**Council MEETING AGENDA**

Wednesday 10 September 2025

Commencing 6.30 pm

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

A close-up of a newspaper

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

**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.

1. **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.
2. **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.
3. **CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES** The minutes of the previous meeting are put before Council to confirm the accuracy and completeness of the record.
4. **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.
5. **PETITIONS** Council receives petitions from citizens on various issues. Council formally accepts petitions at Council meetings.
6. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME** This is an opportunity (30 minutes), for citizens of Merri-bek to raise questions with Councillors.
7. **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.
8. **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.
9. **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.
10. **FORESHADOWED ITEMS** This is an opportunity for Councillors to raise items proposed to be submitted as Notices of Motion at future meetings.
11. **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.
12. **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.
13. **CLOSE OF MEETING** The Mayor will formally close the meeting and thank all present.

**NEXT MEETING DATE** The next Council meeting will be held on Wednesday 8 October 2025 commencing at 6.30 pm, in the Bunjil (Council Chamber), Merri-bek Civic Centre, 90 Bell Street, Coburg. The next Planning and Related Matters meeting will be held on Wednesday 22 October 2025 commencing at 6.30 pm.

**WELCOME**

**1. APOLOGIES/LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Leave of absence has been granted to:

Cr. Pulford - 24 August 2025 to 20 September 2025 inclusive

**2. DISCLOSURES OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

**3. MINUTE CONFIRMATION**

The minutes of the Council Meeting held on 13 August 2025 be confirmed.

**4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND OTHER MATTERS**

**5. Petitions**

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**9. Notice of Rescission**

Nil

**10. Foreshadowed Items**

**11. URGENT BUSINESS**

**12. Confidential Business**

12.1 Contract Award: RFT-2024-66 - Enterprise Software

*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.*

12.2 Proposed Acquisition of Open Space

*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.*

12.3 Sale of Properties Under Section 181 of the Local Government Act 1989

*Pursuant to section 3(1)(f) of the Local Government Act 2020 this report has been designated as confidential because it relates to personal information, being information which if released would result in the unreasonable disclosure of information about any person or their personal affairs.*

12.4 Contract 2021-203 Management Of Council's Aquatic and Contract 2021-203 Management of Council'sAquatic and Leisure Services - Variation to Guaranteed Contract Sum Y4, 2025-2026

*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.*

12.5 CEO Employment Matters - Proposed Board Membership

*Pursuant to section 3(1)(f) of the Local Government Act 2020 this report has been designated as confidential because it relates to personal information, being information which if released would result in the unreasonable disclosure of information about any person or their personal affairs.*

**7. Council Reports**

7.1 Adoption of the Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035, Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029 and Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2025-2026

**Director Business Transformation Sue Vujcevic**

**Governance and Strategy**

## Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Adopts the Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035 (provided as Attachment 1) in accordance with legislative requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

2. Adopts the Merri-bek Council Plan 2025–2029 (provided as Attachment 1) in accordance with legislative requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020* and the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, noting that it incorporates the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029.

3. Adopts Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2025-2026 (provided as Attachment 2) as the first year of actions to deliver against the Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029.

4. Authorises the Director Business Transformation to finalise the Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035, Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029 and Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2025-2026, including any minor administrative changes, professional design of the documents and online versions, for distribution and implementation.

5. Advises submitters that Council has considered their submissions relating to the Draft Council Plan 2025-2029 and that the submitters be advised of the outcome of the consideration, as it relates to their specific submission through this council report (provided as Attachment 3), and they be thanked for their contributions.

6. Thanks, the members of the Community Panel and Community Youth Panel for their contribution and advise them in writing of the outcome of Council’s decision.

**REPORT**

**Executive Summary**

The development of the Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035 (**Attachment 1**), Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029 (**Attachment 1**) and Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2025-2026 (**Attachment 2**) have been informed by a number of key inputs, including working with Councillors to determine their priorities for the next four years and a deliberative community engagement process via a Community Panel, including a Community Youth Panel.

The draft Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035 and draft Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029 were presented to Council at its meeting on the 23 June 2025 and subsequently went out to Public Exhibition for 28 days.

One submission was received for the draft Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035, which included feedback as summarised in (**Attachment 3**), no Council officer changes are recommended for the vision as a result of the submission received.

26 submissions were received for the draft Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029 (**Attachment 3**), with a number of submissions providing positive feedback. A few submissions have resulted in Council Officers recommending changes to the Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029, as summarised below:

 To strengthen the Initiative and priorities 1.3 to now read: *Inspire and activate community connection and care for nature, ecological sustainability and climate resilience (including thermal comfort and UV protection) for public and private land in Merri-bek.*

 Following the Acknowledgement to Country, insert the explainer in the Council Plan: *In this document, the term First Peoples is used to refer specifically to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We have chosen this terminology to acknowledge their unique identities, histories, and enduring connection to Country. While terms such as Indigenous, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Koorie or First Nations are sometimes used, First Peoples is used here to reflect respect for the diversity and sovereignty of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia.*

 To strengthen the Initiative and priorities 1.5 to now read: *Work closely with Traditional Owners and local First Nations People to care for Country.*

 To strengthen the Initiative and priorities 1.6 to now read: *Enable and engage the community to take meaningful action for resilience, a safe climate and circular economy, with a focus on the vulnerable communities including First Peoples, including delivery of programs that improve thermal comfort, reduce energy bills, reduce carbon emissions, and reduce waste to landfill.*

 To strengthen the Initiative and priorities 2.12 to now read: *Work to preserve First Peoples culture by supporting Elders, empowering younger generations, promoting truth telling, recognising culture's foundational role in wellbeing.*

 To strengthen the Initiative and priorities 2.13 to now read: *Prioritise First Peoples self-determined solutions that promote culture, connection, and community strengthening, which contribute to wellbeing*.

 To strengthen the Initiative and priorities 2.15 to now read: *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.*

 To strengthen the Initiative and priorities include 2.16 to read: *Advocate for more social and affordable housing stock. Including crisis, traditional and permanent housing options through planning policy, partnerships and direct engagement with developers and by supporting local responses to homelessness.*

 To strengthen the Initiative and priorities include 2.17 to read: *Support the advancement of Ballerrt Mooroop as Merri-bek’s First Peoples gathering place*.

Many issues raised in relation to the draft Merri-bek Council Plan 2025–2029 are already being addressed or implemented through current strategies, action plans, or policies, therefore Council officers did not recommend further changes as a result of such submissions received.

Further minor changes are also proposed for the final Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029, including grammatical changes to improve readability, and cosmetic design changes following a final review after the public exhibition period.

Additionally, officers have developed the Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2025-2026 (**Attachment 2**). It includes the specific actions to be undertaken during the first financial year in the implementation of the Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029. All actions documented in the Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2025-2026 are resourced for delivery, including through the 2025-26 annual budget i.e. through the adopted 2025-2029 Budget.

At the Council Meeting held Wednesday, 13 August 2025 Council endorsed the withdrawal of the following actions from the Council Action Plan 2024-25:

 Action 209: Commence construction of Brunswick Early Years Centre

 Action 215: Commence construction on the West Street streetscape renewal project.

 Action 216: Progress construction of the Wheatsheaf Road Glenroy streetscape improvement project.

The above actions are now included in the Council Action Plan 2025-2026.

**Previous Council Decisions**

**Year 4 Council Action Plan 2024-25 – Fourth Quarter Performance Report** – 13 August 2025

*That Council:*

*1. Notes the Year 4 Council Action Plan 2024-25 – Fourth Quarter Performance Report (provided as Attachment 1) and the achievements to date in delivering against the Council Plan 2021-25.*

*2. Endorses the following action to be withdrawn from the Council Action Plan 2024-25 as outlined in the issues section of this report; these actions will be considered as actions for the 2025/26 Council Action Plan.*

*a) Action 209: Commence construction of Brunswick Early Years Centre*

*b) Action 215: Commence construction on the West Street streetscape renewal project*

*a) Action 216: Progress construction of the Wheatsheaf Road Glenroy streetscape improvement project.*

**Endorsement of draft Merri-bek Community Vision and Draft Council Plan 2025-2029 for public consultation** – 23 June 2025

*That Council:*

*1. Endorses the draft Merri-bek Community Vision and the draft Council Plan 2025-29 (as provided in Appendix 1) for public exhibition commencing 25 June until 22 July 2025.*

*2. Establishes a Hearing Committee, consisting of all Councillors, and appointing the Mayor as Chair, to be held on Tuesday, 29 July 2025 commencing at 6.00 pm at the Coburg Civic Centre, and invites those wishing to be heard in support of their submission to the Hearing Committee.*

*3. Acknowledges and thanks the deliberative Merri-bek Community Panel members for their participation and the preparation of the draft Community Vision.*

## 1. Policy Context

In accordance with sections 88 and 90 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council must:

a) maintain a Community Vision that is developed with its municipal community; and

b) prepare and adopt a Council Plan for a period of at least the next 4 financial years which must include the strategic direction of the Council; strategic objectives for achieving the strategic direction; strategies for achieving the objectives for a period of at least the next 4 financial years; strategic indicators for monitoring the achievement of the objectives; and a description of the Council's initiatives and priorities for services, infrastructure and amenity.

The Community Vision and Council Plan must be prepared in accordance with Council’s deliberative engagement practices by 31 October in the year following a general election.

In accordance with section 26 of the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, Council must prepare a Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan within the period of 12 months after each general election of the Council. Conversely, in accordance with section 27 of the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, Council may include public health, and wellbeing matters in its Council Plan, providing that Council meets the requirements of section 26, and the Secretary grants the Council an exemption from complying with section 26. Council received this exemption on the 8 July 2025.

## 2. Background

In late 2024, Council initiated a comprehensive engagement process to review the existing Community Vision and prepare a draft Community Vision and inform the development of other strategic documents. An independent organisation was engaged to invite every household in Merri-bek to register interest in joining the Merri-bek Community Panel. Over 1,000 community members responded, and 44 were selected to ensure diverse representation across age, gender, suburb and cultural background. To further broaden perspectives, a Youth Panel of 24 individuals aged 12-17 was also established.

The Panel met over three days in February 2025, participating in a deliberative process designed to ensure inclusivity and accessibility. Panel members were provided with an array of Council information, presentations and an overall community context report (which summarised key engagement activities and community priorities identified over the previous four years). This information informed their review of the Community Vision and input into the development of strategic documents.

The Panels’ objectives included:

 Reviewing and refining the Community Vision to reflect current aspirations and ensure clear communication.

 Providing input into integrated planning documents, including the Council Plan (which includes the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan).

 Building trust and buy-in through a transparent, deliberative process.

This approach supports the revised Community Vision and related plans to be both relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of the Merri-bek community.

A draft Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035 and draft Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029 were presented to Council on the 23 June 2025 and subsequently, these documents went out on Public Exhibition for 28 days. A full outline of submissions and council officer responses is provided in **Attachment 3**.

**Submissions received**

Draft Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035

One submission was received for the draft Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035, which included feedback on the Vision that is intended to shape a ten-year time horizon, however, there doesn’t seem to be a recognition of where the communities are starting this journey from. As stated above, the deliberative panel process included consideration of community engagement activities and priorities from prior years. Various issues were raised that do not require changes to the document, and many matters raised can be progressed separately through implementation of existing strategies and action plans.

No Council officer changes are recommended for the Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035 as a result of submissions received (as shown in **Attachment 3**).

Draft Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029

26 submissions were received for the draft Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029, with a number of submissions providing positive feedback. A few submissions have resulted in recommended changes to the Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029 as follows:

 To strengthen the Initiative and priorities 1.3 to now read: *Inspire and activate community connection and care for nature, ecological sustainability and climate resilience (including thermal comfort and UV protection) for public and private land in Merri-bek.*

 Following the Acknowledgement to Country, insert the explainer in the Council Plan: *In this document, the term First Peoples is used to refer specifically to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We have chosen this terminology to acknowledge their unique identities, histories, and enduring connection to Country. While terms such as Indigenous, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Koorie or First Nations are sometimes used, First Peoples is used here to reflect respect for the diversity and sovereignty of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia.*

 To strengthen the Initiative and priorities 1.5 to now read: *Work closely with Traditional Owners and local First Nations People to care for Country.*

 To strengthen the Initiative and priorities 1.6 to now read: *Enable and engage the community to take meaningful action for resilience, a safe climate and circular economy, with a focus on the vulnerable communities including First Peoples, including delivery of programs that improve thermal comfort, reduce energy bills, reduce carbon emissions, and reduce waste to landfill.*

 To strengthen the Initiative and priorities 2.12 to now read: *Work to preserve First Peoples culture by supporting Elders, empowering younger generations, promoting truth telling, recognising culture's foundational role in wellbeing.*

 To strengthen the Initiative and priorities 2.13 to now read: *Prioritise First Peoples self-determined solutions that promote culture, connection, and community strengthening, which contribute to wellbeing*.

 To strengthen the Initiative and priorities 2.15 to now read: *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.*

 To strengthen the Initiative and priorities include 2.16 to read: *Advocate for more social and affordable housing stock. Including crisis, traditional and permanent housing options through planning policy, partnerships and direct engagement with developers and by supporting local responses to homelessness.*

 To strengthen the Initiative and priorities include 2.17 to read: *Support the advancement of Ballerrt Mooroop as Merri-bek’s First Peoples gathering place*.

Many issues raised in relation to the draft Merri-bek Council Plan 2025–2029 are already being addressed or implemented through current strategies, action plans, or policies, therefore Council officers did not recommend further changes as a result of such submissions received.

Further minor changes are also proposed for the final Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029, including grammatical changes to improve readability, and cosmetic design changes following a final review after the public exhibition period.

Additionally, Council Officers have developed the Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2025-2026 (provided as **Attachment 2**). It includes the specific actions to be undertaken during the first financial year in the implementation of the Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029. All actions documented in the Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2025-2026 are resourced, including through the 2025-26 annual budget i.e. through the adopted 2025-2029 Budget.

At the Council Meeting held Wednesday, 13 August 2025 Council endorsed the withdrawal of the following actions from the Council Action Plan 2024-25:

 Action 209: Commence construction of Brunswick Early Years Centre

 Action 215: Commence construction on the West Street streetscape renewal project.

 Action 216: Progress construction of the Wheatsheaf Road Glenroy streetscape improvement project.

The above actions are now included in the Council Action Plan 2025-2026.

## 3. Issues

**Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035**

The draft Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035 was prepared by the Merri-bek Community Panel and Community Youth Panel.

The *Local Government Act 2020* requires that the Community Vision document is developed through engagement with the Merri-bek community and reflects community aspirations for the future of the municipality. The document is intended to be a reference document of Council, as per the section 89, the strategic planning principles, to guide Council’s planning and policy through the integrated planning framework.

The draft Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035 statement is:

**“Merri-bek leads, and leaves no one behind.**

The key priority areas (themes) for the draft Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035 are:

 We are a welcoming, safe and thriving community

 We are sustainable and our environment is respected

 Our community is engaged and informed

 Our streets are full of life

 One community, proudly diverse.

The Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035 was developed by the Merri-bek Community Panel and Community Youth Panel. In February 2025, Council convened a 40-person adult Community Panel and a 24-person Community Youth Panel (aged between 12-17 years old) of the local community that were independently selected to broadly represent the demographic characteristics of Merri-bek.

The panel included representation from different geographical locations across Merri-bek, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and non-English speaking communities, people with disability and different groups relating to age, gender and sexual orientation. The panel also included diversity relating to household status (rental and home ownership) as well as educational attainment and income levels.

Panel members participated in two and a half days of deliberative engagement including expert presentations and facilitated workshops to develop the draft Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035 in February 2025. During this time the panel was presented with the results of engagement with the wider community to identify aspirations to inform the development of the draft Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035.

As detailed in the Background section of this report, Council officers are not recommending any changes to the Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035.

The Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035 developed by the Merri-bek Community Panel and Community Youth Panel has been translated directly into the Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029, and informs the key priority areas (themes) in the plan (shown at **Attachment 1**).

**Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029**

The Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029 (provided as **Attachment 1**) is a plan for key areas of focus and change that Council is undertaking over the next four years. The plan includes the Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035 and represents the intentions of Council during its term of office in a way that is consistent with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

As detailed in the Background section of this report, during public exhibition 27 submissions were received for the draft Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029, a number of recommended changes are proposed for the plan, based on submissions received. A full outline of submissions received, and Council Officer responses is provided in **Attachment 3**.

The Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029 is set out under the following 5 themes:

 Care for nature and climate resilience

 Healthy and inclusive communities

 Beautiful and liveable city

 Thriving economy and culture

 Engaging and responsible council.

The Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029 outlines 5 strategic objectives, one under each theme of the Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035, which together represent the strategic direction of Council over the next four years for the implementation of the Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035.

The 5 strategic objectives are:

1. To create a flourishing and climate resilient Merri-bek by improving wildlife and nature connectivity, greening and cooling for healthier streets and public realm, and engaging the community in meaningful climate action.

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

3. Create safe, accessible streets and public spaces that support vibrant communities, active travel, rest and relaxation, and community pride, while ensuring development and growth are well managed and local character is celebrated, ensuring Merri-bek is a welcoming, liveable, and connected place for all.

4. A lively and inclusive Merri-bek where the economy supports local business and industry growth, celebrates artistic and creative expression, and connects the community through vibrant cultural experiences.

5. A responsive and engaged Merri-bek that prioritises excellent service, embraces engaging communication methods, advocates community needs, and continues to uphold sustainable financial management and accountable governance that builds trust and collaboration with the community.

In achieving each strategic objective, the Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029 sets out:

a) Strategies: 23 primary methods through which the objectives will be achieved over the next four years;

b) Initiatives and Priorities: 51 critical pieces of work underpinning delivery of the strategies;

c) Strategic Indicators: Measures to monitor progress against the objectives; and

d) Related Strategies and Plans: Other strategic planning documents that will support delivery of the draft Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029.

The Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029 is designed to enable an integrated approach to planning, monitoring and performance reporting. Strategies and initiatives and priorities will inform and cascade into annual Council actions, service unit and individual work planning.

The Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029 showcases a forward-thinking approach to protecting our community, the environment and our assets, with the aim that Merri-bek is well connected, accessible and a welcoming place to live, work and visit.

To ensure additional accessibility and inclusivity, the Council Plan also features a concise summary translated into the top 10 languages representative of the Merri-bek community, with translations included at the back of the document and a translation prompt on the inside cover.

**Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2025-2026**

The Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2025-2026 supports the implementation of the Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029 for the first financial year of the 4-year period (provided as **Attachment 2**).

It includes the specific actions to be undertaken during the first financial year in the implementation of the Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029. All actions documented in the Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2025-2026 are resourced for delivery through the 2025-26 annual budget i.e. included in the adopted 2025-2029 Budget.

At the Council Meeting held Wednesday, 13 August 2025 Council endorsed the withdrawal of the following actions from the Council Action Plan 2024-25:

 Action 209: Commence construction of Brunswick Early Years Centre

 Action 215: Commence construction on the West Street streetscape renewal project.

 Action 216: Progress construction of the Wheatsheaf Road Glenroy streetscape improvement project.

The above actions are now included in the Council Action Plan 2025-2026.

