. All materials demolished and removed from the site will be separated, sorted and recycled, and recycled products will be use in the new construction wherever possible.

Economic sustainability implications

Shopping strip improvements will support the economic vibrancy of the West Street shopping strip, making it a more attractive and pleasant place for people to visit and linger. The project has also included some direct business support initiatives, including enhancements to ten shopfronts, completed in early 2025.

The construction period will mean some disruption for businesses, but careful phasing of works and direct communication with the traders will aim to minimise this impact.

Multipro Civil Pty Ltd is based in the NCA and works with multiple sub-contractors / suppliers also based in Merri-bek.

Parking reduction

During the two rounds of community engagement which shaped the design for the works, the importance of car parking to the function of the West Street shopping strip was a key concern. As a result, every effort was made throughout the design process to retain carparking to the greatest extent possible, while balancing the basic safety and accessibility needs of the community.

The Parking Study undertaken in March 2023 found that while parking within West Street's service road is at capacity at peak times, there is parking capacity in nearby side streets, requiring a short walk to the shops.

The Draft Concept Plan showed a reduction of six carparks to incorporate space for safe pedestrian crossings. Through the detailed design phase, a Road Safety Audit was conducted and Department of Transport and Planning approval sought. This led to a requirement that a further five spaces be removed to meet sightline and offset requirements, resulting in a total reduction of eleven carparking spaces.

Under the Road Management Act 2004, Council is responsible for parking, except for clearways on arterial roads. Council's approval is required to remove or modify parking associated with these works.

Human Rights consideration

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

4. Community consultation and engagement

The design for the West Street Shopping Strip Improvement project has been shaped by two rounds of extensive community and stakeholder engagement during 2023 and 2024. The results of this engagement, documenting community priorities and feedback were reported to Council in June 2023 and February 2024. The Final Plan for the works is provided in **Attachment 2**.

Communications

During construction there will be frequent communication to nearby residents, shoppers and businesses on the timing and progress of works. This will consist of signs on site and letterbox drops to keep stakeholders informed of the construction program.

Multipro Civil Pty Ltd will communicate directly with impacted businesses and traders to minimise disruption caused by the works.

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

A budget of \$2.43 m was allocated to this project over six years (2021-22 to 2026-27), with 2025-26 being the fifth year. A total of \$0.744 m has been expended on design over the five years. The remaining allocated budget is \$2.1 m in 2025-26. The total construction cost is estimated at \$1.951 m (excluding GST).

The table below shows the breakdown of the project budget for the works.

Element	\$ (excluding GST)
2021-22 actuals (design)	\$65,624
2022-23 actuals (design)	\$25,185
2023-24 actuals (design)	\$97,756
2024-25 actuals (design)	\$118,534
2025-26 revised forecast (construction)	\$1,121,000
2026-27 adopted budget carry forward into 2026-27 (construction)	\$1,000,000
Total allocated budget	\$2,428,098
<u>Funding source</u>	

Element	\$ (excluding GST)
Council	\$2,428,098
Total funding source	\$2,428,098
<u>Less</u>	
Actual spend to date	\$319,493
Expected expenditure for Melbourne Water asset survey	\$8,000
Expected expenditure for Telstra asset adjustment works	\$75,000
Expected expenditure for Yarra Valley Water fire hydrant works	\$20,000
Recommended tender award RFT-2025-46 West Street Shopping Strip Improvement Tender Lump sum amount	\$1,705,503
Recommended tender award RFT-2025-46 West Street Shopping Strip Improvement Provisional sum	\$255,000
Allocation for unforeseen circumstances and/or latent condition	\$45,102

One year (52 weeks) of landscape maintenance is included in the Fixed Lump Sum. After this establishment period, the maintenance responsibilities will be handed over to Council. There will be a slight increase in ongoing maintenance requirements for the shopping strip compared to current services, which relate to:

- A larger area of garden bed requiring maintenance
- An increase in the amount of seating / street furniture requiring maintenance

Other services will remain consistent with current programs, including waste collection and street cleansing.