An annual Council action plan will be developed each year to identify priority actions for delivering the Strategies and, Initiatives and Priorities contained in the Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029. This annual planning method will enable Council to be more opportunistic in the delivery of the Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029, whilst providing flexibility in responding to changing and/or unforeseen circumstances (for example future partnerships or grant opportunities).

For years two, three and four, annual action planning and budget review will be carried out through an integrated process.

**Gender Impact Assessment**

The Gender Impact Assessment undertaken for the draft Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029 (provided as **Attachment 4**) includes that the final Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035 and Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029 will have an overall positive impact on gender equality in Merri-bek. A positive impact is likely to arise from assessing gender impacts in planning for delivery of services and infrastructure to support the broader community, including women and other priority groups and disadvantaged community members.

**Community impact**

Feedback received from the deliberative engagement Community Panel and Community Youth Panel, including the development of the Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035, and prior key engagement activities and community priorities identified over the previous four years, has assisted in the determining the initiatives and priorities to support the overall health and wellbeing of the community. Community feedback received provided positive suggestions in the effort to address community, social, health and wellbeing impacts, which have been considered in the development of the Merri-bek Council Plan 2025–2029.

**Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications**

Feedback received from the deliberative engagement Community Panel and Community Youth Panel, including the development of the Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035, has assisted in the determining the initiatives and priorities for the overall environmental sustainability of the municipality. Positive suggestions received in the effort to address climate emergency, and environmental impacts have been considered in the development of the Merri-bek Council Plan 2025–2029.

**Economic sustainability implications**

Feedback from the deliberative engagement Community Panel and Community Youth Panel, including the development of the Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035, has assisted in the determining the initiatives and priorities for the overall economic sustainability of the municipality (as set out in the Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029 and associated Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2025-2026).

**Legal and risk considerations**

The Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035 and Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029 and processes associated with the development of these documents have been undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020* and the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008.*

**Human Rights Consideration**

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

Council takes a proactive approach to human rights, as stipulated in Councils Human Rights Policy (2016-2026). The right to take part in public life and participate in public affairs includes helping to make decisions on local issues, either directly or through representation. Significant consideration was given to, how to reach the Merri-bek community, including using deliberative engagement via a community panel, including through a youth panel.

## 4. Community consultation and engagement

Consultation, engagement and communications are the key issues outlined in this report. A deliberative panel was established to review the Community Vision, and Council has taken into account the aspirations of the draft Community Vision to inform the development of the draft Council Plan 2025-2029.

Community consultation and engagement were not required for the Council Action Plan 2025-2026 (Council Action Plan), as Community consultation had already been undertaken to develop the Council Plan 2025-2029. The budget and annual action plans serve as the vehicle to deliver on the Council Plan (aligned with Council’s budget process), and appropriate engagement and consultation have been undertaken as outlined in this report.

**Public Exhibition of draft Council Plan**

Council exhibited the 4-year Council Plan (incorporating the Community Vision and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan) for public viewing and community feedback from 25 June 2025 to 22 July 2025.

The draft Plan was available to download via the Conversations Merri-bek website, and was available at Coburg Library, Brunswick Library, Fawkner Library, Fawkner Senior Citizens’ Centre, Glenroy Community Hub, Coburg Customer Service Centre and Brunswick Customer Service Centre.

Submissions could be made online via Conversations Merri-bek, in writing at the above locations, by post or via email. Council received a total of 27 submissions through this process.

A detailed listing of all submissions and officer comments are included in **Attachment 3.**

**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. In this regard, the Merri-bek community have had an opportunity to participate in the deliberative engagement Community Panel and Community Youth Panel and to provide their feedback through the public exhibition process.

### Communications

Subject to Council’s decision, the adopted Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029 will be made available via the Merri-bek City Council website. A designed summary version will also be made available at on Conversations Merri-bek, at council offices and libraries.

## 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 Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029 (and Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2025-2026) is resourced for delivery through the 2025-26 annual budget (included in the adopted 2025-2029 Budget).

For years two, three and four, annual action planning and budget review will be carried out through an integrated process. Actions will be cascaded into service unit plans and individual work plans.

## 7. Implementation

The Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2025-2026 details the first year of actions for the implementation of the Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029.

Progress on delivery of the Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029, and specifically Year 1 of the associated action plan will be monitored through quarterly and annual performance reporting via reports to Council.

## Attachment/s

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-29 (includes community vision) | D25/454148 |  |
| **2** | Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2025-26 | D25/370766 |  |
| **3** | Merri-bek Council Plan and Community Vision Community Feedback and Submissions Responses 2025 | D25/454263 |  |
| **4** | Merri-bek Council Plan Gender Impact Report | D25/360212 |  |

7.2 Children, Young People and Families Plan 2021-2025 - Year 4 Review

**Director Community, Eamonn Fennessy**

**Early Years and Youth**

## Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the Children, Young People and Families Plan 2021-2025 annual review and implementation of Year 4 actions which concludes the Plan.

2. Notes the development of a new Strategy to meet the needs of children, young people and families has commenced.

**REPORT**

**Executive Summary**

The Children, Young People and Families Plan 2021-2025 (the Plan) aims to improve health, wellbeing and educational outcomes for children, young people and families with a vision of ‘a community where children, young people and families are healthy, resilient, empowered, safe and belong’. The Plan’s associated Implementation Plan 2022-2025 details the actions and activities that will be undertaken in each of the Plan’s three outcome areas of Inclusive City and Community, Improved Health and Wellbeing, and Lifelong Learning and Participation.

To fulfil the vision of the Plan, there has been continued collaboration with community, partner organisations and the State Government to implement Year 4 actions. Progress has continued in all outcome areas to increase inclusion and accessibility of services and programs, which positively impacts health and wellbeing. Engagement in early learning and civic participation has also increased, with children and young people readily sharing their opinions on matters that impact them, when afforded the opportunity. The Plan’s annual review highlights activities completed and concludes the Children, Young People and Families Plan 2021-2025, see **Attachment 1.**

**Previous Council Decisions**

**Children, Young People and Families Plan 2021-2025 – Implementation of Year 3 Actions** – 14 August 2024

*That Council notes the Children, Young People and Families Plan 2021-2025 annual review and implementation of Year 3 actions.*

**Children, Young People and Families Plan 2021-2025 – Implementation of Year 2 Actions** – 8 November 2023

*That Council notes the Children, Young People and Families Plan annual review and implementation of Year 2 actions.*

**Children, Young People and Families Plan 2021-2025 – Implementation of Year 1 Actions** – 14 September 2022

*That Council notes the Children, Young People and Families Plan 2021-2025 implementation of Year 1 actions.*

**Children, Young People and Families Implementation Plan 2022-2025** – 13 April 2022

*That Council adopts the Children, Young People and Families Implementation Plan 2022-2025.*

**Children, Young People and Families Plan 2021-2025** – 9 June 2021

*That Council adopts the Children, Young People and Families Plan 2021-2025*.

## 1. Policy Context

The Plan aligns with the following key policy documents and legislative requirements:

 Community Vision 2021-2031 (Theme 3: A Healthy and Caring Merri-bek, Theme 4: Spaces and Places in Merri-bek, Theme 5: An empowered and collaborative Merri-bek)

 Council Plan 2021-2025 (Major initiative and priority 21: Implement the Children, Young People and Families Plan)

 Council Action Plan 2021-2025, Year1-4 (Implement actions of the Children, Young People and Families Plan; plan and deliver early years infrastructure)

 Child Safe Standards.

The Plan aligns with key international policy on the human rights of children and young people:

 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

## 2. Background

On 9 June 2021, Council endorsed the Children, Young People and Families Plan 2021-2025. The Plan provided an integrated strategy to improve the health, wellbeing and educational outcomes of children and young people aged 0-24 years and their families. The Plan was developed through extensive consultation with key stakeholders including children, young people, families, community members, local organisations and education providers.

The Plan had three key outcome areas:

 Outcome 1: Inclusive City and Community

 Outcome 2: Improved Health and Wellbeing

 Outcome 3: Lifelong Learning and Participation.

Each outcome area has several strategic objectives that contributed to achieving the vision of a community where children, young people and families are healthy, resilient, empowered safe and belong. On 13 April 2022, Council endorsed the associated Children, Young People and Families Implementation Plan 2022-2025 which detailed the actions and activities that would be undertaken to deliver on the Plan’s objectives. An annual review of the Plan is undertaken to monitor progress and report on achievements.

The key achievements in Year 4 included efforts to increase inclusion and service accessibility through regular Rainbow Storytime sessions and Rainbow Family Group gatherings continuing. Acknowledgement of Country signs have been installed on all Council early years facilities and storytime sessions in community languages, including Woiwurrung are delivered. The central registration and enrolment system to access participating kindergartens and early learning centres has been reviewed and a new system will be implemented to provide a streamlined registration and enrolment process for families.

There has been an increase in free and accessible activities for children and young people through the expansion of Youth Takeover sessions to Coburg and Glenroy libraries, the arts programming at the Counihan Gallery, place activation events and community festivals. Playgroup Week and Children’s Week events continue to attract children and families, as children engage in play and parents and carers learn about local services available. The provision of information to families has increased through the re-fresh of the Early Years Services for Families booklet and new Youth Services for Families booklet, detailing local services.

There has been an increased focus on co-locating services with new Maternal Child Health centres opening at Wimbi Early Learning Centre, Fawkner and Balam Balam Place, Brunswick. The Breastfeeding Clinic has expanded to Brunswick, complimenting existing services in central and northern Merri-bek. The INFANT program has continued to support infants and families with nutrition information, while the partnership with Dad’s Group supports couples and fathers’ engagement. Pop-up playgroups continue to be delivered during the school holidays, in additional to regular supported playgroups delivered during school terms.

Efforts to amplify children and young people’s voice continued through the Children’s Reference Group, Youth Ambassadors and the inaugural Children’s Forum which provided opportunities for children to provide feedback on matters that impact them.

Early years infrastructure refurbishment and expansions continued with projects at Derby Street Children’s Centre, Oak Park Kindergarten and Pascoe Vale Community Centre Kindergarten completed. Planning to develop the Brunswick Early Years Hub has continued. These projects have supported meeting increased kindergarten demand due to early years reforms and a growing population.

The Year 4 review concludes the Children, Young People and Families Plan 2021-2025. The development of a new Strategy to address the needs and aspirations of children, young people and families has commenced. The draft Children, Young People and Families Strategy will be presented to Council in December 2025.

## 3. Issues

### Community impact

The Plan continues to positively impact children and young people through their consultation and participation in decision making on matters that impact them through the Children’s Reference Group, Youth Ambassadors and 2025 Children’s Forum. There has also been increased support for families through partnerships with organisations to deliver community programs.

### Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

Environmentally sustainable design (ESD) has been included in early years infrastructure projects and the recent expansion of Oak Park Kindergarten resulted in removal of all gas appliances to electrify the site. ESD is a significant focus in the detailed design process for the Brunswick Early Years Hub.

### Economic sustainability implications

The Plan’s implementation has not resulted in economic sustainability implications.

### Legal and risk considerations

There is continued adherence to the Victorian Child Safe Standards and legislation on working with children checks for all staff who have regular contact with children and young people, including thorough risk assessments for all new programs, projects and services where children and young will attend.

### 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 the Plan has been implemented in accordance with the Charter, in particular the right to protection of families and children (section 17). The Plan also aligns with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and in particular, the right to express views and the views of the child to be taken seriously (Article 12).

## 4. Community consultation and engagement

Community engagement and consultation was central the Plan’s actions and activities. Key opportunities for consultation and engagement during the Year 4 reporting period include:

 Children’s Reference Group; quarterly meetings held

 Children’s Forum 2025: consulted on the Libraries Strategy and book collection, new Children, Young People and Families Strategy 2026-2030

 Youth Ambassadors: monthly meetings held

 Early Years Infrastructure: impacted community members were consulted on the design of Dunstan Reserve Children’s Centre.

**Affected persons rights and interests**

The Plan has been assessed as having a positive impact on children, young people and families’ rights and interests. Early years infrastructure projects may impact local community interests although on balance, these projects provide a positive impact, enabling children’s increased participation in early learning.

### Communications

The Plan’s Year 4 review and highlights of key achievements will be communicated via website updates.

## 5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

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

## 6. Financial and Resources Implications

Financial and resource implications to implement the Plan’s Year 4 actions were met through operational budgets, external grants and the annual budget process.

## 7. Implementation

The Plan’s Year 4 review and key achievements will be communicated with community and considered finalised.

The draft Children, Young People and Families Strategy 2026-2030 will be presented to Council for consideration in December 2025.

## Attachment/s

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | Children Young People and Families Plan 2021-2025 Year 4 Review | D25/440340 |  |

7.3 Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-2029 - endorsement for exhibition

**Director City Infrastructure Anita Curnow**

**Amenity and Compliance**

## Officer Recommendation

1. That Council endorses the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-2029 for public exhibition for the period 15 September to 12 October 2025, noting that it includes:

a) An increase in Council’s cat desexing program, focused on areas with the highest levels of nuisance cat complaints

b) Introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew from 1 July 2026 with an 8-month grace period

**REPORT**

**Executive Summary**

The *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act) requires councils in Victoria to develop a Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) every four years.  The DAMP must outline council services, council programs and policies established to address the administration of the Act, and councils’ management of cat and dog issues in their community.

This plan is the overarching strategic document relating to domestic animals and is to be prepared at 4-year intervals. The current DAMP 2021-2025 is due to expire at the end of November 2025, therefore a new DAMP must be developed, adopted by Council and submitted to the Secretary of Victoria’s Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) by 1 December 2025.

The draft DAMP 2025-2029 has been prepared following community and stakeholder engagement which ran from 25 June to 23 July 2025. With support for a 24-hour cat curfew in the engagement, officers are recommending the phased introduction of a cat curfew. This will line Merri-bek up with most M9 (inner) and Northern Councils who have either a 24-hour or night-time curfew. In addition, the DAMP envisages a step-up in Council’s cat desexing program, with the goal of seeing unowned cats becoming owned and registered.

The draft DAMP is presented to Council for endorsement to be placed on public exhibition for the period 15 September to 12 October 2025. At the conclusion of the public exhibition period feedback will be considered and amendments made to the draft if required. The final Plan will then be presented to the November 2025 Council meeting for adoption.

**Previous Council Decisions**

**Dog Walking in Merri-bek –** 9 July 2025

*That Council:*

*1. Revises Attachment 1 and Attachment 2 so that they reflect changes to Tate Reserve to increase the area zoned as No Dogs, still retaining a corridor for Dog Off-Leash along the western side of the No Dogs area.*

*2. Adopts the Council Order at Revised Attachment 1 (Dog Off-Leash and Dog Prohibited Areas) and directs for it to be published with tracked changes accepted in the Victorian Government Gazette with an effective date of 28 July 2025.*

*3. Endorses the implementation of the Stage 1 pilot program across eight identified parks the support the Council Order to trial draft principles and interventions for improved management of dog access (Revised Attachment 2) for a minimum of six months, utilising capital funding of $150,000 set aside in 2025/26 for this purpose.*

*4. Notes that the community has participated significantly in consultation on Stage 1 of the Dog Walking in Merri-bek project summarised in Attachment 3 of this report and that officers will continue to engage with the community during the pilot.*

*5. Receives a future report at the conclusion of the Stage 1 pilot on outcomes, learnings and future recommendations as part of the preparation of Stage 2 of the Dog Walking in Merri-bek project (remaining off leash reserves).*

**Cat Containment Strategy –** 7 December 2022

*That Council:*

*1. Considers a multi-pronged approach to dealing with the issue of over-population of cats which particularly focuses on un-owned and semi-owned cats as well as an education program for pet cat owners.*

*2. Receive a report in 2023 which includes information on:*

*a) The number of cats coming into the Epping Animal Welfare Facility which are un-owned and owned.*

*b) The number of cats coming into the Epping Animal Welfare Facility which have been born within the previous 12 months.*

*c) A comparison of local councils which have implemented cat curfews, voluntary cat containment strategies and strategies to de-sex un-owned/semi-owned cats for the number of cats being impounded, the number of complaints about roaming or nuisance cats, the number of cats being returned to owners, the number of cats being adopted and the number of cats being surrendered. Some councils which could be compared include City of Yarra Ranges, City of Casey and City of Banyule.*

*d) Proposals on and recommended funding for:*

*i) A program of targeted de-sexing of semi-owned and unowned cats, including:*

*• encouraging people who feed community cats to take ownership of and responsibility for the community cats that they feed with the offer of free de-sexing, free registration and free vaccination.*

*• targeting hot spots for semi-owned or unowned cats with door knocks*

*ii) A program of education which including education about methods such as bed-time feeding to contain cats overnight as well as encouraging the use of and assistance with construction of cat enclosures.*

*iii) Resource citizen scientists to survey and get data on locations of threatened and endangered species in Merri-bek council area to inform areas to focus on for semi-owned and unowned cats, as well as cat owners who have cats which do predate.*

*e) Notes that reducing local cat populations via free desexing is a proven mechanism to reduce the local cat population. In this context, council will provide an analysis of the cost of the above proposals, particularly free desexing, in relation to the costs of running the Epping Animal Welfare Centre (EAWC), given that free desexing will likely reduce impound rates at the EAWC, and therefore, running costs.*

**Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025** **-** 10 November 2021

*That Council adopts the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 and, following a minor editorial to remove a duplicated action regarding a social media campaign about dog socialisation on Page 19, provides a copy of the Plan to the Secretary, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions by 4 December 2021.*

*1. That future alternatives for compostable dog poo bags, to substitute the plastic options most dog walkers use, be considered By Council within the future life of the plan, to meet Council’s goals of zero waste and sustainability.*

**Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan -** 8 September 2021

*That Council endorses the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 for public exhibition for the period 10 September – 8 October 2021.*

## 1. Policy Context

The Domestic Animals Act 1994 (the Act) requires all councils in Victoria to develop a ​Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP). This plan is the overarching strategic ​document relating to domestic animals and is to be prepared at 4-year intervals. The current DAMP 2021-2025 is due to expire at the end of November 2025, therefore a new DAMP must be developed, adopted by Council and submitted to the Secretary of Victoria’s Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) by 1 December 2025.

Councils are responsible for developing a plan which:

 promotes responsible pet ownership and the welfare of dogs and cats in the community

 protects the community and the environment from nuisance dogs and cats

 identifies a method to evaluate whether the animal management services provided by council are adequate

 outlines the training programs for Authorised Officers to ensure the Officers are capable in administering and enforcing the provisions of the Act.

The plan sets out Council’s operational practices, current programs and policies in relation to the following standards of animal management:

 promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats

 ensure that people comply with the Act, the regulations and any related legislation

 minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals

 address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats

 encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats

 minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance

 effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in the municipality and ensure those dogs are kept in compliance with the Act and the Regulations.

The plan identifies the current local laws and Orders made under the Act and considers opportunities to review them.

Council reviews the plan annually and publishes an evaluation of the implementation of the plan in the annual report.

## 2. Background

The cities of Darebin, Whittlesea and Merri-bek are partners in the wat djerring Animal Facility and associated animal management services. This partnership has included the development of the DAMP 2021-2025 and this new draft DAMP, as a joint project.

Each Council is developing its own plan consistent with the feedback from its respective community, and the strategies developed arising from data and analysis in each municipality. Some actions will be consistent across each of the three DAMPs as we seek to apply a regional partnership approach to the tackling of common issues and trends.

## 3. Issues

Merri-bek City Council’s draft DAMP has been developed through a sector-leading approach in partnership with our pound partners, Darebin City Council and City of Whittlesea.

Conversation Co was engaged by the partner councils to provide a comprehensive engagement program which aimed to capture community views regarding animal management, specifically cats and dogs. The development of the draft DAMP was driven by a working group made up of representatives from the partner councils and through four stages: stage 1 – background research and analysis; stage 2 – community consultation; stage 3 – joint Council planning; and stage 4 (current stage) – public exhibition.

An engagement program was used to prepare the draft DAMP for each individual Council, while leveraging the efficiencies of working in partnership. This sector-leading approach delivers an engagement program that helps inform the development of each council’s separate DAMP.

A copy of the draft Merri-bek City Council Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-2029 is at **Attachment 1.**

### Overview of DAMP Actions

Some key proposed features of the DAMP are discussed below.

#### Cat containment approach

There was significant feedback about cat containment. There was support by three-quarters of the survey and pop-up participants for a 24 hour cat curfew. This builds on engagement undertaken in 2022 on a cat curfew.

Council resolved in December 2022 to focus efforts on cat containment, rather than introducing a curfew at that time.

The community’s feedback with respect to cats in the recent engagement included responding to a question about what respondents noticed about cats when out and about in the local area. Their responses were:

 cats not being kept inside houses during day/night

 cats in the street at night

 cats preying on wildlife

Officers have reviewed this feedback and considered practices of other Councils. A two-pronged approach to cat containment is therefore proposed:

 Increasing Council’s cat desexing program, focusing on the areas where the most cat nuisance complaints come from and resulting in more cats becoming owned and registered and reducing overpopulation.

 Introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew (with an education and transition plan)

This two-pronged approach allows for unowned and semi-owned cats to become owned (through the desexing program) and for owned cats to be kept indoors (through the curfew).

It is proposed that the desexing program would be operated on a similar basis to that undertaken at Banyule City Council. This includes:

 Targeting the program to areas where there are the most complaints about nuisance cats

 Taking an empathetic, educative approach, engaging with residents who might be feeding unowned cats in these areas

 Undertaking desexing, vaccinations, microchipping of these cats for free and paying for the first year of registration for someone agreeing to take on ownership of a cat

It is proposed that the cat curfew would be introduced with the following approach:

 Cat Curfew (24 hours) Order is made in November 2025, with a commencement date of 1 July 2026

 An education campaign featuring information to encourage understanding of the reasons why a curfew is being introduced to be shared with the community from early 2026

 Cat owners, as part of their registration renewal, to receive specific information about the forthcoming cat curfew, and provided with information and tips to support their transition to keeping their cats indoors

 Specialist advice and support to be made available to cat owners who are concerned that their cat may not be able to make the transition to being an indoor cat

#### Dog Walking in Merri-bek Stage 1 Pilot Evaluation and Stage 2

Council received a report in July 2025 following extensive engagement on Dog Walking in Merri-bek. This introduced some changes to the Council Order relating to dog-off leash areas at 8 locations. These changes are to be accompanied by infrastructure changes and implementation of these is underway. A six-month period of monitoring and evaluation will follow, after which the pilot outcomes will be reviewed and some adjustments potentially made to the sites.

Further engagement on the remaining dog off leash areas in Merri-bek will follow the completion of Stage 1 and its evaluation, this will be Stage 2 of Dog Walking in Merri‑bek.

#### Other Initiatives

As well as the above initiatives, the DAMP contains a wide range of actions that respond to the community feedback during consultation and ensure Merri-bek meets its statutory obligations under the Domestic Animals Act 1994. Broadly, these include:

 Ensuring our training of Authorised Officers equips them for their roles

 Creating opportunities to educate and remind dog walkers of their responsibilities such as adhering to dog off leash areas and picking up after their dog

 Having a Council presence at events and festivals to promote animal registration and responsible pet ownership

 Continuing our efforts around managing restricted and menacing dogs and responding to dog attacks

 Overseeing functions relating to registration of Domestic Animal Businesses

The full list of actions are incorporated into the draft DAMP at **Attachment 1**, including timing and evaluation measures.

### Community impact

Whilst the DAMP is focused primarily with the management of dogs and cats, pet ownership has a range of positive outcomes for the ongoing physical and mental health of community members. Pets are often identified as extended members of the family and can provide great companionship, affection and joy.

Community members were invited to participate and have their say on domestic animal issues. Feedback was gathered through three methods: a survey; community pop-ups held at key locations across the municipality; and interviews conducted with key stakeholders. Details are provided in the community consultation and engagement section of this report.

### Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

There are no climate emergency implications associated with this report.

While the primary focus of the DAMP is the management of cats and dogs, Council recognises its broader responsibilities to the community and the environment. This includes protecting native wildlife and biodiversity from the predation and disturbance caused by domestic animals, particularly in environmentally sensitive areas.

The introduction of a 24-hour curfew whereby cats will be required to be kept indoors or contained on private property is proposed in the draft DAMP. A 24-hour curfew is known to produce better outcomes for cats, better outcomes for overpopulation and better protection of wildlife.

### Economic sustainability implications

There are no economic sustainability implications associated with this report. The Domestic Animals Act allows for Domestic Animal Businesses to operate and the DAMP includes actions for Council relating to these businesses. There are 13 such businesses in Merri-bek and the actions of Council support compliant business operations.

### Legal and risk considerations

As mentioned in the Policy Context section, the preparation of a DAMP is a statutory requirement for all Councils.

There is a high level of risk associated with the keeping of dangerous and restricted breeds of dogs, and other dogs that exhibit menacing behaviours. The DAMP outlines Council’s response to the Domestic Animals Act in this regard.

Enforcing these rules and also responding to dog attacks is a high risk function for Council’s Animal Management Officers and so there is training and there are strict protocols for the handling of such issues for the safety of officers and the community.

### Human Rights consideration

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, namely right to freedom of movement, right to protection of families and children; right to take part in public life and rights in criminal proceedings.

The DAMP also acknowledges the diverse needs of the community. Not all residents are pet owners, and some experience fear, discomfort, or access limitations due to off-lead dogs or uncontrolled cats. Council aims to balance the benefits of pet ownership with the rights of all community members to enjoy open space safely and comfortably.

Where restrictions are placed on where dog and cat owners can take or permit their animal to go, these restrictions on and requirements of the owners of these animals are considered to be proportionate to the risk associated with uncontrolled dogs and roaming cats.

The benefits of pet ownership for people’s health and wellbeing are well established. Whilst Domestic Animal Management Plans are concerned primarily with the management of cats and dogs within the community, it is important to note that pet ownership has a range of positive outcomes for the ongoing physical and mental health of community members, including:

 preventing loneliness

 motivating people to exercise regularly

 creating opportunities to meet people and make new friends

 teaching responsibility, as pets require ongoing care.

## 4. Community consultation and engagement

There are three engagement phases in the development of the DAMP. Each stage builds on the previous stage, both in the data collected and the intensity of engagement. The three engagement stages are:

 Stage 1: June - July 2025: Broader community engagement

 Stage 2: June - July 2025: Interviews with key stakeholders

 Stage 3: 15 September - 12 October 2025: Test draft DAMP with the wider community via public exhibition

Stage 1 and Stage 2 community engagement was undertaken from 25 June to 23 July 2025.

The purpose of the engagement was to:

 Inform a new DAMP

 Understand the evidenced needs and understood needs of the community regarding animal management

 Understand the competing community priorities regarding animal management

 Identify potential solutions/activities for the DAMP

 Identify potential partners for delivery of DAMP actions

Stage 1 engagement was promoted via social media, through the My Merri-bek e-newsletter, to participants of the recent Dog Walking in Merri-bek engagement, to more than 17,000 Conversations Merri-bek members, and via the Community Connectors.

Participants could provide feedback via:

 A survey on Conversations Merri-bek (with content and survey translatable in 15 languages). A total of 131 surveys were completed.

 At three place-based community pop-ups were held across the municipality, at different locations and times. The following locations were chosen because of their community appeal:

 Brunswick Town Hall, Brunswick, Saturday July 12 11am - 2pm

 Glenroy Library, Glenroy, Wednesday 16 July 11am - 2pm

 Coburg Farmers Market, Coburg Saturday 19 July 8am - 1pm

 Email submission – three submissions were received during the engagement period.

For Stage 2 engagement, Conversation Co conducted targeted interviews with key stakeholders identified by the partner councils:

 Rescue Rehabilitate Release

 Reservoir Vet Clinic

 RSPCA Victoria

 Petbarn Preston

 Cat Protection Society

 Second Chance Animal Rescue

 Bundoora Veterinary Clinic & Hospital

 Friends of Merri Creek

 Pascoe Vale Veterinary Clinic

 Project Underdog Rescue

A total of 186 participants were involved in the engagement of which 131 responded to the survey, 42 provided feedback at pop-ups, 10 stakeholders were interviewed, and 3 email submissions were received. Community engagement activities were promoted on Council’s website, social media, e-newsletters, and internal communications.

Feedback from over 1800 participants in the Dog Walking in Merri-bek community engagement program has also helped inform the development of the draft DAMP.

A copy of the Merri-bek DAMP Engagement Summary Report is at **Attachment 2.**

**Key findings** – participants were engaged on a variety of issues, including the importance of pets and the impact on health and wellbeing:

 78 per cent of respondents strongly agreed that pets give great comfort

 63 per cent strongly agreed that pets are an important part of the family

 33 per cent strongly agreed we exercise more because we have a dog

 31 per cent strongly agreed we talk to more people because we have a dog

The top three things noticed about dogs when out and about in the local area were:

 dog poo left on the ground

 dogs off-leash where they shouldn’t be

 dogs sitting next to their owners at outdoor cafes

The top three things noticed about cats when out and about in the local area were:

 cats not being kept inside houses during day/night

 cats in the street at night

 cats preying on wildlife

**Key themes** - the key themes emerging from the engagement program are listed in the table below:

| **Theme** | **Theme details** |
| --- | --- |
| Responsible pet ownership | • Improving owner behaviours and control of animals.  • Increasing community education and communications about responsible dog and cat ownership. |
| Over-population | • Providing a free cat desexing program or increasing and continuing to provide low cost and subsidised desexing.  • Increasing rehoming efforts.  • Reducing illegal and irresponsible backyard breeding.  • Reducing stray cats.  • Providing education to the community about the benefits of desexing animals. |
| Protection from nuisance | • Addressing dog waste in public places.  • Addressing roaming cats, especially at night.  • Addressing cats preying on wildlife.  • Addressing dogs off-leash when they shouldn’t be.  • Consider introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew.  • Availability of cat traps.  • Having dog-free nature reserves. |
| Review of Council services | • Increasing patrols and officer visibility.  • Increasing community education.  • Reviewing dog off and on-leash areas to includes areas for specific types or size.  • Increasing fines for people doing the wrong thing. |
| Dog attacks | • Education around dog behaviour, selecting the ‘right’ dog and effects of dog attacks.  • Improving safety at dog parks.  • Increased patrol and enforcement of on- and off-leash dog areas. |
| Pet registration/identification | • Reducing registration fees.  • Educating about the purpose and benefits of registration. |
| Dangerous and restricted dogs | • Addressing aggressive dogs in off-leash parks.  • Stricter rules specifically for dangerous breeds. |
| Training for authorised officers | • Providing training to encourage positive interactions with the community |

### 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. All members of the community are either directly (pet owners) or indirectly impacted by the DAMP. The community and key stakeholders have had an opportunity to express their views through the robust engagement process as detailed above. A further opportunity to express their views will be provided during the public exhibition period.

## 5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

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

## 6. Financial and Resources Implications

The actions in the DAMP 2025-2029 are broken down by year. Actions identified in Year One are accounted for within the current year budget of the Amenity and Compliance branch. Most actions in the future years are budgeted for within the Amenity and Compliance base budget. Some specific projects will require funding e.g. expanding the desexing program. Where additional funding is required, grant opportunities will be sought.

## 7. Implementation

Subject to Council’s decision, the draft DAMP 2025-2029 will be placed on public exhibition for the period 15 September to 12 October 2025. Feedback from the public exhibition will be considered and amendments made to the draft if required. The final draft will then be presented to the November 2025 Council meeting for endorsement. Subject to Council’s decision a copy of the plan will be provided to the Secretary of Victoria’s Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) by 1 December 2025.

The Order to introduce a 24 hour Cat Curfew from 1 July 2026 is proposed to be authorised by Council at its November 2025 meeting, along with the DAMP adoption.

Implementation of all actions in the DAMP will be progressed, tracked and reported annually as required by the Domestic Animals Act 1994 section 68A (3).

## Attachment/s

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | DRAFT Merri-bek Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-2029 | D25/451446 |  |
| **2** | Merri-bek DAMP Engagement Summary Report | D25/451467 |  |

**7.4 Integrated Water Management Action Plan 2025 - 2030 - for Adoption**

**Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade**

**Sustainability and Climate**

**Officer Recommendation**

That Council:

1. Adopts the draft Integrated Water Management (IWM) Action Plan 2025 – 2030 at Attachment 1 to this report.

2. Refers to the annual budget process, the budgets identified in Table 1 of this report.

3. Acknowledges the valuable contribution of the community and external stakeholders during the development of Merri-bek’s IWM Action Plan 2025–2030, including the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Merri Creek Management Committee, Chain of Ponds Collaboration, Waterwatch and the Friends of Waterways groups, Melbourne Water, the IWM Forum (led by the Victorian Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action).

4. Authorises the Director Place and Environment to make minor amendments to the IWM Action Plan 2025–2030 prior to publication.

**REPORT**

**Executive summary**

The Integrated Water Management (IWM) Strategy 2040 brings together all elements of the water cycle to achieve the greatest social, economic and environmental benefits for the community. It provides the vision for a water sensitive Merri-bek, supported by five-year action plans. Taking an integrated approach ensures that the water cycle is more resilient to the impacts of climate change and a growing population, while continuing to make Merri-bek a great place to live, work and play.

This report presents Councils final draft Integrated Water Management Action Plan for 2025–2030. This plan builds on completion of the 2020–2025 Action Plan and sets out the next phase of initiatives to improve water outcomes, enhance resilience, and support community health and climate adaptation. It was released for public consultation between Monday 14 April and Sunday 11 May 2025.

Overall, the community feedback affirmed the strategic direction of the Action Plan. This reaffirms Council’s plans to progress projects and partnerships to further advance stormwater harvesting, waterway health, flood management, and the transition to water sensitive urban design and long-term resilience and liveability goals – which in turn contribute to urban cooling, permeability, biodiversity and urban greening. The engagement also provided valuable refinements to better reflect the needs of the community, partners, and Traditional Owners.

Feedback has informed refinements and the final action plan presented for Council endorsement includes:

 Revisions to actions 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 to address community concerns about permeability, enforcement, and maintenance responsibilities

 Moving the flood education action (Action 2.3.1) to better reflect its primary role in community awareness rather than risk mitigation

 Expanding Action 4.1.2 to reinforce third-party commitments by embedding Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) and IWM principles across all Council and externally delivered projects—including Victoria’s Big Build works and level crossing removals—to ensure alignment with the IWM Strategy and delivery of measurable water-sensitive outcomes

 Clarifying language and intent of cultural engagement actions (Actions 1.1.1 and 1.1.2) to ensure meaningful and ongoing partnership with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation

 Incorporating feedback into future planning cycles, including actions on IWM for activity centres and a drought response framework for open space

 Rewording some actions to allow for greater flexibility of scope for actions occurring later in the five-year action plan – without altering desired outcome

 Adding a response to the council’s EPA obligations as an appendix to the Action plan.

**Previous Council Decisions**

**Draft Integrated Water Management Action Plan 2025-2030 – Community Consultation** – 9 April 2025

1. *That Council:*
2. *1. Endorses the draft Integrated Water Management Action Plan 2025 -2030 (Attachment 2) for community engagement for four weeks from Monday 14 April until Sunday 11 May 2025, including two pop-up sessions in Coburg, and Glenroy.*
3. *2. Receives a further report at the August 2025 Council meeting with a final version of the Integrated Water Management Action Plan 2025 - 2030 for adoption.*

*3. Acknowledges the valuable contribution of the community and external stakeholders in the delivery of outcomes in the 2020-2025 Action Plan Integrated Water Management Strategy, including Melbourne Water, the Integrated Water Management Forum (led by the Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action), Merri-creek Management Committee and the Waterwatch team and the “Friends of….” groups.*

**1. Policy Context**

Climate change is reducing the availability of potable water supplies, putting pressure on stormwater systems, open spaces, landscapes and biodiversity. Droughts are becoming longer in duration and there are more frequent intense storm bursts and flash flooding and more extremes of temperature. These changes are also impacting waterway health, contributing to erosion, reduced water quality, and the degradation of aquatic ecosystems. It is becoming increasingly difficult to keep our city cool, green, healthy and resilient.

**Council Plan 2020-2025**

The IWM Strategy (and first 5-year Action Plan) was adopted in August 2020 and sets out the vision for a water sensitive city by 2040. The endorsed IWM Strategy 2040 can be found on [Conversations Merri-bek](https://conversations.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/integrated-water-management-strategy).

The implementation of the IWM Strategy is a Major Initiative and Priority under Theme 1 – An environmentally proactive Merri-bek in the 2021-2025 Council Plan. (Council Actions 161, 198, 200)

**Draft Council Plan**

The draft Council Plan 2026–2030 sets a renewed direction for Merri-bek’s commitment to environmental sustainability, cultural connection, and community wellbeing. It is structured around five strategic themes. IWM directly supports the following:

 Theme 1: Care for Nature and Climate Resilience; This theme recognises the importance of protecting and restoring natural systems, increasing resilience to climate change, and supporting Traditional Owner self-determination.

 Theme 3: Beautiful and Liveable City; This theme focuses on creating a well designed, accessible, and sustainable built environment that supports vibrant and inclusive neighbourhoods

Merri-bek’s IWM strategy proposes to invest in new ways to diversify supply, reduce demand and build resilience. In becoming a 21st century water sensitive city it also seeks to harness benefits from our local catchments including green infrastructure, new sources of water, and the protection of healthy downstream environments.