7. Implementation

It is proposed that the CEO be authorised to do all things necessary to execute the contract and any other required documentation.

Works are planned to commence in January 2026 and anticipated to be complete by September 2026.

Attachment/s

- 1 RFT-2025-46 - Tender Recommendation Report D25/607591

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.

- 2 [📄](#) West Street Shopping Strip Improvement - Final Plan, September 2025 D25/554045

IMPROVING THE WEST STREET SHOPPING STRIP, HADFIELD FINAL CONCEPT PLAN - SEPTEMBER 2025



Merri-bek Language Link

廣東話	9280 1910	हिंदी	9280 1918
Italiano	9280 1911	普通话	9280 0750
Ελληνικά	9280 1912	ਪੰਜਾਬੀ	9280 0751
عربي	9280 1913		
Türkçe	9280 1914	All other languages	
Tiếng Việt	9280 1915		9280 1919

7.9 CONTRACT AWARD: RFT-2025-48 ROAD RECONSTRUCTION NORTHUMBERLAND ROAD, PASCOE VALE (FAWKNER ROAD TO LONGVIEW STREET)

Acting Director City Infrastructure, Greg Rodwell

Capital Works Planning and Delivery

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to:
 - a) Make a formal offer to **MJ Construction Group Pty Ltd and ACN 092 432 730 (Contractor)** to award the Contractor contract **RFT-2025-48 Road Reconstruction Northumberland Road, Pascoe Vale (Fawkner Road to Longview Street) (Contract)** on the following terms and otherwise subject to and in accordance with paragraph 1(b) of this Resolution:
 - i. For the total Contract value of \$857,557.00 (excluding GST), comprising of fixed lump sum of \$670,467.00 (excluding GST) and provisional amount of \$187,090.00 (excluding GST).
 - b) Negotiate and finalise the terms of the Contract between Council and the 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:
 - a) Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to execute the Contract and any required documentation for the Contract; and
 - b) Advises all tenderers of Council's decision in relation to the Contract.

Refers the budget savings of \$353,393.00 to the quarterly review process.

REPORT

Executive Summary

The road reconstruction of Northumberland Road, Pascoe Vale (Fawkner Road to Longview Street), has been included in the 2025–2026 Capital Works Program under the Roads and Carparks Program. The project forms part of Council's current Development Contributions Plan (DCP).

The scope of works includes the installation of underground drainage pipes and associated pits, reconstruction of the existing concrete kerb and channel, vehicle crossings, footpaths, and drainage upgrade.

Following the tender evaluation process, MJ Construction Group Pty Ltd has been identified as the preferred tenderer based on the strength of their submission. Subject to contract award on 10 December 2025, the contractor has confirmed readiness to commence offsite preparatory works from 19 January 2026. The construction of this project will commence after the completion of the Devon Road reconstruction.

MJ Construction Group has successfully delivered projects of similar scale and complexity for Merri-bek and other councils, with strong performance outcomes. Onsite construction is scheduled to begin in late January 2026 and is expected to be completed over a three-month period by mid-April 2026 (weather permitting). The works will be delivered in two distinct sections to minimise disruption to residents and local traffic.

The tender complies with section 109(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Previous Council Decisions

There has been no prior Council decision in relation to this specific contract or project.

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

The purpose of the report is to award a tender to a suitably qualified contractor to undertake the Road Reconstruction of Northumberland Road, Pascoe Vale (Fawkner Road to Longview Street) as per the detailed drawings and specifications.

The tender was advertised via Council Procurement portal on 20 September 2025, inviting tenderers via the e-tender portal from suitably experienced contractors to undertake the works.

Tender was released on 20 September 2025 and closed at 2pm on Tuesday 14 October 2025, with tenders received from following 8 contractors. All 8 tenderers were deemed conforming.