**Council Strategy Alignment**

The IWM Strategy and draft Action Plan 2025 - 30 is strategically aligned to:

 Open Space Strategy, April 2024

 Urban Forest Strategy 2017-2027

 Nature Plan 2020

 Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2020

 Public Place Service Improvement Plan 2024

 Climate Risk Strategy 2022

 Draft Circular Economy Strategy

 Merri-bek’s Statement of Commitment

 Urban Heat Island Effect Action Plan 2017-2026

 Merri-bek Local Planning Policy - Environmentally sustainable development Clause 15.01-2L-05

**State Government and Regulatory Alignment**

The IWM Strategy and draft Action Plan 2025-30 align with key state-level water policies and frameworks, including:

 Water for Victoria (2016)

 Integrated Water Management Framework for Victoria (2017)

 Yarra and Maribyrnong Strategic Direction Statements (September 2018)

 IWM Forum Catchment Integrated Water Management Plan (2022) and Action Plans (2024). Specifically:

o Maribyrnong Catchment IWM Action Plan 2024: [View Plan](https://www.water.vic.gov.au/our-programs/integrated-water-management/iwm-forums" \t "_blank" \o "https://www.water.vic.gov.au/our-programs/integrated-water-management/iwm-forums)

o Yarra Catchment IWM Action Plan 2024: [View Plan](https://www.water.vic.gov.au/our-programs/integrated-water-management/iwm-forums" \t "_blank" \o "https://www.water.vic.gov.au/our-programs/integrated-water-management/iwm-forums)

o Water is Life: Traditional Owner Access to Water Roadmap 2022

The IWM Strategy 2040 was developed to align with Yarra and Maribyrnong strategic direction statements (September 2018). The proposed draft actions for 2025 – 2030 have been developed to align with the state government-led Integrated Water Management Plans – Actions for delivery (2024), developed by the Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action (DEECA) IWM Forums, of which Merri-bek is an active member.

Planning Scheme requirements, including:

 Urban Stormwater Best Practice Environmental Management Guidelines (BPEM, 1999 as amended)

 Victorian Planning Provisions (VC154 amendments – Stormwater Management, 2018)

 State Environmental Protection Policy - Waters (SEPP)

 Healthy Waterways Strategy (HWS) 2018

 EPA Publication 1739.1, 2021 [Urban stormwater management guidance](https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/about-epa/publications/1739-1) (publication 1739)

Under the Environment Protection (EPA) Act 2017, the General Environmental Duty (GED) mandates that risks of harm to human health and the environment must be minimised. Councils and other land or infrastructure managers (OMLI) have explicit obligations to prevent pollution, protect waterway health, and ensure environmental sustainability. These responsibilities align directly with the IWM Strategy’s vision for a water-sensitive Merri-bek, reinforcing integrated planning and investment in sustainable urban water management.

Furthermore, in accordance with Council obligations, local governments must review and update their plans at intervals of no more than five years. This Action Plan meets that requirement and provides the next stage of implementation toward Merri-bek’s 2040 water vision.

**2. Background**

The IWM Strategy 2040, endorsed by Council in August 2020, brings together all elements of the water cycle to achieve social, economic and environmental benefits for the community. Taking an integrated approach ensures that the water cycle is more resilient to the impacts of climate change and a growing population, while continuing to make Merri-bek a great place to live, work and play.

The IWM Strategy was developed in response to a range of existing and emerging issues impacting our city including but not limited to:

**Climate change.** Reduced availability of potable water supplies adds pressures on the stormwater system, open spaces, landscapes and biodiversity. Droughts are becoming longer in duration and there are more frequent intense storm bursts, flash flooding, and temperature extremes. These changes increase the risk of poor water quality, erosion, and degradation of local waterways. The changes reduce the resilience of our city, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to keep our city cool, green, and healthy. We must invest in new ways to diversify supply, reduce demand and build resilience.

**Population growth.** The City of Merri-bek covers 50.9 square kilometres and is one of Melbourne’s most populous municipalities and had an estimated resident population of 185,767 people in 2019. By 2036, Merri-bek’s population [is forecast](https://www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/globalassets/website-merri-bek/areas/my-council/strategies-policies-and-collected-data/collected-data/population-forecast-data/covid-impact-study---merri-bek-population-and-housing-scenarios-forecast---full-report.pdf) to be 235,200[[1]](#footnote-1).  
Increasing population will lead to a higher demand for limited water supplies, pollution pressures caused by urban consolidation, putting added pressure on Merri-bek and Victoria’s precious water resources that support our local community and environment.

**Regulatory and policy.** Water scarcity and regulated water management requirements, especially in drought periods, will impact urban habitat and biodiversity, open spaces and landscapes.

**Economy.** Increasing water and sewage charges by water authorities, the cost of floods and inundation, increased pressure on drainage systems and capacity to cope with more frequent and more severe rain events all place additional financial pressure on the community and Council.

**Knowledge and technology.** Developments in water recycling, stormwater reuse, and stormwater treatment are constantly informing new ways of planning, designing and delivering council assets and services. Anticipating these needs and keeping informed of any changes and innovation will enable Merri-bek to better plan for change and place us in the best position to manage this precious resource.

The IWM Strategy 2040 provides the vision for a water sensitive Merri-bek, supported by five-year action plans. Following completion of the 2020–2025 Action Plan, the next draft Action Plan for 2025–2030 has been prepared in consultation with stakeholders and the community. This plan builds on previous work and sets out the next phase of actions to improve water outcomes, enhance resilience, and support community health and climate adaptation.

**3. Issues**

Following Council’s endorsement in April 2025, community consultation on the draft IWM Action Plan 2025–2030 was conducted between Monday 14 April and Sunday 11 May 2025.

Overall, the engagement process affirmed the strategic direction of the Action Plan and the focus areas, supporting our plan to progress projects and partnerships to further advance stormwater harvesting, waterway health, flood management, and the transition to water sensitive urban design and long-term resilience and liveability goals. The engagement process also provided valuable refinements that better reflect the needs of the community, partners, and Traditional Owners.

**Key themes raised from the consultation included**:

 Strong support for stormwater harvesting projects and urban cooling measures

 Requests for improved maintenance of stormwater infrastructure

 Concerns about loss of permeability in infill development, and compliance with private development controls

 Support for nature-based flood mitigation solutions, biodiversity protection, creek restoration, passive irrigation, and water reuse

 A desire for improved public education on waterways and IWM principles

 Requests for clearer cultural engagement commitments, protection of sensitive sites, and integration of IWM into other planning priorities

**Post-consultation adjustments:**

This feedback has been used to refine and strengthen the final Action Plan as follows:

 Revisions to actions 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 to address community concerns about permeability, enforcement, and maintenance responsibilities

 Relocated flood education (Action 2.3.1) to better reflect its primary role in community awareness rather than risk mitigation

 Expanded Action 4.1.2 to reinforce third-party commitments by embedding WSUD and IWM principles across all Council and externally delivered projects—including Victoria’s Big Build works and level crossing removals—to ensure alignment with the IWM Strategy and delivery of measurable water-sensitive outcomes

 Clarified language and intent of cultural engagement actions (Actions 1.1.1 and 1.1.2) to ensure meaningful and ongoing partnership with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation

 Incorporated feedback into future planning cycles, including actions on IWM for activity centres and a drought response framework for open space

 Rewording to some actions to allow for greater flexibility of scope for actions occurring later in the five-year action plan – without altering desired outcome

 Added a response to the council’s EPA obligations as an appendix to the Action plan

The draft IWM Action Plan 2025-30 for endorsement can be found in **Attachment 1**.

**Key highlights from the plan:**

 Stronger partnership with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC), embedding cultural values and Traditional Owner knowledge in planning, design, and delivery.

 Recognition of the changes to legislation in recent years focusing on council’s obligations as land managers such as the amendment to the Environmental Protection Act in 2021 which introduced the general environmental duty (GED) for all Victorians to avoid the risk of environmental damage.

 Continuing to deliver projects in response to the community support for capital works including stormwater harvesting projects (e.g., Oak Park, CB Smith Reserve) to capture, treat, and reuse water for irrigation.

 Continuing to deliver projects in response to the community support for capital works including wetland projects to transform under-utilised open space into landmark projects for waterway restoration, climate resilience, biodiversity and community wellbeing. (e.g., Fran Street, Kingsford Smith Ulm or Moonee Boulevard wetlands).

 Expanded focus on urban cooling, permeability and tree health, including passive irrigation and technical guidance to complement our canopy growth targets.

 Clear commitments to support biodiversity and increase areas of creek naturalisation, including wetland construction, with habitat restoration and ecological principles supporting local flora and fauna.

 Stronger emphasis on compliance and enforcement to ensure stormwater management obligations are met in private development.

 Integration of IWM and WSUD principles across Council and externally delivered projects (e.g., Big Build Victoria, level-crossing removals) so all capital works deliver water-sensitive outcomes.

 Recognition of community concerns about infrastructure maintenance, permeability loss, and the impacts of urban development, with actions revised to address these issues.

**Climate change and environmental sustainability implications**

Transitioning to a water sensitive city is a crucial part of becoming a resilient, climate adapted city that responds to the Climate Emergency. The sustainable management of water resources remains crucial for resilience to climate change.

Some examples of specific actions that support this include understanding flood hazard, stormwater harvesting for irrigation to reduce potable water use, reducing stormwater pollution, and increasing provision of water for biodiversity, greening and cooling.

Acting to improve water management outcomes helps to mitigate the negative impact the community and environment experiences on our waterways, on the supply of our drinking water, on the comfort and amenity of public and private realm and community assets, resources and services.

**Economic sustainability implications**

The IWM Strategy and Action Plan supports long-term economic sustainability by promoting efficient water resource management. Reducing water usage, improving stormwater infrastructure, and encouraging water-sensitive urban design, can help lower operational costs, minimise damage to public assets, and enhance resilience against climate-related water challenges.

**Legal and risk considerations**

The IWM Action Plan 2025–2030 has been developed in alignment with key legislative obligations and policy frameworks, including the Environment Protection Act 2017, which establishes the General Environmental Duty (GED). This duty requires Council and other land or infrastructure managers to proactively manage risks to human health and the environment, including through the prevention of stormwater pollution and protection of waterway health.

Failure to implement appropriate water management practices may result in non-compliance with the GED, potential environmental harm, reputational damage, and increased financial liabilities for Council.

The Action Plan also helps mitigate risks associated with the impacts of climate change, such as more frequent extreme rainfall, flash flooding, and long-term water scarcity. Implementation of the actions will strengthen Merri-bek’s capacity to respond to these risks through more integrated planning and infrastructure investment.

Risks to delivery may arise from competing Council priorities, funding limitations, and cross-organisational dependencies. These risks will be managed through clear governance arrangements, internal coordination, and alignment with other Council strategies.

**Human Rights consideration**

A Gender and Equity Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the draft IWM Action Plan 2025-2030

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 new or revised policies/ programs and services with a direct and significant impact on the community. The tool that we are asked to use are gender impact assessments and the Act requires us to demonstrate how our recommendations and actions will:

 meet the needs of people of different genders

 address gender inequality, and

 promote gender equality.

No changes were made as a result of the Assessment, however Gender and Equity Impact Assessments will continue to be undertaken for many of the specific actions which may be projects or initiatives over the life of the five-year action plan.

**Cultural rights**

Under the Charter of Human Rights, First Nations peoples have the right to enjoy their identity and culture, to maintain and use their language, and maintain their kinship ties to members of their community.

The Charter also recognises the special relationship First Nations peoples have with the land, water and resources in Victoria. This relationship could be spiritual, material or economic and may be connected to traditional laws and customs. This right also protects your access to cultural institutions, ancestral lands, natural resources and traditional knowledge.

In recognition of this feedback, the final draft IWM Action Plan acknowledges Traditional Owners through specific actions and strengthened wording, highlighting close partnership with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and recognising WWCHAC as a key support partner across other actions in the plan.

**4. Community consultation and engagement**

Following endorsement of draft documents at the 9 April 2025 Council Meeting, community consultation was undertaken on the draft Action Plan:

**Engagement activities included:**

 An updated project page on Conversations Merri-bek featuring the draft Action Plan and a public survey

 Two in-person pop-up events: one in Glenroy and one in Coburg

 Targeted social media promotions to raise awareness and invite participation

 Ongoing partnership with Traditional Owners, including Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWHAC) via the Integrated Water Management Officer and Council’s Water Unit

 Direct engagement with key community and advocacy groups, including Merri Creek Management Committee, Chain of Ponds Collaboration, Friends of Merri Creek, and Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek

 Consultation with strategic partners and agencies, such as Melbourne Water, DEECA, Yarra Valley Water, and the EPA

 Engagement with neighbouring councils to ensure alignment and regional collaboration

Overall, the community feedback was positive and affirmed the strategic direction of the Action Plan. Reaffirming our plans to progress projects and partnerships to further advance stormwater harvesting, waterway health, flood management, and the transition to water sensitive urban design and long-term resilience and liveability goals – which in turn contribute to urban cooling, permeability, biodiversity and urban greening. The engagement also provided valuable refinements that better reflect the needs of the community, partners, and Traditional Owners.

The detailed engagement outcome report will be published on the relevant project pages of the Conversations Merri-bek website.

**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.

Through community engagement, feedback was gathered, and changes to the Action Plan were made where they directly responded to the ideas, needs, or concerns of affected persons before the Action Plan was finalized for Council endorsement.

**5. Officer declaration of Conflict of Interest**

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

**6. Financial and resources implications**

The estimated capital requirements for the IWM Action Plan 2025–2030 are included in Council’s forward 5-Year Capital Works Program, as detailed below. The total estimated five-year cost of the Action Plan is approximately $14 million – including a mix of Council and external grant funding. This includes both base and operational expenditure and capital expenditure.

A detailed budget breakdown is presented in **Table 1**.

*Table 1. Budget for the delivery of the IWM Action Plan*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Financial Year** | **Base AND Operating** | | **Capital\*\*** | | **Estimated additional maintenance cost per year \*\*\*** |
| **Existing budget for IWM** | **Subject to Business Case and external grant funding** | **Seeking external grants (Partnership opportunities with Melbourne Water and DEECA)** | **Council 2025-29 adopted budget (as per Council meeting June 2025)** |
| **2025-2026** | 90,000 | 0 | 500,000 | 787,000 | N/A |
| **2026-2027** | 90,000 | 30,000 | 3,000,000 | 3,297,000 | N/A |
| **2027-2028** | 90,000 | 50,000 | 2,350,000 | 2,656,500 |  |
| **2028-2029** | 90,000 | 0 | 0 | 750,000 | 15,000 |
| **2029-2030** | 90,000 | 0 | 0 | 130,000 | 35,000 |
| **Sum\*** | **450,000** | **80,000** | **5,850,000** | **7,620,500** | **50,000** |

\*Additional Funding is required to achieve the targets.

\*\* Capital costs are indicative only. Final budget allocations will be confirmed through future Council budget processes, and following completion of detailed design.

\*\*\* Maintenance costs apply once assets are constructed. Landscape maintenance is part of the construction contractor after one year.

 **Base** **budget funding** (Existing)

$450,000 expenditure is part of council’s existing base budget over the five-year period, primarily to support program coordination, technical advice, education, and engagement initiatives.

 **Operational funding**

$80k operational over 5 years requested subject to future budget processes, business case approvals and/or external grant funding.

 **Capital funding:**

A further $7.62 million in capital projects is identified in Council’s forward 5-Year Capital Works Program (as per Council meeting June 2025) and is subject to future budget approval and detailed design.

The plan identifies $5.85 million in targeted external grants, primarily from Melbourne Water’s *Liveable Communities, Liveable Waterways* program, DEECA, and other state or federal funding programs.

Over the past decade, Merri-bek has successfully secured over $5 million in grant funding to deliver IWM projects. Building on this strong track record, Council will continue to proactively pursue funding opportunities to support the delivery of priority actions and maintain momentum toward the city’s long-term vision of becoming a water sensitive city.

 **Maintenance costs:**

Maintenance for new WSUD assets has been estimated based on planned project delivery timelines, with costs commencing in 2028-2029 as assets are completed and become operational. These costs are expected to increase incrementally in line with project completion, reaching approximately $50,000 per annum by 2029–30. Typically, the first year of maintenance is covered under construction contracts, with ongoing upkeep subsequently absorbed into broader open space maintenance budgets.

**7. Implementation**

Pending endorsement, next steps for implementing the action plan are:

1. Conversations Merri-bek project pages will be updated, with notification to project followers.

2. The endorsed documents will be uploaded to Council’s website and news items posted in relevant e-newsletter/channels.

3. Actions will be loaded into Council’s corporate reporting system and delegated as appropriate, for progress tracking and periodic reporting.

4. Refreshed governance structures will be confirmed and established to oversee implementation.

**Attachment/s**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | SBE - IWM - FINAL- Merri Bek IWM Action Plan 2025-2030 | D25/433704 |  |

**7.5 2026 State Election Advocacy Priorities**

**Chief Executive Officer, Cathy Henderson**

**Governance and Strategy**

**Officer Recommendation**

That Council adopts the following Advocacy Priorities for the 2026 State Election:

a) Upfield Rail Corridor

b) Improving bus networks

c) Accessible transport

d) Road safety

e) Active transport

f) Coburg Library and piazza project

g) Brunswick Baths Gym expansion and preparation for electrification

h) Ballerrt Mooroop

i) All Abilities Playground

j) Sport infrastructure

k) Growing basketball in Merri-bek

l) Coburg Social and Affordable Housing

m) Building better homes through environmentally sustainable design

n) Creating cooler greener spaces and community connections to nature

o) More businesses and more jobs in Merri-bek

p) Social justice initiatives

**REPORT**

**Executive Summary**

Merri-bek last adopted State Advocacy Priorities in April 2022 (alongside Federal Advocacy Priorities, with both elections occurring in the same year).

These advocacy priorities were the focus for Council’s advocacy platform during the 2022 Federal and State elections.

In February 2024, Council adopted new Federal Advocacy Priorities, with a focus on infrastructure, to advocate for in the lead up to the May 2025 Federal Election.

The next Victorian State Election will be held on 28 November 2026 it is timely for Council to adopt new State advocacy priorities. These will provide a focus for Council to promote its advocacy priorities to key stakeholders and an opportunity to secure support and investment in projects and initiatives for the benefit of the Merri-bek community.

The 2026 State Election advocacy priorities proposed for adoption in this report were developed and selected following discussions and workshops with Council’s Senior Managers, Executive and Mayor and via briefing with Councillors. Council’s Community Vision, Council Plan, Long-term Financial Plan, Capital Works Plan and 2025/26 Budget were also considered in relation to advocacy priorities.

The adoption of specific advocacy priorities for the next State election will not curtail opportunities for further advocacy associated with existing advocacy priorities or emergent issues nor will this impact operational advocacy which periodically occurs through day-to-day activities at an officer level.

**Previous Council Decisions**

**Federal Advocacy Priorities –** 14 February 2024

*That Council adopts the following Federal Advocacy Priority infrastructure projects:*

 *Upfield Rail Corridor upgrade and duplication and extension and electrification to Wallan*

 *Coburg Library redevelopment*

 *Central Coburg Social and Affordable Housing*

 *All Abilities Playground*

 *Ballerrt Mooroop*

 *More Trees in Merri-bek*

 *Coburg Aquatic Centre redevelopment*

 *Gillon Oval Grandstand refurbishment*

 *Neighbourhood Playground Upgrades (multiple sites)*

 *Sports Field Lighting Upgrades (multiple sites)*

**Advocacy Priorities -** 13 April 2022

*That Council:*

*1. Adopts the following advocacy priority projects and initiatives*

* Upfield rail corridor upgrade and duplication*

* 33 Saxon Street cultural and creative hub*

* Fawkner Leisure Centre redevelopment*

*2. Adopts the following advocacy supporting projects and initiatives*

* Improving bus connections*

* Accessible public transport*

* Improve safety at Jacana railway station*

* Active transport, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure*

* Speed limit reductions*

* Climate change, sustainability and biodiversity*

* Greening Moreland*

* Planning reform for sustainable design outcomes*

* Economic development, local businesses and jobs*

* Early childhood and universal kindergarten access*

* Female friendly sport and recreation facilities*

* Investment in aged care and the older comm unity*

* Social justice initiatives linked to:*

* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community*

* Refugees and asylum seekers*

* Mental health*

* Family violence*

* Raise the Rate*

* Social and Affordable Housing including public housing*

* GLBTIQ*

* Gambling*

* People Experiencing Homelessness*

*3. Supports further investigation into the extension of Trams 19 and 58.*

**Northern Region Transport Strategy -** 8 December 2021

*That Council:*

*1. Endorses the Northern Council Alliance Northern Region Transport Strategy (2021) at Attachment 1, subject to Council advising the Northern Alliance it will not participate in a pilot sub-regional parking amendment to introduce maximum parking rates.*

*2. Supports the further development of the projects listed on page 13 of the Northern Region Transport Strategy (at Attachment 1) with particular reference to the development of a regional bus network plan.*

*3. Notes the strategy will be used for ongoing regional advocacy purposes by the Northern Councils Alliance.*

*4. Notes that the duplication of the Upfield Line north of Gowrie Station remains a key transport advocacy item reflected in the Council Plan.*

**Inner Metropolitan Councils Advocacy –** 12 May 2021

*That Council:*

*1. Agrees to join the proposed group of inner metropolitan city councils for the purposes of shared advocacy, with a working title of M9.*

*2. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to execute a Memorandum of Understanding formalising Council’s membership of M9.*

*3. Receives further information on proposed advocacy priorities for the group.*

**Public Transport Advocacy** **–** 12 May 2021

*That Council:*

*1. Resolves to have a report back to council about how the following Public Transport projects listed in point 3 can be achieved including advocacy and other actions council can take to progress these projects.*

*2. Seeks to work with the State Government, Federal Government, Local MPs, neighbouring municipalities and other partners to progress these projects.*

*3. Includes the following projects in the report:*

*a) Duplication of the Upfield railway line to improve frequency of trains and future extension of the line.*

*b) Extension of the 19 Tram line to at least Anderson Road in Fawkner and to Camp Road, Campbellfield to provide a link with suburban rail and better transport options for residents in the north of Melbourne.*

*c) Extension of the No 58 tram route past Bell Street along Turner and Derby Streets.*

*d) Better East-West bus connections and frequency of buses.*

**1. Policy Context**

Strategic advocacy is a key part of Council operations providing a means of alerting other levels of government to priority issues and needs of the Merri-bek community. Typically, this takes the form of proposing and influencing policy positions, identifying partnership opportunities and lobbying for financial resources for priority projects.

**Alignment with Council Plan 2021-25**

Alignment with various Council strategies under the five themes of the Council Plan 2021-2025.

**An environmentally proactive Merri-bek**

 1.1. Lead by example and partner with others to accelerate the shift to zero carbon emissions in energy, transport and waste in ways that are efficient, financially responsible, healthy and socially fair.

*Major initiatives and priorities*

 1. Implement Zero Carbon Merri-bek including 2030 targets review, transition off fossil gas and innovative partnerships for efficient and distributed renewable energy

**Moving and living safely in Merri-bek**

 2.3. Advocate to improve public transport capacity and equitable access across Merri-bek, including advocating for bus services to be scheduled to operate at night and on weekends.

 2.4. Advocate for increased funding from State and Federal Governments for bike and pedestrian infrastructure to ensure our bike routes are safe, accessible, and continuous with an increased focus on fully accessible, signalised road crossings.

 2.7. Maintain road safety focus through review of crashes and reported accidents, advocacy and continued efforts to address black spots, reduce speed limits and implement traffic calming measures including road closures.

*Major initiatives and priorities*

 12. Advocate to improve public transport capacity and equitable access across Merri-bek.

**A healthy and caring Merri-bek**

 3.1. Plan, deliver and advocate for services and good outcomes that meet the changing needs of Merri-bek’s diverse and growing population.

 3.6 Strengthen the relationship with Traditional Custodians and First Nations communities to support a process towards self-determination and local, regional or national Treaty or Treaties.

*Major initiatives and priorities*

 15. Develop and implement a Climate Resilience Strategy (including climate adaptation).

 19. Advocate to support delivery of the Ballerrt Mooroop Community Hub.

 22. Implement the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan and audits.

**Vibrant spaces and place in Merri-bek**

 4.1. Improve and provide equitable access to council-owned community infrastructure by investing in needs driven, place-based, integrated services and facilities including developing precinct plans.

 4.7. Increase local affordable housing outcomes by continuing to support the activities of Merri-bek Affordable Housing Ltd, advocating for and facilitating developers to contribute to affordable housing and attracting State-funded and not for profit public, social and affordable housing investment to Merri-bek.

 4.9. Revitalise Merri-bek’s major activity centres to deliver new integrated community facilities and services, enable new cultural spaces, create jobs and improve local accessibility and amenity, while protecting the special character that each centre is known for and advocating for affordable housing outcomes.

 4.11. Make Merri-bek a creative and cultural destination within Melbourne, significantly contributing to local vibrancy, cohesion and inclusion.

*Major initiatives and priorities*

 25. Revitalise the Coburg Activity Centre (start landing and communicating).

 27. Review and implement the Affordable Housing Action Plan including the development of affordable housing on council land.

 31. Activate major activity centres with intensive, holistic, rapid turnaround economic programs that increase social and economic activity and enhance local identity.

 34. Implement Library strategy.

**An Empowered and collaborative Merri-bek**

 5.5. Contribute to great community outcomes through partnering with community and stakeholders in a coordinated advocacy effort.

 5.8. Ensuring our assets provide the best fit for community needs over the long term.

**2. Background**

Merri-bek has a strong history of successfully advocating for changes in government policy, securing funding for community infrastructure, influencing significant State government infrastructure projects and advancing human rights interests.

Some examples of recent success include funding for sporting upgrades, influencing outcomes of level crossing removals, a broad range of transport related improvements, some changes to the approach to refugees at a Federal level, extensions to current Aged Care Commonwealth Home Support program block funding and Citizenship ceremonies no longer having to be held on 26 January.

Merri-bek last adopted State Advocacy Priorities in April 2022 (along with Federal Advocacy Priorities, with both elections occurring in the same year).

These advocacy priorities were the focus for Council’s advocacy platform during the 2022 Federal and State elections. Council was successful in attracting Federal funding for the Saxon Street Cultural and Community Hub and the Fawkner Leisure Centre redevelopment, which are now complete and open to the community. Council attracted State funding for sporting upgrades at JP Fawkner Reserve in Oak Park and Cole Reserve in Pascoe Vale, as well as funding for one of 100 Neighbourhood Batteries in Merri-bek.

In February 2024, Council adopted new Federal Advocacy Priorities, with a focus on infrastructure, to advocate for in the lead up to the May 2025 Federal Election. Council was successful in attracting funding towards the renovation of the grandstand, lighting and changeroom upgrades at Gillon Oval Brunswick and funding for a roof over, and resurfacing of, netball courts for the Fawkner Netball Club. Council also secured funding to increase vegetation along creek corridors and improve stormwater retention along Merri Creek near the Coburg North Sports Hub.

Just prior to the Federal election period, Council, in collaboration with the Northern Councils Alliance, welcomed $7.05 million towards planning for Melbourne Northern Suburbs rail upgrades, including delivery of a business case to develop and prioritise options for upgrades to the Upfield and Craigieburn rail lines – an outcome of long-standing regional advocacy for the upgrade, duplication, extension and electrification of the Upfield Rail line.

The next Victorian State Election will be held on 28 November 2026. It is timely for Council to adopt new State advocacy priorities. These will provide a focus for Council to promote its advocacy priorities to key stakeholders and an opportunity to secure support and investment in projects and initiatives for the benefit of the Merri-bek community.

The adoption of specific advocacy priorities for the next State election will not curtail opportunities for further advocacy associated with existing advocacy priorities or emergent issues nor will this impact operational advocacy which periodically occurs through day-to-day activities at an officer level.

**3. Issues**

The 2026 State Election Advocacy Priorities proposed for adoption were developed and selected following discussions and workshops with Council’s Senior Managers, Executive and Mayor and via briefings with Councillors. Council’s Community Vision, Council Plan, Long-term Financial Plan, Capital Works Plan and 2025/26 Budget were also considered in relation to advocacy priorities.

Specifically, considerations when developing and selecting advocacy priorities include the current Council Plan, existing council resolutions and strategies.

**Peak Body and Regional Advocacy**

Merri-bek advocates on many issues, both local and broader. On broader topics, advocacy will often be more effective if there is collaboration between councils. The advocacy priorities of regional advocacy organisations Council participates in are considered, and alignment sought where suitable, when developing and selecting Merri-bek City Council’s advocacy priorities.

Merri-bek City Council is a member of several advocacy bodies including the M9, the Northern Councils Alliance, the Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action, the Mayors Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum, and the Alliance for Gambling Reform.

Merri-bek Council is a member of peak bodies engaged in advocacy including Municipal Association of Victoria and Victorian Local Governance Association. Merri-bek Council is also a member of Northlink.

**Proposed 2026 State Election Advocacy Priorities**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Upfield Rail Corridor | *Duplicate and upgrade the Upfield Rail line and extend (through Roxburgh Park) and electrify to Wallan* |
| Improving bus networks | *Prioritise the delivery of the Bus Reform project in Melbourne’s North-West specifically:*  o *More frequent and improved bus services across Merri-bek, particularly through east-west connections*  o *More weeknight and Sunday services on buses in Merri-bek* |
| Accessible transport | *Invest in accessible tram stops along the Sydney Road Route 19 Tram Line.* |
| Road safety |  *Improve safety along Murray Road and around the Pentridge and Coburg High School areas for pedestrians and cyclists, particularly children travelling to school.*   *Improve safety on Moreland Road by delivering safer speed limits and Pedestrian Operated Signals (near Queen Street)*   *Fund a feasibility study and designs for safe and accessible active travel options over Coburg's Bell Street bridge at the Nicholson Street intersection to address pedestrian and cyclist safety issues, particularly for Coburg High School students*   *Plan and deliver Pedestrian Operated Signals on Elizabeth Street, Coburg North (near Goff Street)* |
| Active transport | *Invest, plan and deliver critical missing links in our walking and riding network, including:*   *Upfield shared path: from northern end of Sages Road to the M80 Trail, including a pedestrian crossing at Box Forest Road.*   *Craigieburn Shared Path from Oak Park to Glenroy, linking with the completed Glenroy Station section.* |
| Coburg Library redevelopment and new piazza | *Invest in the $60 million development of a new Coburg Library and Piazza in central Coburg.* |
| Brunswick Baths Gym expansion and preparation for electrification | *Invest $6 million to expand Brunswick Baths Gym to allow more community members to access the facilities, improving health and wellbeing, and prepare for the future electrification of the Baths.* |
| Ballerrt Mooroop |  *Transfer the title of the Ballerrt Mooroop site to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.*   *Invest in the development of inclusive multi-purpose community facilities, at Ballerrt Mooroop, Glenroy.* |
| All Abilities Playground | *Invest $2 million to provide an All-Abilities Playground at Sewell Reserve, Glenroy.* |
| Sport infrastructure | *Invest in upgrades of sporting facilities across Merri-bek to support increasing participation in competition sport and outdoor recreation activities and the health, wellbeing and social benefits sport and physical activity provides.*  *Projects include:*   *Shore Reserve Oval, Pascoe Vale South*   *Raeburn Reserve, Pascoe Vale*   *Wallace Reserve, Glenroy*   *JP Fawkner Reserve East, Oak Park*   *Balfe Park, Brunswick East* |
| Growing basketball in Merri-bek | *Invest in basketball courts in Merri-bek to support one of Merri-bek’s fastest growing sports.* |
| Coburg Social and Affordable Housing | *Investment through Homes Victoria, Development Victoria and Department of Treasury and Finance, including partnership programs with the Commonwealth Government, towards the development of social and affordable housing in Central Coburg.* |
| Building better homes through environmentally sustainable design | *Secure strong sustainable built environment outcomes by:*  • *Reinstating Clause 15 and local ESD policies for low-rise residential development or embed robust, measurable sustainability requirements directly within the deemed-to-comply pathway*  • *Finish stage 2 of the ESD Roadmap*  • *Integrate consistent and robust ESD requirements in Activity Centre Structure Plans* |
| Creating cooler greener spaces and community connections to nature | *Investment to deliver improvements to our creeks in Merri-bek, providing community connections to nature and opportunities to increase biodiversity, manage and utilse stormwater and plant canopy trees for a cooler, greener future.*  *Projects include:*  • *Moonee Ponds Creek Conservation Plan*  • *Westbreen Creek Conservation Plan*  • *Fawkner Merri Creek Parklands Plan* |
| More businesses and more jobs in Merri-bek | *Investment and support to facilitate the creation of more businesses and more jobs in Merri-bek by:*   *Collaborating with Council to identify vacant and underutilized government owned land and infrastructure that could deliver local economic and community benefits, particularly the current Dawson Street Police site.*   *Investing in supporting infrastructure businesses need to operate easily and efficiently.* |
| Social justice initiatives (advocacy via peak bodies and advocacy partners and noting some are federal matters, some are state matters) |  *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander*   *Family Violence*   *Mental Health*   *Raise the Rate*   *Social, Affordable and Public Housing*   *People experiencing homelessness*   *Gambling reform*   *Refugee and asylum seekers*   *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Asexual and Aromantic communities (LGBTIQA+)* |

These advocacy priorities proposed for adoption are intended to replace the advocacy priorities adopted by Council in April 2022, and are in addition to the Federal Advocacy Priorities endorsed in February 2024. It should be noted that active advocacy for some priorities adopted in February 2024 will cease if the priority has been achieved and/or the project is underway or complete.

Council continues with operational advocacy as the need arises outside of Council’s adopted advocacy priorities.

Through the course of its day-to-day activities, it is common for Council to:

 Write letters to Members of Parliament, Ministers and government departmental stakeholders;

 Seek meetings with Members of Parliament, Ministers and government departmental stakeholders;

 Prepare fact sheets outlining ‘asks’;

 Apply for government funding;

 Make submissions on policy development; and

 Be proactive in the media and social media space to generate support.

Sometimes, these activities are a result of a pressing matter that arises – for instance a transport issue, asylum seeker re-settlement, poverty and minimum wage increases and homelessness to name but a few examples. This practice will continue into the future, consistent with Council policy and Council resolutions.

**Community impact**

Community support plays a key role in local government advocacy. Even if advocacy relies on decisions by Members of Parliament to succeed, politicians will often only act if they know that voters and the community are engaged.

Community stakeholders are part of the 2026 State Election Advocacy Priorities and will be engaged on the relevant projects.

**Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications**

Merri-bek Council declared a climate emergency on 12 September 2018. Since then it has committed to urgent action to respond to this emergency. It is Council’s adopted goal for the Merri-bek community to achieve 75 per cent emissions reduction by 2030 (against 2011/12 baseline), net zero by 2035 and drawdown (‘negative emissions’) by 2040.

Whilst the recommendation contained in this report does not immediately give rise to environmental sustainability implications, many projects listed are underpinned by the need to respond to the climate emergency and maximise impact.

The State government control key environmental policy levers. Council has a continuing role to influence other tiers of government to pull these policy levers, so that we can move toward zero carbon and slow the rising temperatures.

**Economic sustainability implications**

Whilst all proposed advocacy priorities contained in this report enhance economic sustainability outcomes, the adoption of this report and the officer recommendation does not immediately give rise to economic sustainability implications.

**Legal and risk considerations**

There are no legal or risk implications associated with the adoption of this report and its officer recommendation.

**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 do not impact on any of the protected rights or freedoms.

**4. Community consultation and engagement**

Existing Council strategies, plans and resolutions informed and guided the proposed advocacy priorities. Existing Council strategies have been informed by community consultation and feedback.

**Affected persons rights and interests**

Before making a decision that affects a person’s rights, Council must identify whose rights may be directly affected and provide an opportunity for that person (or persons) to convey those views regarding the effect on their rights and consider those views. There are no individual rights or interests affected.

**Communications**

A strategic communications plan will be part of the 2026 State Election Advocacy Priorities following the adoption of Council’s identified priorities. This will ensure the community remains informed of progress and opportunities for participation.

**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 implementation of the 2026 State Election Advocacy Priorities can be achieved using existing resources.

**7. Implementation**

Following Council’s endorsement of the proposed advocacy priorities, Council officers will finalise and implement a 2026 State Election Advocacy Action Plan, undertaking advocacy activities to further individual advocacy priorities with targeted stakeholders. Complementary strategic communications activities will be actioned to inform the Merri-bek community of 2026 State Election advocacy priorities.

**Attachment/s**

There are no attachments for this report.

**7.6 Naming part of the laneway between 217-219 Elizabeth Street Coburg North**

**Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade**

**Property**

**Officer Recommendation**

That Council:

1. Notes the feedback received from the community on the proposed name, ‘Kastoria Lane’, for the part of the laneway at the rear of 217-219 Elizabeth Street Coburg North.

2. Submits the name ‘Kastoria Lane’ to Geographic Names Victoria for registration and gazettal.

3. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer or their delegate to do all other things necessary to formalise the name ‘Kastoria Lane’, once registered by Geographic Names Victoria.

**REPORT**

**Executive Summary**

The Kastorian Association of Victoria (‘Kastorian Association’) is a cultural organisation based in North Coburg. The Kastorian Association was established in 1968 by Kastorian immigrants from Greece who settled in the area. Their premises is located at 219 Elizabeth Street, North Coburg with entranceway from the unnamed right of way (‘laneway’) at the rear of the property. A locality map is shown in **Attachment 1.**

The Kastorian Association has requested to have the laneway named Kastoria Lane to ensure clear wayfinding to their premises.

At its meeting on 12 April 2023 a Notice of Motion was endorsed by Council to name the laneway Kastoria Lane, to acknowledge the contribution of the club to the community. The name ‘Kastoria’ aligns with Council’s commitment to recognising and celebrating the contributions of culturally significant communities, such as the Kastorian Association, to the City of Merri-bek’s heritage.

At meetings on 12 July 2023 and 13 September 2023, Council resolved to continue discussions with Geographic Names Victoria (‘GNV’) for an exemption to be made to Principle J (using commercial and business names, in GNV’s *Naming Rules for Places in Victoria, Statutory Requirements for naming roads, features and localities – 2022* – the ‘Naming Rules’), for the name ‘Kastoria’.

In July 2024 GNV provided Council with an exemption from Principle J of the Naming Rules. The proposed name ‘Kastoria Lane’ has a strong link to the place. GNV advised that Council must be clear who the laneway is being naming after and requested written approval from the Kastorian Association to use the name. The Kastorian Association provided Council with their written approval in January 2025.

Consultation has been undertaken consistent with the requirements of the Local Government Act. Notice of Council’s proposal to name part of the laneway between 217-219 Elizabeth Street Coburg North ‘Kastoria Lane’ was published on Council’s Conversations Merri-bek website from 2 June 2025 until 4 July 2025.