	Tenderers	ABN
1	ADP Constructions Pty Ltd	46 118 588 097
2	CDN Construction Pty Ltd	62 884 294 341
3	Merlo Civil and Concreting	18 150 942 920
4	GP Bluestone Pty Ltd	21 664 700 435
5	Kaizen Civil Pty Ltd	18 619 423 068
6	MJ Construction Group Pty Ltd	56 092 432 730
7	Melbourne Civil Works - Salah	28 347 242 302
8	TDL Contractors	76 091 395 210

Tender Evaluation

The tenders were evaluated in accordance with Council's Procurement Policy, at the time of tendering and in accordance with the approved Procurement Evaluation and Probity Plan for this project.

The tender evaluation criteria included cost, work program, working methodology, capability, capacity, experience and past performance, complete project management plan, customer service, social, environmental, and economic sustainability considerations.

The conforming tender submissions were evaluated in accordance with Council's Procurement Policy, at the time of tendering.

The following is a breakdown of the Evaluation Criteria applicable to this procurement project.

Criteria	Weighting
Cost	45%
Work Program	3%
Work Methodology and Staging Plan	4%
Capability	4%
Experience and Past Performance	4%
Capacity	5%
Complete Project Management Plan	10%
Customer Service	7%
Social Sustainability	5%
Economic Sustainability	4%
Environmental Sustainability	4%
Environmentally sustainable construction Options	5%
Total Scores	100%

The membership of the tender evaluation panel was as follows.

Title	Generalist or Nominated Speciality	Full Voting / Advisory Member
Team Leader Roads Projects	Engineering Services (Chair)	Full Voting
Project Engineer Roads and Drainage	Engineering Services	Full Voting
Project Engineer – Asset Management	Generalist	Full Voting
Senior Procurement Partner	Procurement	Procurement Compliance

Further details of tender evaluation are shown in the Tender Recommendation Report (**Confidential Attachment 1**).

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.

Under this contract there are no opportunities to collaborate with other Councils or public bodies because it is a local stand-alone road re-construction and drainage project for which there is a healthy local market of contractors.

Social Implications

MJ Construction have implemented a Social Procurement Policy, along with Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and Modern Slavery Policies. These policies reflect the company's commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce by employing individuals from varied social, political, and cultural backgrounds.

Local Implications

MJ Construction are in Reservoir within the Northern Councils Alliance (NCA) area. Demonstrating a strong commitment to supporting the local economy, MJ Construction regularly engages local suppliers in its operations and has identified three local businesses to be involved in the upcoming Northumberland Road, Road Reconstruction project.

Environmental Implications

MJ Construction have established processes to recycle and reuse waste materials wherever possible and actively incorporates recycled products into their projects. For the Northumberland Street Road Reconstruction, the company will ensure that all excavated spoil, concrete, and asphalt are transported to appropriate recycling facilities. Additionally, they have mentioned that they will use tip truck to carry material both ways, making the process more efficient and reducing environmental impact.

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

As part of the design phase, community consultation was carried out in June 2025 via a letter drop to property owners and residents, along Northumberland Road, Pascoe Vale (Fawknor Road to Longview Street). Several residents expressed their support for the proposed works, and their feedback has been carefully considered in the final road design.

Prior to the commencement of construction, further notifications will be issued to the community through another letter drop by both the Contractor and Council to ensure clear communication and awareness.

5. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

One conflict of interest was declared by a voting member of the evaluation panel. This was assessed, in alignment with the Procurement Evaluation and Probity Plan and triaged accordingly.

6. Financial and Resources Implications

A total budget of \$1,270,950.00 has been allocated in Council Capital Works Program for the financial year of 2025/26 for the Road Reconstruction Works of Northumberland Road, Pascoe Vale (Fawknor Road to Longview Street).

In this case there may be contract variations required due to latent conditions outside of Council's and Contractor's control.

The table below shows the breakdown of the 2025/26 budget for the entire works.