Respondents were invited to provide a submission of support or objection to this name. Five (5) submissions were received, four (4) in support and one (1) seeking further details about the process. No objections were received.

Having considered community feedback, officers recommend that Council endorses the name Kastoria Lane for that part of the laneway between 217-219 Elizabeth Street Coburg North.

**Previous Council decisions**

**Naming of laneways** – 13 September 2023

*That Council:*

*1. Notes the potential risks and resource challenges associated with a universal approach to naming laneways, and that individual requests for naming laneways can be accommodated within the existing Naming Merri-bek Places Policy (2013), in cases where there is a clear reason to consider them as exceptions to standard practice.*

*2.* *Continues discussions with Geographic Names Victoria to assess the name ‘Kastoria Lane’ against Geographic Naming Victoria’s naming rules for places in Victoria - Statutory requirements for naming roads, features and localities – 2022.*

*3. Writes to the submitter of the request to name a walkway on Sydney Road ‘Pagonis Place’ requesting supporting evidence in relation to the naming rules, specifically Principle C – linking the name to the place and Principle I – using commemorative names.*

*4. Commence a formal process to name the laneway between Trafford Street and Ann Street, Brunswick.*

*5. Continues to assess individual naming requests as the naming authority, noting that the Registrar of Geographic Names holds the power to either approve or reject any proposal for naming.*

*6. Refers to the 2024/25 budget process consideration of allocating funds for the installation of informative text beneath new road names and interpretive signage at newly named parks to offer insights into the history and significance of place names and enhances understanding and appreciation of the locale's heritage and cultural importance.*

*7. If budget savings are declared in the 2023/24 budget, that consideration be given to allocating savings identified to ensure that projects nominated in this recommendation are delivered with interpretive signage elements.*

**Laneway adjacent to Kastorian Association, North Coburg** -12 July 2023

*That Council:*

*1. Includes the laneway from Elizabeth Street to the Kastorian Association entry in Council’s footpath network and undertakes appropriate maintenance.*

*2.* *Submits the name “Kastoria Lane” to the Registrar – Geographic Names for an exemption to be made to Principle J - Using Commercial and Business Names of the Naming Rules for Places in Victoria, Statutory Requirements.*

*3. Not pursues the upgrading of the remainder of the unmade laneway at this stage.*

***Notice of Motion 8.3 - Kastorian Association – North Coburg*** *– 12 April 2023*

*That Council calls for a report on the following matters:*

*1. Reconstruct the unmade laneway to provide safe passage to the community facility.*

*2. Rename the laneway to Kastoria Lane to acknowledge the contribution of the club to the community and make the entranceway easier to find.*

*3. The report includes the engagement and consultation process for affected*

**1. Policy context**

Naming rules for places in Victoria - Statutory requirements for naming roads, features and localities – 2022 (‘Naming Rules’)

When naming places in Victoria, naming authorities must follow the relevant processes and names must meet the mandatory naming rules and principles of Geographic Names Victoria’s (GNV) Naming Rules.

Naming Merri-bek Places Policy

Names are also considered in the context of Council’s Place Naming Preference Criteria, set out in Naming Merri-bek Places Policy (noting that this policy is now due to be renewed). The criteria outlined within the policy for assessing proposed place names in Merri-bek recognises the cultural and ethnic diversity of Merri-bek as well as taking account of the particular contributions of women, ethnic groups and First Nations people to the City.

**2. Background**

The Kastorian Association is a cultural organisation based in North Coburg. The association was established in 1968 by immigrants from the Greek city of Kastoria and surrounds who settled in the area.

The Kastorian Association is located at 219 Elizabeth Street, North Coburg. A locality map is shown in **Attachment 1.** The entranceway is via an unnamed laneway. The Kastorian Association has requested to have the unnamed laneway named to ensure clear wayfinding to their premises in North Coburg.

At its meeting on 12 April 2023 a Notice of Motion was received to name the laneway between 217-219 Elizabeth Street, Coburg, Kastoria Lane to acknowledge the contribution of the club to the community. Further to this, at its meetings on 12 July 2023 and 13 September 2023 reports were received to submit the name “Kastoria Lane” to the Registrar of Geographical Names (Registrar) for an exemption to be made to Principle J – Using Commercial and Business Names of the Naming Rules and to continue discussions with GNV to assess the name ‘Kastoria Lane’ against the Naming Rules.

**Geographic Naming Victoria (GNV) – Naming Rules**

The GNV Naming Rules are the statutory guidelines provided for under section 5 of the [*Geographic Place Names Act* *1998*](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/geographic-place-names-act-1998/011). They contain mandatory directions for all naming authorities in Victoria including councils, government departments and other authorities – and include all government-owned or administered roads, features (natural or otherwise) and localities.

The Naming Rules provide a structure for ensuring that assigning names to roads, features and localities in Victoria is consistent and fair. They are aligned with principles that support emergency services and delivery agencies (eg Australia Post and private delivery companies) who use locational and mapping services.

The Victorian Registrar of Geographical Names considers proposed naming lodgements for endorsement in accordance with the Naming Rules. A proposal must be endorsed to be gazetted and become the official name of a place.

Council, as the naming authority, applied to the Registrar to seek exemption from Naming Rules Principle D and Principle J. The Registrar approved these exemptions as set out below.

| **Naming Rules** | **Officer comment** | **GNV assessment** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Principle D  Ensuring names are not duplicated  A road name cannot be the same (or similar) as any other road within 5km. | Kia Ora Road, 600m from this location  Kallista Court, 3.6km from this location | In July 2024 GNV advised that emergency services did not have any concerns that Kia Ora and Kalista are too similar to Kastoria. The names are not phonetically similar enough to one another to cause concern. |
| Principle J  Using commercial and business names  Authorities should not name places after commercial businesses, trade names, estate names, not-for-profit organisations. | The Australian Association of Kastorians is a business name  Kastoria Bus Lines is a commercial business name | In July 2024 GNV supported the use of Kastoria as a name for the laneway with two conditions.   There is a strong link to the place, Kastorian Association building/community centre adjacent to laneway and Council must be clear who they are naming after.   Council must seek in writing approval from the Kastorian Association to use the proposed name |

The name Kastoria aligns with Council’s commitment to recognising and celebrating the contributions of culturally significant communities, such as the Kastorian Association, to the City of Merri-bek’s heritage. The Kastorian Association provided written support to use the name Kastoria to name part of the laneway adjacent to their premises at 219 Elizabeth Street Coburg North in January 2025.

Public notice to the notice of intention to name part of the laneway Kastoria Lane was placed on Council’s Conversations Merri-bek website from 2 June 2025 to 4 July 2025.

**3. Issues**

Following the notice of intention for Council to name part of the laneway Kastoria Lane and consideration given to any objections, a decision can be made on the name.

The notice of intention invited anyone to submit letters of support or objections to this name and asked that objections should state how you are affected by this proposal and the reason why it does not comply with State Government’s [Naming rules](http://www.propertyandlandtitles.vic.gov.au/naming-places-features-and-roads/naming-rules-for-places-in-victoria) and the [Naming Merri-bek's Places Policy](https://conversations.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/download_file/view/3263/2304/710/773).

Five (5) submissions were received, four (4) in support of the name and one (1) submission seeking further details about the process.

No objections were received during the advertising period.

**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 the following basic rights and freedoms:

Right to freedom of thought - Section 14: conscience, religion and belief: People have the freedom to think and believe what they want, for example, religion. They can do this in public or private, as part of a group or alone.

Right to freedom of expression - Section 15: protects your right to have your own opinion, to seek and receive information, and to express yourself. These rights come with responsibilities – to respect the rights and reputation of others and not risk public safety.

Right to take part in public life - Section 18: protects your right to take part in public life, whether directly or through a representative (including suggesting possible names). It also protects your right to vote in state and local council elections (including the naming voting poll), and to access public services.

Right to enjoy culture - Section 19: People can have different family, religious or cultural backgrounds. They can enjoy their culture, declare and practice their religion and use their languages. Aboriginal persons hold distinct cultural rights.

**4. Community consultation and engagement**

In accordance with [the Naming Rules,](https://www.land.vic.gov.au/place-naming/understand-the-naming-process/the-naming-rules) Council must undertake consultation with the immediate community and advertise a notice of intention to name the small section of laneway Kastoria Lane for a minimum of 30 days

**Affected persons rights and interests**

Before making a decision that affects a person’s rights, Council must identify whose rights may be directly affected and provide an opportunity for that person (or persons) to convey those views regarding the effect on their rights and consider those views.

**Communications**

Public notice of Council intention to name a part of the laneway Kastoria Lane occurred on Council’s Conversations Merri-bek website and Council’s website from 2 June 2025 - 4 July 2025.

Letters detailing the notice of intention were sent to owners and occupiers of the surrounding properties.

Consultation occurred with the following key stakeholder groups as identified in the Policy:

 Merri-bek City Council officers (Community Development and Inclusion)

 Coburg Historical Society

 Property, Darebin City Council

 Friends of Edgars Creek

 Friends Merri Creek

 Newlands Neighbourhood House

 Moreland Rotary Club

The consultation process was carried out in accordance with the Naming Rules and the requirements of Council’s Community Engagement Policy 2024.

Of the stakeholder groups consulted, the majority did not provide any objection in response to Council’s request for feedback.

Council received four other submissions from the public, with three expressing strong support in favour of the naming proposal, and one in the nature of an enquiry which officers responded to accordingly. The anonymised submissions are attached as **Attachment 2**.

**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**

Due to the administrative requirements of naming projects, they can involve significant resources in the form of officer hours.

Additionally, there are often costs associated with the required advertising and consultation.

Provided the name is endorsed by Council and approved by GNV, the remaining financial implications relate solely to the relatively low costs of installing street signage following gazettal.

**7. Implementation**

Following Council’s decision, formal endorsement of the name will be sought by submitting all supporting documents to GNV for the Registrar to consider the proposal. If the Registrar deems the proposal conforms, GNV will proceed to gazette the name.

The gazette notice acts as official notification that the name will be registered in the Register of Geographic Names – VICNAMES. Upon receipt that the official naming has been registered in VICNAMES, Council can notify and display a place or street name sign.

**Attachment/s**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | 217-219 Elizabeth Street Coburg North - location plan proposed naming part of laneway - Kastoria Lane | D25/247941 |  |
| **2** | Feedback on naming proposal | D25/440917 |  |

7.7 C233mbek - Fix up Amendment - Gateway 1 - Authorisation and Exhibition

**Director Place and Environment Pene Winslade**

**City Strategy and Economy**

## Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. As the planning authority, apply to the Minister for Planning (Minister) under section 8A of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (Vic) (Act), for authorisation to prepare Amendment C233mbek to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme (Amendment).

2. Prepares the Amendment if authority is received under section 8A of the Act, or if 10 business days have passed since the Minister received the application without notifying Council of a decision:

a) As the planning authority, prepares the Amendment in accordance with section 8A(2) or section 8A(7) of the Act as relevant.

b) Authorises the Director Place and Environment to make minor changes to the draft Amendment documentation at Attachments 1-6 as required prior to exhibition of the Amendment, to correct any administrative errors, and to meet any conditions the Minister imposes through authorisation.

c) Endorses, for the purpose of exhibition, the draft Amendment documentation at Attachments 1-6, subject to any changes required under (2)(b) above.

d) Exhibits the Amendment in accordance with sections 17, 18 and 19 of the Act.

**REPORT**

**Executive Summary**

The Merri-bek Planning Scheme (Scheme) sets out the policies and provisions that guide how land is used and developed across the municipality. To maintain its effectiveness in providing direction and supporting decision-making, Council periodically undertakes “fix-up” amendments to correct errors, update references, resolve mapping anomalies, implement recommendations and improve accuracy.

As part of its four-yearly review under the *Planning and Environment Act 1984*, Council adopted the *Planning Scheme Review 2022,* which recommended improvements to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme. The *Heritage Action Plan Implementation Plan 2022–2025* also identifies actions to address specific heritage issues. This has identified a need for a range of minor or administrative changes, including:

 **Zoning/Overlays anomalies and updates:** Remove outdated overlays from 384 properties; rezone some parkland to the Public Park and Recreation Zone.

 **Heritage updates:** Update planning permit exemptions, revise statements of significance, improve Heritage Overlay schedules, correct mapping, remove incorrect overlays, and update design/demolition guidance.

 **General corrections:** Fix grammatical and spelling errors, formatting issues, and mapping errors; update strategy, policy, and reference documents.

Amendment C233mbek is needed to resolve these anomalies and improve the clarity, accuracy, and effectiveness of the planning scheme, while supporting Council’s preparation for the next Planning Scheme Review in 2026.

Council officers recommend that Council resolves to request the Minister for Planning authorise Amendment C233mbek. Public exhibition of the amendment would follow the Minister’s authorisation.

**Previous Council Decisions**

**2022 Planning Scheme Review Report** **– 12 October 2022**

*That Council:*

*1. Endorses the Planning Scheme Review 2022 report, at Attachment 1 to this report.*

*2. Submits the Planning Scheme Review 2022 report to the Minister for Planning in accordance with section 12B (1) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987.*

**Community Heritage Action Plan 2022-2025 – 7 December 2023**

*That Council:*

*1. Note the Heritage Action Plan 2017 – 2032 Implementation Plan for the 2022-2025 period as shown at Attachment 1.*

*2. Include an additional action in the Implementation Plan 2022-2025, to research and document the history of the Upfield Rail Line, with an anticipated budget requirement of $20,000.*

*3. Develop a Terms of Reference for and establish a Heritage and Local History Reference Group chaired by Cr Tapinos, which meets quarterly and includes representatives from local historical societies.*

*4. Refer unfunded items in the Heritage Action Plan 2017 – 2032 Implementation Plan 2022-2025 to the 2023/2024 budget process for consideration.*

## 1. Policy Context

### Planning and Environment Act 1987

Under Section 12B of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (the Act) requires that a planning authority, such as Merri-bek City Council, ensure that its planning scheme is regularly reviewed and kept up to date.

Additionally, administrative and technical errors should be corrected to “*provide for the fair, orderly, economic and sustainable use and development of land*” in accordance with the objectives (in part) under section 4 of the Act.

### Heritage Action Plan 2017-2032 (MHAP)

The MHAP provides a clear framework for Council in identifying, managing, protecting and celebrating Merri-bek’s heritage. Fundamental to the plan are strategies and actions to guide Council’s role in heritage and assist Council to meet its heritage obligations as set out in various legislation in an integrated manner. Relevant actions within the supporting Heritage Action Plan Implementation Plan 2022-2025 include:

P1 - Heritage Assortment project to resolve various heritage issues identified by the Planning Scheme Review 2022.

P2 - Review the Heritage Policy in the scheme and the Permit Exemptions Incorporate Plan to ensure it aligns with expectations of the State described in the Planning and Environment Act 1987 (Section 6B) and heritage policy in the Scheme.

### Ministerial Directions for Potentially Contaminated Land

##### Ministerial Direction 1 - Potentially Contaminated Land (MD1)

MD1 requires planning authorities to satisfy themselves that the environmental conditions of land proposed to be used for a sensitive use (defined as residential, child-care centre, pre-school centre or primary school), agriculture or public open space are or will be suitable for that use.

##### Ministerial Direction 19 – Preparation and Content of Amendments that may Significantly Impact the Environment, Amenity and Human Health (MD19)

MD19 directs in the preparation and content of an amendment that may significantly impact the environment, amenity or human health, the views of the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) must be sought as part of the preparation of the amendment.

## 2. Background

The Merri-bek Planning Scheme (Scheme) sets out the policies and provisions guiding land use and development across the municipality. To maintain its effectiveness, accuracy, and usability, Council, as the Planning authority, periodically undertakes a “fix-up” amendment to (amongst other things):

 Correct technical errors and mapping anomalies (e.g., dual-zoned sites).

 Update outdated references.

 Implement recommendations.

 Improve clarity, structure, and ease of use.

The need for Amendment C233mbek arises from several recent strategic and statutory reviews.

### Planning Scheme Review 2022 (PSR 2022)

In 2022 Council adopted the *Planning Scheme Review Report 2022*. This report made several recommendations to improve the effectiveness and performance of the Merri-bek Planning Scheme, including the following relevant recommendations:

1B - Review the Heritage Policy in the scheme and the Permit Heritage Exemptions Incorporated Plan to ensure it aligns with expectations of the State described in the Planning and Environment Act 1987 (Section 6B) and heritage policy in the Scheme.

4PP - Address the list of corrections identified in Appendix 6 of this Report.

5PP - Consider ways in which local policy, zones, overlays and particular provisions could be improved based on the analysis at Appendix 5 of this Report.

3R - Identify which properties within the EAO have met their obligations regarding contamination and consider them for removal from the EAO

### Heritage Action Plan 2017–2032 (Heritage Action Plan)

The Heritage Action Plan provides a framework for identifying, protecting, and celebrating Merri-bek’s heritage. The 2022–2025 Implementation Plan includes actions that align with PSR 2022 findings, such as:

 Resolving heritage issues identified in the Review

 Updating the Heritage Policy and Permit Exemptions Incorporated Plan to meet legislative and policy requirements

**Other drivers for the Amendment**

 **Amendment VC159 (2019):** Introduced updated land use terms, including renaming ‘Tavern’ as ‘Bar’, requiring updates to the Scheme.

 **Moreland Heritage Exemptions Incorporated Plan**: The current 2023 version has usability and wording issues, prompting a review and update.

 **Heritage Assortment Project (Project)**: This Project investigated heritage issues identified through the planning scheme review. This project included a review of Merri-bek’s local heritage policies, review of heritage values and heritage mapping. A peer review of several of the Officer recommendations was undertaken by GML Heritage in February 2024 to ensure they were appropriate.

Together, these reviews, projects and amendments have identified a package of generally minor and administrative changes and updates that, while not altering strategic policy direction, will significantly improve the Scheme’s clarity, accuracy, and ease of administration.

## 3. Issues

Amendment C233mbek makes changes (**Attachment 1**) to ordinances and maps of the Merri-bek Planning Scheme to correct errors, anomalies and improve its functionality. They generally fall under the following themes:

 Zone/overlay anomalies and updates.

 Heritage updates.

 General corrections.

Details of each theme are outlined below.

**Zone/overlay anomalies and updates**

Land in two or more zones

A site should generally be covered by a single zone, unless there is a clear strategic justification for more than one. In Merri-bek, some sites are dual-zoned (with two or more zones applying to the same land) without such justification. This creates uncertainty about which planning provisions apply, adds unnecessary complexity to decision-making, and can result in zoning that does not align with the intended or current use of the land.

A key example is Council-owned parkland, where parts are zoned Public Park and Recreation Zone (PPRZ) and other parts zoned for residential, industrial, transport, or another public use. PPRZ is the most appropriate zone for public parkland as it recognises land set aside for recreation and open space. Amendment C233mbek proposes to correct these anomalies by rezoning these areas entirely to PPRZ.

Amendment C233mbek also seeks to correct other dual-zoned properties across Merri-bek where there is no strategic rationale for the current arrangement.