Project Name (Roads Reconstruction)	Allocated Budget (Excluding GST)
Road Reconstruction Northumberland Road, Pascoe Vale (Fawknor Road to Longview Street)	\$1,270,950.00
Total Budget	\$1,270,950.00
Less	
Recommended contract award RFT-2025-28 Road Reconstruction Northumberland Road, Pascoe Vale (Fawknor Road to Longview Street)	\$857,557.00
Provision for latent conditions or unforeseen costs	\$60,000.00
Savings to be referred to quarterly forecast process	\$353,393.00

7. Implementation and Timeline

It is proposed that the Chief Executive Officer be authorised to do all things necessary to execute the contract/s and any other required documentation.

The contract will commence as soon as possible following Council endorsement by 10 December 2025.

Construction works are planned to commence in late January 2026 immediately after completion of roadworks on Devon Road.

Attachment/s

- | | | |
|---|---|------------|
| 1 | CONFIDENTIAL - RFT-2025-48 Tender Recommendation Report | D25/620828 |
|---|---|------------|

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.

7.10 CONTRACT AWARD: RFT-2025-49 ROAD RECONSTRUCTION JERSEY STREET, COBURG (O'HEA STREET TO GAFFNEY STREET)

Acting Director City Infrastructure, Greg Rodwell

Capital Works Planning and Delivery

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to:
 - a) Make a formal offer to **GP Bluestone Pty Ltd, ACN 604 987 519 (Contractor)** to award the Contractor contract **RFT-2025-49 Road Reconstruction Jersey Street, Coburg (O'Hea Street to Gaffney Street) (Contract)** on the following terms and otherwise subject to and in accordance with paragraph 1(b) of this Resolution:
 - i. For the total Contract value of \$808,050.00 (excluding GST), comprising of fixed lump sum of \$642,600.00 (excluding GST) and provisional amount of \$165,450.00 (excluding GST).
 - b) Negotiate and finalise the terms of the Contract between Council and the 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:
 - a) Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to execute the Contract and any required documentation for the Contract; and
 - b) Advises all tenderers of Council's decision in relation to the Contract.
3. Refers the budget savings of 306,920.00 to the quarterly review process.

REPORT

Executive Summary

The road reconstruction of Jersey Street, Coburg (O'Hea Street to Gaffney Street), has been included in the 2025–2026 Capital Works Program under the Roads and Carparks Program. The project forms part of Council's current Development Contributions Plan (DCP).

The scope of works includes the installation of underground drainage pipes and associated pits, reconstruction of the existing concrete kerb and channel, vehicle crossings, footpaths, and drainage upgrade.

Following the tender evaluation process, GP Bluestone Pty Ltd has been identified as the preferred tenderer based on the strength of their submission. Subject to contract award on 10 December 2025, the contractor has confirmed readiness to commence offsite preparatory works from 11 February 2026. The construction of this project will commence after the road reconstruction work on O'Hea Street is completed past Jersey Street intersection.

GP Bluestone Pty Ltd has successfully delivered projects of similar scale and complexity for Merri-bek and other councils, with strong performance outcomes. Onsite construction is scheduled to begin in early February 2026 and is expected to be completed over a 14 week period by mid-May 2026 (weather permitting). The works will be delivered in two distinct sections to minimise disruption to residents and local traffic.

The tender complies with section 109(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Previous Council Decisions

There has been no prior Council decision in relation to this specific contract or project.

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

The purpose of the report is to award a tender to a suitably qualified contractor to undertake the Road Reconstruction of Jersey Street, Coburg (O'Hea Street to Gaffney Street) as per the detailed drawings and specifications.

The tender was advertised via Council Procurement portal on 20 September 2025, inviting tenderers via the e-tender portal from suitably experienced contractors to undertake the works.

The tender was released on 20 September 2025 and closed at 2pm on Tuesday 14 October 2025, with tenders received from the following 12 contractors. All 12 tenderers were deemed conforming.