**Attachment 1** lists all affected sites and the proposed zoning changes.

### Schedule 1 to Clause 37.08 - Activity Centre Zone: Coburg Activity Centre (ACZ1)

Schedule 1 to Clause 37.08 - Activity Centre Zone provides land use and development direction for the Coburg activity centre. It contains several of obvious technical, format and grammatical errors. Amendment C233mbek seeks to correct these issues, as outlined in the table in **Attachment 1.**

These have no impact to the current land use and built form direction of the zone (policy neutral) other than providing greater clarity by fixing up the errors.

### Schedule 1 to Clause 43.02 Design and Development Overlay: Heritage Protection (DDO1)

Schedule 1 to the Design and Development Overlay (DDO1) was first introduced in 1990 as part of implementing the study *Keeping Brunswick’s Heritage*. It was applied to 95 properties that adjoin 50 heritage places identified in the 1990 study, with the aim of ensuring new buildings on adjoining sites did not dominate neighbouring heritage places.

The objectives of DDO1 in the Merri-bek Planning Scheme are:

 *To protect and enhance the environment of heritage places.*

 *To ensure that the character and appearance of heritage places is not adversely affected by the design of new buildings on adjoining land.*

 *To ensure that building heights, building bulk and setbacks on sites adjoining heritage places are compatible with and enhance the character and appearance of heritage places.*

Today, Merri-bek’s Heritage Overlay includes approximately 2,100 significant heritage places, yet DDO1 applies to only 2% of adjoining properties. As a result, its objectives are applied inconsistently and to a very limited number of sites. The image (Image 1) below illustrates this, showing the properties within DDO1.

While the intent of DDO1 remains relevant, its objectives can be more effectively and equitably delivered through a single, municipality-wide local policy rather than a narrowly applied overlay.

C233mbek proposes to delete DDO1 and translate these objectives into new local strategies and policy guidance at Clause 15.01-1L - Building in Merri-bek. This will direct any new development to consider adjacent heritage buildings and ensure all development adjoining heritage places is assessed consistently across Merri-bek.

***Image 1: Extent of DDO1***

A map of a city

Description automatically generated

Environmental Audit Overlay updates

The purpose of Environmental Audit Overlay (EAO) includes ensuring that potentially contaminated land is suitable for a use which could be significantly adversely affected by any contamination.

C233mbek proposes to delete the EAO from several properties that have Certificates of Audits or Preliminary Risk Site Assessment outlining the land is suitable for all beneficial and sensitive uses.

Removing the relevant EAOs from the planning scheme reduces the real and perceived administration burden from the planning process and signals a ‘readiness’ of land for beneficial use.

Refer to page 20 of **Attachment 1** for further details.

**Heritage updates**

Clause 15.03-1L – Heritage: Heritage in Merri-bek

Section 6B of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* allows Council to manage development where unlawful demolition or deliberate neglect of a heritage place has occurred. Merri-bek’s Local policy at Clause 15.03-1L of the Planning Scheme supports with this legislation by discouraging the full demolition of significant or contributory heritage places in the municipality, unless it can be demonstrated that the building is structurally unsound, amongst other criteria. This approach has generally been effective.

Recent VCAT decisions, including *Poulakis v Moreland CC* [2022] VCAT 195 and *Tahche v Moreland CC* [2018] VCAT 1202, have shown that the term “structurally unsound” can be interpreted in ways not originally intended. Amendment C233mbek therefore proposes minor wording changes to the demolition strategy to clarify its strategic intent, broaden its scope to allow appropriate reconstruction of heritage fabric, and introduce a supporting decision guideline to enable reconstruction where justified.

Refer to page 41 of **Attachment 1** for the specific changes proposed under Amendment C233mbek.

### Heritage Exemptions Incorporated Plan

The *Moreland Heritage Exemptions Incorporated Plan 2023* (2023 Plan) sets out planning permit exemptions from the provisions of the Heritage Overlay in Merri-bek.

A review of the 2023 Plan identified issues with its interpretation and application, arising from the documents design and the wording of exemptions. These issues are summarised in **Attachment 2.**

In response, Council officers have prepared an updated *Merri-bek Heritage Exemptions Incorporated Plan 2024* (2024 Plan) at **Attachment 3**. The 2024 Plan addresses these issues by (amongst other things):

 Updating the title of the document to reflect the municipality’s correct name.

 Redesigning the layout for clarity and ease of use.

 Aligning exemption wording with heritage overlay permit triggers.

 Applying consistent terminology for applicability and location.

 Expanding some exemptions, reducing others, and adding new ones for sustainability and accessibility.

 Removing precinct maps (now in a separate document – refer to **Attachment 4**).

Proposed Amendment C233mbek seeks to replace the 2023 Plan with two separate incorporated documents:

 *Merri-bek Heritage Exemptions Incorporated Plan April 2024* (**Attachment 3**).

 *Merri-bek Heritage Precinct and Serial Listing Grading Maps*, April 2024 (Attachment **4**).

### Schedule to Clause 43.01 Heritage Overlay (HO)

The Schedule to Clause 43.01 lists every heritage place, precinct, or serial listing covered by the Heritage Overlay, along with specific controls for each. As a large and detailed document, the schedule can contain errors, become inconsistent, or be difficult to navigate without regular review and updates.

*Structure of the Schedule to the HO*

The Schedule to the HO currently has 536 listings made up of 94 Precincts, 5 Serial listings and 438 place listings. These are presented in a single, unsorted table, making it difficult to search for a specific overlay.

Amendment C233mbek proposes to restructure the HO Schedule into a clear, logical format based on listing type (precinct, serial, and place listings) and to arrange the entries in numerical order. This change will make it easier for users to navigate and for administrators to update.

Refer to page 91 of **Attachment 1** for further details.

*Administrative changes to the HO Schedule*

Planning Practice Note 1 on Heritage (PPN1) provides examples to illustrate how to write a heritage overlay listing. It outlines that that if the heritage property or structure has a name, this is used for the name of the heritage overlay.

Many of Merri-bek’s heritage overlay listings do not follow the correct naming convention. C233mbek aims to update the name of 83 heritage overlays to comply with PPN1.

C233mbek proposes several other administrative type changes to HO listings in the Schedule to the HO.

Refer to page 91 of **Attachment 1** for further details.

Merri-bek Assortment Heritage Advice

GML Heritage prepared the document *Merri-bek Heritage Assortment Project: Heritage Advice* (Advice) in February 2024 (refer to **Attachment 5**). The Advice provided the following independent expert recommendations, which are implemented through Amendment C233mbek:

 **St Linus Anglican Church complex, 21 Glyndon Avenue, Coburg North (HO86):** Heritage assessment confirming local significance.

 **Phillipstown Precinct (HO139):** Peer review of the updated citation and statement of significance to resolve a drafting error identified in the Heritage Nomination Study.

 **Merging of individual HOs into precinct listings:** Direction to merge certain individually significant places into their relevant heritage precincts, including HO172 – The Grove / Sydney Road These are discussed further below.

These matters are discussed further below.

*Heritage Place: 21 Glyndon Avenue Coburg North - St Linus Anglican Church (HO86)*

The *City of Coburg Conservation Study* prepared by Timothy Hubbard Pty Ltd in 1990 identified as significant the Moyle Organ within the St Linus Anglican Church and the Neo-Tudor church building. HO86 was subsequently applied to 21 Glyndon Avenue, Coburg North, but the listing focused solely on the organ.

GML Heritage assessed the site and concluded the St Linus Anglican Church complex is of local significance, recommending recognition of the church building as an individually significant place, applying internal controls to protect original 1932 interior features, and retaining the existing curtilage (refer to **Attachment 5** reading this work).

C233mbek seeks to implement this recommendation by modifying the HO86 listing in the HO Schedule to reflect this recommendation, including incorporating a Statement of significance for the Church building (**Attachment 6**).

*Heritage Precinct: Phillipstown Precinct (HO139)*

An updated citation has been prepared, merging content from the Heritage Gap Study, Nominations Study and HERMES entries for key sites including the former R.J. Henderson Factory, Stephens & Co. Clothing Factory, Temple Park and 299 Brunswick Road.

The revised citation was peer reviewed by GML Heritage, who generally supported Council’s approach and recommended refinements, now incorporated in the final 2024 version. Updates also correct property listings within HO139 to reflect current conditions.

Amendment C233mbek implements these changes by updating the Phillipstown Precinct Statement of Significance Incorporated Document and precinct mapping (**Attachment 6).**

*Merging of individual HOs into precinct listings*

The former Brunswick West Progress Hall (HO185) and the former Brunswick West Primary School (HO186) have been identified as important to the Daly Street Precinct (HO56). Advice from GML Heritage outlined these heritage places are linked to the residential development of the precinct, demonstrating how self-contained communities formed in the period of World War II. It is recommended that HO185 and HO186 are transferred to HO56.

Similarly, several significant places relating to *The Grove / Sydney Road Precinct* currently sit within other heritage overlays. It is recommended that the following heritage overlays be transferred to HO172:

 HO173 – 22 The Grove Coburg

 HO174 – 23 & 25 The Grove Coburg

 HO175 – 45 & 47 The Grove Coburg

 HO363 - 148-164 Sydney Road Coburg

 HO150 - 84-92 Sydney Road Coburg

 HO374 - 127-129 Sydney Road Coburg

Amendment C233mbek implements these changes. Refer to pages 16 and 50 of **Attachment 4** for further details.

Heritage Overlay Map

The Heritage Overlay (HO) map spatially illustrates the application of the HO, identifying places and areas with heritage significance, such as historic buildings, precincts, and significant trees.

Officers have recently reviewed the boundaries of the HO map. This process identified mapping anomalies to 17 places largely resulting from changes in land subdivision patterns.

C233mbek seeks to fix these mapping issues considered minor in nature by amending the HO boundary to align with the property boundaries. In some instances, the HO is reduced, in others it is extended, but in all situations the HO is not being applied to any new property.

The places where HO boundaries have been modified in this way are listed in **Attachment 1** (page 16).

This review also identified there were three HOs being applied in error following an oversight in the approval of previous heritage themed amendments (see Table 1) C233mbek aims to fix these errors by deleting HO10, HO547 and HO587 from the heritage overlay maps.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 1 – HO’s being deleted** | | |
| **HO No.** | **HO Name** | **Description of change** |
| HO10 | 1C Melville Road Brunswick West | Delete HO10  HO10 was deleted from the HO Schedule by C174morept1 but was accidentally left in the HO maps. |
| HO547 | 18 Kendall Street Coburg | HO547 was originally proposed as a new HO in C208more but was removed prior to exhibition. Its inclusion in Merri-bek’s mapping is therefore an error. |
| HO587 | 10 Josephine Street Oak Park | Delete HO587  HO587 was originally proposed as a new HO in C208more but was removed prior to exhibition. Its inclusion in Merri-bek’s mapping is therefore an error. |

### General corrections

C233mbeck corrects typographical and formatting errors and updates references in the planning scheme.

### 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 adverse impacts.

## 4. Community consultation and engagement

Public consultation will be conducted as part of the formal statutory exhibition process for the amendment. Subject to the timing of the Minister’s authorisation of the amendment, it is anticipated that exhibition will occur in late 2025 for a period of four weeks after the notice of the amendment is published in the Government Gazette and in the newspaper circulating the area.

In accordance with Section 19 of the Act, notice of the amendment via direct mail (or email) will be given to:

 Relevant state government departments and Ministers.

 All abutting councils.

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

 Notice of the preparation of the amendment in the Government Gazette and the Age newspaper.

 Copies of amendment documentation will be available on Council’s website and hard copies will be made available to residents upon request.

 Communication through Council’s social media platforms.

 Notice in any relevant Council publication available at the time of exhibition.

Under section 19(1A) of the Act, it is considered impractical to individually notify owners and occupiers throughout the municipality of changes proposed by the amendment.

## 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 undertake the exhibition of the planning scheme amendment are budgeted for within the 2025/26 base budget of the Strategic Planning Unit.

## 7. Implementation

The following timelines for the amendment are broken down into the key ‘decision gateways’ for Council. The timeline is approximate and subject to Ministerial approval timelines and Planning Panels Victoria reporting and assumes an October/November 2025 exhibition period.

**Decision Gateway 1: Authorisation and exhibition** (current report)

**Decision Gateway 2: Submission Review and Panel Reques**t (December 2025/January 2026)

**Decision Gateway 3: Panel report review and approval request** (April 2026)

## Attachment/s

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | Amendment C233mbek Documentation | D25/368665 | Under Separate Cover |
| **2** | Amendment C233mbek - Heritage Exemptions Incorporated Plan- Summary of changes | D25/368670 | Under Separate Cover |
| **3** | Amendment C233mbek - Heritage Exemptions Incorporated Plan - April 2024 | D25/368672 | Under Separate Cover |
| **4** | Amendment C233mbek- Heritage Precinct and Serial Listing Grading Maps Incorporated April 2024 | D25/368673 | Under Separate Cover |
| **5** | Heritage Assortment Project - Heritage Advice, GML Heritage, February 2024 | D24/99688 | Under Separate Cover |
| **6** | Amendment C233mbek - Statements of Significance | D25/368675 | Under Separate Cover |

7.8 Summer Sporting Allocations 2025/26

**Director Community, Eamonn Fennessy**

**Community Wellbeing**

## Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Allocates sports grounds and pavilions for the 2025/2026 summer season to the clubs shown in Attachment 1 to this report.

2. Authorises the Director Community to make any necessary changes to the allocation of facilities for the 2025/2026 summer season if required and to inform Council of any changes.

3. Notes any club owing ground and pavilion fees from previous seasons, or owing any other debt to Council, will be informed that no ground allocation will be granted until payment is made, or a payment plan has been agreed to.

4. Notes current junior and female participation levels at sports clubs contained within this 2025/2026 Summer Sports Ground Tenancy Allocations Report.

**REPORT**

**Executive Summary**

Council is committed to providing the community with sporting and recreational facilities and opportunities to encourage physical activity and improve community health and wellbeing outcomes. Council’s Allocation and Use of Sporting Facilities, Grounds and Pavilions Policy 2025 (the Policy) provides a framework for the annual and seasonal allocation of sporting grounds and pavilions to clubs through a tenancy agreement.

In line with the Policy, facilities are allocated to clubs with sound governance structures, open membership for men, women and juniors, and a demonstrated commitment to social responsibility, including participation in club development programs. Thirteen (13) summer seasonal tenancy applications were received from clubs and all requests can be accommodated. This report also provides an update on progress of each club’s junior and female participation levels. Several clubs are still in the process of submitting their compliance documentation which is required prior to receiving their summer 2025/2026 sports ground seasonal allocation.

## 1. Policy Context

The Merri-bek City Council Allocation and Use of Sporting Facilities, Grounds and Pavilions Policy (the Policy), together with the Sporting Facilities, Grounds and Pavilions User Guide (the User Guide) provide a framework for the allocation for Council’s sports facilities and outline the terms and conditions of use. Council’s Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2020 and Open Space Strategy guide the guide the planning, provision and management of facilities and places that support community sport and participation.

## 2. Background

Council adopted a revised Allocation and Use of Sporting Facilities, Grounds, and Pavilions Policy in December 2023. The revision of the Policy, together with the User Guide, outlines the terms and conditions of use for Council’s sports facilities. For facilities to be allocated to clubs requires they are required to:

 Have sound governance structures

 Provide open membership for men, women and juniors

 Demonstrate a commitment to social responsibility

 Participate in club development programs

The Policy also contains conditions for leasing and allocation of Council facilities to clubs whose membership provide the following in their respective sporting codes:

 At least one junior team/side

 At least one female team/side

 Registered sport association development programs

 Female representation on club committee and/or board

Priority leasing and allocation of facilities will be given to clubs that:

 Are inclusive of people with disabilities, and actively support juniors, females and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) to participate in recreation

 Demonstrated participation by Merri-bek residents

 Comply with all previous occupancy requirements

 Completed approved capital work projects to the satisfaction of Council

 The revised Policy now also provides concessions to clubs who ensure equitable scheduling of training for all participants and /Board and/or obtaining 50 per cent or above representation of women, girls, or gender diverse people on Committee Leadership roles. Clubs providing sport, recreation and physical activity opportunities must develop and demonstrate policies, strategies and active programs that increase the participation, general health and wellbeing of juniors, girls and women.

## 3. Issues

**Community impact and Capacity of Merri-bek’s sporting grounds**

Tenancy and allocation applications are considered firstly in relation to the capacity of Merri-bek’s sporting grounds, and secondly with respect to the club’s compliance to the Policy.

Council’s Cricket facilities consist of the following number of fields:

 13 turf table wicket sports fields

 16 synthetic wicket sports fields

Each ground will have a different capacity for use, which is dependent on the sporting code played, age groups, team sizes, Sporting Associations competition schedule, season/weather, soil profile, grass type, irrigation, and drainage. Cricket also has the added aspect of turf wickets, with each turf table varying in how many wickets can be used and prepared for competitions. Summer clubs consist of mostly cricket, as well as one Baseball Club, and one Ultimate Frisbee club. The main capacity restrictions and concerns are:

Turf wicket matches on Saturdays, and Friday night junior synthetic matches. Other usage can be accommodated; however, these two specific slots (Friday Nights and Saturday) are at capacity.

**Considerations leading into the 2025/2026 summer season**

**Changeover/Maintenance**

Every year, post winter season, grounds and turf wickets need to be prepared for the Summer season. The grounds need to be seeded, turf replacement, aeration, scarification, oversewing, top-dressing, and turf wickets prepared.

Turf wicket preparation is particularly important as it will dictate when cricket clubs can start playing their first matches of the season. This preparation typically requires 6 weeks; however, AFL finals can occasionally shorten this timeline meaning that some clubs are not able to play their first couple of matches at their home ground.

During this transition period, scheduling maintenance at optimal times (August/September) is not feasible due to limited resources, and access. As a result, tasks such as topdressing the ovals must be distributed throughout the remainder of the year, which may not be ideal for cricket activities as it could affect training and matches.

**Sportsground projects**

This summer, several projects are underway that will impact some summer clubs. The projects have been communicated with both the clubs, associations and impacted residents, and all necessary adjustments have been made in collaboration with the Club for game allocation and alternative grounds provided as detailed below:

**Coburg City Oval** (15 September 2025 – Mid December 2025 approx.)

Full ground turf resurfacing.

Coburg Cricket Club will be unable to play their matches here between October – December. The VTCA league have catered the clubs’ fixtures appropriately. Council to assist club in sourcing training alternative nets.

**Allard Park Reserve** (September 2025 – April 2025 approx.):

Full ground redevelopment, including new drainage, irrigation and an improved surface.

East Coburg Cricket Club allocated a full Saturday PM share of Rayner Reserve for the 2025/26 summer which accommodates their Senior Men 3rds and 4ths teams on Saturday PM and Rupert Wallace West Reserve for 5th X1.

Brunswick Disc Society have been allocated to Jackson Reserve for the summer.

For their Wednesday nights and Sunday AM requirements.

Brunswick Cricket Club Juniors have been allocated to Wallace Reserve West half share and full share of Shore Reserve on a Friday night as an alternative for the 2025/26 summer.