	Tenderers	ABN
1	ADP Constructions Pty Ltd	46 118 588 097
2	CDN Construction Pty Ltd	62 884 294 341
3	Merlo Civil and Concreting	18 150 942 920
4	GP Bluestone Pty Ltd	21 664 700 435
5	Kaizen Civil Pty Ltd	18 619 423 068
6	MJ Construction Group Pty Ltd	56 092 432 730
7	New Horizon Construction Pty Ltd	293 6054 3618
8	Presta & Sons Pty Ltd	88 089 320 918
9	Presta Construction Group Pty Ltd	55 096 137 745
10	Melbourne Civil Works – Salah	283 472 423 02
11	SME Earth Moving Pty Ltd	21 673 232 570
12	TDL Contractors	76 091 395 210

Tender Evaluation

The tenders were evaluated in accordance with Council's Procurement Policy, at the time of tendering and in accordance with the approved Procurement Evaluation and Probity Plan for this project.

The tender evaluation criteria included cost, work program, working methodology, capability, capacity, experience and past performance, complete project management plan, customer service, social, environmental, and economic sustainability considerations.

The conforming tender submissions were evaluated in accordance with Council's Procurement Policy, at the time of tendering.

The following is a breakdown of the Evaluation Criteria applicable to this procurement project.

Criteria	Weighting
Cost	45%
Work Program	3%
Work Methodology and Staging Plan	4%
Capability	4%
Experience and Past Performance	4%
Capacity	5%
Complete Project Management Plan	10%
Customer Service	7%
Social Sustainability	5%
Economic Sustainability	4%
Environmental Sustainability	4%
Environmentally sustainable construction Options	5%
Total Scores	100%

The membership of the tender evaluation panel was as follows.

Title	Generalist or Nominated Speciality	Full Voting / Advisory Member
Team Leader Road Projects	Engineering Services (Chair)	Full Voting
Project Engineer Roads and Drainage	Engineering Services	Full Voting
Asset System Administrator	Generalist	Full Voting
Senior Procurement Partner	Procurement	Procurement Compliance

Further details of tender evaluation are shown in the Tender Recommendation Report (**Confidential Attachment 1**).

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.

Under this contract there are no opportunities to collaborate with other Councils or public bodies because it is a local stand-alone road reconstruction and drainage project for which there is a healthy local market of contractors.

Social Implications

GP Bluestone have implemented a Social Procurement Policy, along with Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and Modern Slavery Policies. These policies reflect the company's commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce by employing individuals from varied social, political, and cultural backgrounds.

Local Implications

GP Bluestone are in Coburg. Demonstrating a strong commitment to supporting the local economy, GP Bluestone regularly engages local suppliers in its operations and has identified three local businesses to be involved in the upcoming Jersey Street Road Reconstruction project.

Environmental Implications

GP Bluestone have established processes to recycle and reuse waste materials wherever possible and actively incorporates recycled products into their projects. For the Jersey Street Road Reconstruction, the company will ensure that all excavated spoil, concrete, and asphalt are transported to appropriate recycling facilities. Additionally, they have mentioned that they will use tip truck to carry material both ways, making the process more efficient and reducing environmental impact.

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

As part of the design phase, community consultation was carried out in June 2025 via a letter drop to property owners and residents, along Jersey Street, Coburg (O'Hea Street to Gaffney Street). Several residents including Coburg North Primary School expressed their support for the proposed works, and their feedback has been carefully considered in the final road design.

Prior to the commencement of construction, further notifications will be issued to the community through another letter drop by both the Contractor and Council to ensure clear communication and awareness.

5. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

One conflict of interest was declared by a voting member of the evaluation panel. This was assessed, in alignment with the Procurement Evaluation and Probity Plan and triaged accordingly.

6. Financial and Resources Implications

A total budget of \$1,174,970.00 has been allocated in Council Capital Works Program for the financial year of 2025/26 for the Road Reconstruction Works of Jersey Street, Coburg (O'Hea Street to Gaffney Street).

In this case there may be contract variations required due to latent conditions outside of Council's and Contractor's control.

The table below shows the breakdown of the 2025/26 budget for the entire works.

Project Name (Roads Reconstruction)	Allocated Budget (Excluding GST)
Road Reconstruction Jersey Street, Coburg (O'Hea Street to Gaffney Street)	\$1,174,970.00
Total Budget	\$1,174,970.00
Less	
Recommended contract award RFT-2025-49 Road Reconstruction Jersey Street, Coburg (O'Hea Street to Gaffney Street)	\$808,050.00
Provision for latent conditions or unforeseen costs	\$60,000.00
Savings to be referred to quarterly forecast process	\$306,920.00

7. Implementation and Timeline

It is proposed that the Chief Executive Officer be authorised to do all things necessary to execute the contract/s and any other required documentation.

The contract will commence as soon as possible following Council endorsement by 10 December 2025.

Construction works are planned to commence in mid-February 2026 immediately after the road reconstruction work on O'Hea Street is completed past Jersey Street intersection.

Attachment/s

- 1 CONFIDENTIAL - RFT-2025-49 Tender Recommendation Report D25/619702

Pursuant to section 3(1)(g)(ii) of the Local Government Act 2020 this attachment has been designated as confidential because it relates to private commercial information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that if released, would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage.

8. NOTICES OF MOTION

8.1 RETAIN THE FORMER COBURG NORTH TAFE SITE FOR SKILLS, INNOVATION AND JOB CREATION

Cr Helen Politis

At its meeting on 12 November 2025, Council deferred consideration of this Notice of Motion to enable a meeting to occur between the TAFE Site Stakeholders Group and interested Councillors and a Council officer.

Motion

That Council:

1. Notes the officer submission to the Victorian government in relation to the former Coburg North TAFE site advocating to maintain industrial zoning for the site.
2. Writes to the Federal Minister for Industry and Innovation advising of Council's submission, and seeking the Federal Government's active support of any industries seeking help to establish innovative industries and job hubs at this site.

1. Background

Cr Politis' background:

The former Coburg North TAFE site once supported the development of many trades, skills and jobs but has laid dormant and unused for many years. With planned densification this strategic site is well placed to become a hub for learning, creating and job creation. In addition the need to be able to locally develop, produce and upcycle for our needs is becoming increasingly apparent, especially in view of recent disruptions to global supply chains. Creating more jobs where people can work close to where they live is also becoming an environmental, economic and quality of life imperative.

The State government has declared this site surplus and is undertaking an EOI process seeking suggestions for the future use of the site. Council is lodging a submission to this EOI emphasising the critical importance that this site is developed to support Coburg's economy, skills and jobs – consistent with State government planning policy, Council policy, and the surrounding commercial and industrial uses.

This motion seeks Council's support to advocate to the Federal government to support any job-creating industry proposals that will ensure a skills, innovation and jobs hub is created towards a vibrant and liveable municipality and a brighter future for Merri-bek and its citizens.

2. Policy context

Officer's comments:

This Notice of Motion is broadly consistent with Council strategies and policies, as it supports the retention and fostering of industrial and commercial uses in a location where this is a high priority in the Merri-bek Planning Scheme as well as the State Government's industrial land strategy (MICLUP – Melbourne Industrial and Commercial Land Use Plan).

The state government has recently sought EOIs and submissions in relation to the former TAFE site in Coburg North, which are surplus to the State Government's requirements. Submissions closed on 9 November 2025.

Council officers have lodged a short submission that is consistent with existing Council policy and decisions, emphasising the importance of commercial and industrial uses in this location. Council's letter also notes potential interest in part of the site by the Merri Community Shed, as a location for skills-based learning, training and community connection (aligned with a Council decision in March 2025 to explore relocation options for the shed).

Following its EOI process, if the State government makes the site available for a next generation of industrial and commercial uses, the Federal Government's support for businesses seeking to operate from the site could play an important role in supporting and enabling this use.

3. Financial implications

Officer's comments:

An advocacy letter can be completed with existing budget.

4. Resources implications

Officer's comments:

An advocacy letter can be completed with existing staffing.

8.2 VENUES FOR COUNCILLOR WORKSHOPS

Cr Sue Bolton

Motion

That Council holds all Councillor workshops at locations in Melbourne, and preferably locations in Merri-bek.

1. Background

Cr Bolton's background:

Merri-bek Council usually holds a councillor workshop each year for budget and other planning. The workshop involves councillors and the senior council managers, including the CEO.

There has been a tradition at the Merri-bek Council to hold these councillor workshops at conference venues outside Melbourne. Usually the councillors and council managers stay for a whole weekend, especially as the locations are usually a long distance from Melbourne.

There is no practical reason for holding these workshops outside Melbourne, other than to hold them in a more pleasant surroundings. There are a couple of reasons why these workshops should be held at a Melbourne location and preferably a Merri-bek location:

- We are in a cost-of-living crisis. Merri-bek should be leading by example and not spending on such conference venues.
- Holding the workshops in Melbourne, and preferably Merri-bek, makes it easier for councillors to support community activities because there wouldn't be so much time spent travelling to the workshops.

2. Policy Context

Officer's comments:

The annual strategic workshop for Councillors, focused on the annual budget and Council Plan, is typically the only Councillor workshop conducted outside Melbourne and held over a weekend. While no formal decisions are made during this workshop, it serves as a platform for briefings and discussions on key topics.

3. Financial Implications

Officer's comments:

The annual strategic workshop for Councillors held either within Melbourne, locally or outside Melbourne will generally incur similar costs for catering and venue staffing.

However, workshops held offsite, typically at a conference venue, may include additional accommodation expenses.

4. Resources Implications

Officer's comments:

Hosting an annual workshop at a Council venue eliminates external hire fees but requires additional staff at weekend penalty rates.

External venues, local or outside Melbourne, shift expenses to accommodation and travel while reducing some staff overtime.

8.3 MOBILE COVERAGE FOR OPTUS NETWORK IN BRUNSWICK

Cr Adam Pulford

Motion

That Council writes to Optus:

1. Asking whether a mobile tower for their network was removed in the past 12 months in central Brunswick;
2. Informing Optus that local residents and workers have reported very poor mobile data signal in and around Brunswick Baths; and
3. Requesting information on Optus's plans to improve coverage in Merri-bek.

1. Background

Cr Pulford 's background:

Despite being in inner Melbourne, there is limited mobile coverage on the Optus network in central Brunswick. There have been many reports of people not being able to use mobile data in the heart of Brunswick, particularly in and around Brunswick Baths. Earlier this year, there was a flyer-circulated by local community members saying an Optus mobile tower had been removed at or near 10 Dawson Street, Brunswick. If accurate, this could explain the current poor coverage. With many people depending on their phones and data for their work, to get around and live their lives, we need quality mobile and mobile data coverage across Merri-bek. This Notice of Motion seeks to write to Optus to find out whether a mobile tower was removed, pass on community reports of poor coverage and ask what their plans are to improve signal in Brunswick.

2. Policy Context

Officer's comments:

Writing to Optus supports Council's commitment to advocating for infrastructure and services that meet the needs of our community. Council plays a key role in representing residents and businesses on issues that affect their daily lives, including access to reliable digital connectivity. Mobile coverage is now an essential service for work, safety, and social connection, and gaps in coverage undermine equity and liveability. By raising community concerns directly with Optus and seeking clarity on their plans, Council is fulfilling its responsibility to ensure Merri-bek remains a connected, accessible, and inclusive municipality.

3. Financial Implications

Officer's comments:

An advocacy letter can be completed with existing budget.

4. Resources Implications

Officer's comments:

An advocacy letter can be completed with existing resources.