*Note: Due to the demolition of the Shore Reserve pavilion and building site parameters in place off the ground, West Coburg St Andrews Cricket Club juniors indicated they did not wish to use Shore Reserve for matches in 2025/26. They have reshuffled their days of play for their junior teams to then allow for all junior teams to be played across Morris Reserve and Cole Reserve South this summer across Friday nights and Saturday AM.*

**Cole Reserve North Ground** (October 2025 – May 2026 approx.):

Full ground redevelopment, including new drainage, irrigation and an improved surface.

As a result of this ground closure this summer, West Coburg St Andrews Cricket Club have adjusted their team competitions entered from turf to synthetic in lower divisions and have been granted full share of Morris Reserve and Cole Reserve South Ground to cater for all their teams in summer 2025/26.

**Oak Park North Ground** (September 2025 – January 2026 approx.):

Club will be implementing a turf table on the oval and will be responsible for maintaining as per previous discussions with Council Open Space and council approval obtained.

Pascoe Vale Central Cricket Club will be unable to play their matches here between October – December. The VTCA league have catered the clubs’ fixtures appropriately.

**Notable Trends and future concerns**

**Turf wicket capacity and demand**

The availability of turf wickets for senior men's matches on Saturdays has reached full capacity. However, there are still clubs interested in fielding an additional turf team or transitioning from synthetic to turf wickets. Council is not building or providing any additional turf wickets, due to the high cost of both development and maintenance. It is also preferable to maintain a balance between turf and synthetic wickets to support junior and community level cricket.

**Friday Night Synthetic Pitches**

Junior cricket competition club and player preference continues to evolve away from Saturday AM to Friday night competitions across all age groups. We are at full capacity on Friday nights with Synthetic ground offerings this summer with previously minimally used synthetic grounds of Wallace Reserve West, Fleming Park and Shore Reserve now being fully utilised.

**Sporting Ground and Pavilion Allocation Policy - Summer 2025/2026**

A list of the clubs applying for a summer 2025/2026 sports ground and pavilion allocation is listed in Attachment 1 along with the participation levels of genders in juniors and seniors, including numbers of teams each club has. The data is requested as part of each club’s tenancy application prior to season starting. Council officers have been liaising with the local cricket associations. Actual team and player registrations will be confirmed by cricket associations prior to the commencement of the season.

Council Officers have been in touch with clubs who have identified that they may be struggling to maintain a junior or female team for the 2025/2026 season. Clubs and Council officers have been working closely with Cricket Victoria to support these clubs. Cricket Victoria is supporting clubs to run the ‘Blast program’ through local schools and working with council on strategies on transitioning these children to their local clubs.

Merri-bek clubs have submitted their proposed teams and ground requests for the upcoming summer season, with leagues and associations adjusting back to a standard season for competitions.

A summary list of weekly ground allocations will be available for the community to view on the Active Merri-bek website.

### Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

The Merri-bek Sports Grounds Management and Maintenance Policy aims to provide guidance to Council staff, user groups and the community so that sports grounds can be sustainably managed to ensure an appropriate use, quality and service levels.

The ability of Council to provide safe playing grounds of a suitable quality for competition levels, and to maintain acceptable quality of playing surfaces is an important factor to consider. The type of use, age of users and intensity of use, level of competition and compatibility between the varieties of users is a major factor in Council being able to provide sport grounds which meet acceptable standards.

The management of each sports facility is also discussed regularly with clubs, to educate and facilitate the appropriate use of each sports field, pavilion, and other sports infrastructure (e.g. sports field lighting, training nets/facilities and turf wickets). Clubs play an integral role in reactive management of these facilities, with routine checks for safe playing surfaces, and mitigating risks for shared community use.

Sports field usage capacity is defined as the number of hours of use that a surface can sustain before it deteriorates to a point where short-term recovery is not achievable.

Sports grounds have been classified into three broad categories with each type having an estimated usage capacity.

The usage capacities are the potential maximum hours of use which includes match play, training and casual use and may be modified by weather conditions, type of sport played, time of year, surface conditions (cover, turf-type, compaction etc.) and the level of maintenance.

In practice the actual usage of many sports grounds often exceeds the recommended usage capacity due to the ever-increasing demand for sports facilities. However, the surface quality of these sports grounds will continuously be monitored and cannot be guaranteed should recommended usage hours be exceeded.

### Economic sustainability implications

The clubs and associations applying for summer allocations are non-for- profit organisations, predominantly operated by volunteers. Clubs and associations are often experiencing volunteer fatigue, where the work of many falls on a few. The burnout of volunteers is a regular occurrence, impacting the information, skills and knowledge needed to maintain club operations. Council officers will continue to work with clubs who have identified the lack of volunteers as an issue in ensuring their club is viable.

### Legal and risk considerations

The governance audit ensured clubs maintained their incorporation, as State Sporting Association insurance policies would deny indemnity to clubs that have allowed their incorporation to lapse putting Council at risk to cover injury claims.

### Human Rights Consideration

The implications of this report have been considered in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. Access to sport and physical activity reflects Sections 12 and 18 of the Human Rights Charter which relate to freedom of movement and taking part in public life.

## 4. Community consultation and engagement

Summer applications opened 15th July 2025 and closed on 12th August 2025. During this time, Council officers liaised regularly with clubs and associations providing advice and guidance on the application process, availability of facilities and grounds and answer questions from club committee members.

While all summer clubs have submitted their applications, registrations for players and teams have not yet been finalised by the relevant leagues and associations. State Sporting Associations and local leagues are responsible for managing the competitions Merri-bek clubs enter. Officers work closely with their staff to monitor team numbers, player registrations, and competition conditions.

For the summer allocations 2025/2026, the following associations will be consulted to confirm participation numbers the season:

 Cricket Victoria

 Softball Victoria

 Ultimate Victoria

To ensure Council can provide appropriate facilities, regular communication and consultation occurs internally to ensure suitability of facilities and grounds to meet competition standards. Supporting this, clubs communicate frequently with Council officers about their needs, and this is monitored as the season approaches.

**Affected persons rights and interests**

All ensuing actions will be progressed in a manner that does not adversely affect individual rights and interests.

### Communications

 All clubs and associations will be notified of the Council resolution within 14 days.

 Summer allocations will be approved for each club or association via IMS Reserves Manager as soon as the Policy and application compliance is confirmed.

 A summary list of weekly ground allocations will be available to view on the Active Merri-bek website. This list is subject to change based on the seasonal requirements for ground usage (e.g., preseason, in season fixtures, finals).

## 5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

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

## 6. Financial and Resources Implications

The estimated fees and charges income for the 2025/2026 summer sports ground and pavilion allocations is approximately $100,000. Noting this is lower than previous years due to the closures of Allard Park and Cole Reserve North for the whole summer and City Oval for extended period due to ground works.

## 7. Outstanding Fees

Council officers monitor the payment of fees, and clubs with outstanding debts are advised that these debts could affect future ground allocations. All clubs with outstanding debts receive in writing a request to finalise payment. Relevant State Sporting Associations are also advised.

**8. Implementation**

Officers will work with clubs to ensure any outstanding documentation is received and outstanding fees are paid prior to allocation confirmation. Once adopted, clubs will receive written notification of their allocation within 14 days.

Officers will continue to actively support clubs who are struggling with the requirements of the Policy to develop strategies and actions to establish female and junior teams.

## Attachment/s

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | Summer sports ground allocations 2025 2026 | D25/443496 |  |

**7.9 2024-25 Financial Statements and Performance Statements**

**Director Business Transformation, Sue Vujcevic**

**Finance Management**

**Officer Recommendation**

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.

**REPORT**

**Executive Summary**

Council’s Financial and Performance Statements (the Statements) for the 2024-25 financial year have been prepared and reviewed by the Victorian Auditor General Offices appointed auditor, RSD Audit and Council’s Audit and Risk Committee.

This report seeks Council’s ‘in principle’ approval of the Statements and the appointment of two Councillors and the Chief Executive Officer to sign the 2024-25 Statements in their final form.

Council is reporting an accounting surplus of $30.4 million for the financial year 2024-25. This accounting surplus includes items such as non-cash contributions, capital grants, loan redemptions and committed capital or operational expenditure for future years.

After excluding non-cash items included in the accounting surplus, capital expenditure and committed funding requirements, Council had an unrestricted surplus of $43,664.

**Previous Council Decisions**

Nil.

**1. Policy Context**

Section 99 of the *Local Government Act* *2020* (the Act) requires a Council to:

 Pass a resolution giving its approval, ‘in principle’, to the Financial and Performance Statements before they are submitted to the Auditor.

 Authorise two Councillors to certify the Statements in their final form, after any changes recommended or agreed by the Auditor have been made.

This report is in keeping with Council’s commitment to accountability and sound financial management.

**2. Background**

Preliminary audit work has been completed by RSD Audit, and Council officers have prepared a draft set of the Financial and Performance Statements for 2024-25 (the Statements) for submission to the Auditor-General in accordance with the Act (the Statements are included at **Attachments 1** and **2**.

RSD Audit has advised the Audit and Risk Committee that, subject to a review of the final version by the Victorian Auditor General’s Office (VAGO), it intends to recommend to the Auditor-General that Council’s 2024-25 Statements should be given confirming audit opinions without qualification.

The Financial Statements and Performance Statement have each been:

1. prepared by Council staff;

2. reviewed by the Victorian Auditor General’s External Agent (RSD Audit); and

3. presented to the Audit and Risk Committee.

The process required to ensure Council’s 2024-25 Statements are submitted to the Auditor-General in a timely manner, enabling the Auditor-General to officially express their opinion and ensure that the annual report is presented to a Council meeting (open to the public) by 31 October 2025 is summarised below:

 The draft statements have been reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee on the 2nd of September and recommended to Council to approve in principle.

 RSD Audit checks the approved ‘in principle’ Statements, these statements are then forwarded to VAGO for review.

 Council must review the draft Statements, approve the Statements ‘in principle’ and authorise two specific Councillors and the Chief Executive Officer to sign the Statements; the ‘in principle’ Statements and the Council resolution are provided to VAGO.

 The Auditor-General reviews the Statements and requests changes where appropriate.

 The Principal Accounting Officer considers any changes requested by the Auditor-General and, where appropriate, incorporates them into the ‘in principle’ Statements.

 The Principal Accounting Officer will identify matters of significance, if any, including proposed qualification issues, not previously considered by the Council, for approval by the Chief Executive Officer in consultation with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

 If Council and the Auditor-General are satisfied with the Statements in their final form, the Statements are to be signed by the two authorised Councillors and the Chief Executive Officer and forwarded to the Auditor-General.

 The signed Auditor-General’s Audit Reports will be issued to Council once the formally signed Statements have been received and checked by VAGO; and

 The annual report must be presented to a council meeting (open to the public) by 31 October 2025.

**3. Issues**

**Key outcomes of the 2024-25 accounts**

Council is reporting an accounting surplus of $30.4 million for the financial year 2024-25. This accounting profit includes items such as non-cash contributions, capital grants, loan redemptions and committed capital or operational expenditure for future years.

**Significant income statement movements**

Major differences in the income statement compared to last year include:

**Revenue**

 **Rates & Charges –** Increased of $9.9 million (5%) on the prior year as a result of the 2.75% rate cap, supplementary rates and a $2.4 million increase in the waste charge (cost recovery model).

 **Grants operating -** Increased by $8.4 million (49%) primarily as a result of the timing of the **Commonwealth** Financial Assistance Grants. 100% of the grant relating to 2024-25 was received in the current year, as well as 50% ($3.1 million) of the payment relating to 2025-26.

 **Contributions –** Increased by $2.2 million (19%) as a result of a large one-off open space contribution.

 **Other income –** Increased by $2.0 (21%) primarily as a result of a one-off payment ($4.8 million) from the State Government for reimbursement of expenditure relating to Level Crossing Removals within the municipality. This is partially offset by a reduction in interest on investments from the prior year.

**Expenses**

 Increase in employee costs of $4.0 (4%) million primarily due:

 The Enterprise Agreement increases of 2.75% (rate cap); and

 The increase in the superannuation guarantee percentage increasing by 0.5% to 11.50%;

 **Materials and Services –** increased by $8.6 million (12%) primarily due to:

 Expenditure relating to the subdivision of an asset which triggered a significant open space contribution ($2.7 million)

 Capital expenditure that does not meet the accounting standard for capitalisation ($2.4 million); and

 Increased utility costs ($1.2 million) primarily related to the re-opening of Fawkner Leisure Centre

 A increase of $9.5 million (288%) in the net loss on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment. This is as a result of the demolition of infrastructure assets which were undertaken throughout the year including Balam Balam Place & Fawkner Leisure Centre, as well as the gifted asset of Wilkinson Street, Brunswick. These losses were partially offset against the proceed on sale from other assets throughout the year.

 **Allowance for impairment losses –** decreased by $1.5 million (39%) as a result of recalculating the outstanding debt provision.

**Capital works statement**

Council delivered its largest capital works program to-date with capital works expenditure was $92.7 million in 2024-25 compared to $87.6 million reported for 2023-24. There were significant increases in plant and equipment, roads and parks, open space assets, partially offset by a reduction in building assets.

**Cash position**

Cash is shown in two parts of the balance sheet:

1. Cash and cash equivalent – which is considered short term cash (can access in less than 90 days).

2. Other financial assets – which is considered long term cash (would take 90+ days to access).

At 30 June 2025, Council had $96.1 million in cash, in comparison to $106.4 million the prior year. While this indicates a decrease of total financial assets decreased by $10.3 million in cash, the unrestricted cash levels have increased.

**Carry Forwards**

Grant funding or contribution carry forwards include any grants or contributions that were received during the 2024-25 financial year, which have agreed spending obligations or conditions that have not been fully completed as at 30 June 2025. These are grants or contributions that do not meet the conditions or materiality threshold to be treated as a liability as per accounting standards. The total grant funding or contribution carry forwards were $286,111.

Operating funding which had tied contractual payments to be carried forward into 2024-25 totalled $187,228.

The 2024-25 Capital Works Program saw a year-end carry forward position of $32.4 million. This is made up of $20.2 million rates funded, $9.0 million grant funded and $3.2 million reserve funded. The third quarterly forecast was endorsed at the April 2025 Council Meeting which forecasted capital carry forwards to be $24.0 million. The year-end position was an increased carry forward position that was $8.4 higher than forecast.

***Attachment 3*** provides a breakdown of these carry forwards, when they are anticipated to be complete and the main cause of the delay.

**VAGO financial sustainability ratios**

Council uses financial sustainability ratios (as defined by the Victorian Auditor General’s Office) to monitor trends and performance and assess longer term financial risk.

| **Indicator** | **2024-25** | **2023-24** | **2022-23** | **2021-22** | **2020-21** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Net result (%)**  Net result/Total revenue | 10.8%  (Green) | 10.1%  (Green) | 12.3%  (Green) | 19.3%  (Green) | 12.3%  (Green) |
| A positive result indicates a surplus, and the larger the percentage, the stronger the result.  Council’s five-year average, being 13.0% is greater than 0%, this indicates Council’s ability to generate surpluses consistently.  (Long-term risk indicator: Green) | | | | | |
| **Adjusted underlying result**  Adjusted underlying surplus/Adjusted underlying revenue | 8.8%  (Green) | 7.9%  (Green) | 10.2%  (Green) | 16.1%  (Green) | 4.7%  (Amber) |
| Indicator of the broad objective that an adjusted underlying surplus should be generated in the ordinary course of business.  Council’s five-year average, being 9.5% is greater than 5%, this indicates that Council generates sufficient surpluses to fund operations.  (Long-term risk indicator: Green) | | | | | |
| **Liquidity (ratio)**  Current assets/Current liabilities | 2.64  (Green) | 2.98  (Green) | 2.97  (Green) | 3.62  (Green) | 2.41  (Green) |
| A ratio of one or more means there are more cash and liquid assets than short-term liabilities. A ratio greater than 1 means an entity can sufficiently fund its short-term liabilities.  Council’s five-year average, being 2.92, suggests that there is no immediate issues with repaying short-term liabilities as they fall due.  (Long-term risk indicator: Green) | | | | | |
| **Internal financing (%)**  Net operating cash flow/Net capital expenditure | 83.8%  (Amber) | 80.0% (Amber) | 90.0% (Amber) | 131.5% (Green) | 104.3% (Green) |
| This measures the ability of an entity to finance capital works from generated cash flows.  A medium indicator was anticipated this year as a result of the delivery of the largest capital works program to-date, including Fawkner Leisure Centre redevelopment & Balam Balam Place. Council has been saving, via the significant projects reserve for these two projects over multiple years and this is not taken into account in this indicator. The 4-year budget shows this indicator returning to a low risk in 2026/27.  Council’s five-year average, being 97.9% is lower than 100%, suggests Council may needs to generate additional cash from operations to fund new assets if they are not being saved for via a reserve over multiple years.  (Long-term risk indicator: Orange) | | | | | |
| **Indebtedness (%)**  Non-current liabilities/own-sourced revenue | 7.1%  (Green) | 13.9%  (Green) | 13.4%  (Green) | 12.7%  (Green) | 14.1%  (Green) |
| The higher the percentage, the less the entity is able to cover non-current liabilities from the revenues the entity generates.  Council’s five-year average, being 12.2%, is well below the benchmark of 40%. This suggests that there are no concerns over the ability to repay debt from own-source revenue.  (Long-term risk indicator: Green) | | | | | |
| **Capital replacement (ratio)**  Cash outflows for property, plant and equipment/Depreciation | 2.26 (Green) | 2.22 (Green) | 2.42 (Green) | 1.72 (Green) | 1.42 (Amber) |
| Comparison of rate of spending on infrastructure with its depreciation. A ratio higher than 1 indicates that spending is faster than the depreciation rate.  Council’s five-year average, being 2.01 is well above the benchmark of 1.5, thus confirming that there is a low risk of insufficient spending on asset renewal.  (Long-term risk indicator: Green) | | | | | |
| **Renewal gap (ratio)**  Renewal and upgrade expenditure/depreciation | 1.81 (Green) | 1.84 (Green) | 1.86 (Green) | 0.95 (Amber) | 0.96 (Amber) |
| Comparison of the rate of spending on existing assets through renewing, restoring, and replacing existing assets with depreciation. A ratio higher than 1 indicates that spending on existing assets is faster than the deprecation.  Council’s five-year average is 1.48, against a benchmark of 1.00. This has improved from 2022/23 (1.15), but the focus must remain on maintaining this expenditure.  (Long-term risk indicator: Green) | | | | | |

**Unrestricted surplus**

Council achieved an unrestricted surplus of $43,664 for the 2024-25 financial year.

It is important to note that Council’s restricted cash includes amounts required to complete carry-forward capital and operating projects, loan repayments, and other cash to be allocated to reserves.

**Audit and Risk Committee recommendation**

The Audit and Risk Committee met on 2 September 2025 to consider the draft Statements and recommended that:

 Council approves ‘in principle’ the Annual Statements for the year ending 30 June 2025.

 Council officers make administrative changes to the notes.

 Subject to review of the final version of the Statements, Council authorises the:

 Chief Executive Officer, Mayor and Deputy Mayor to certify the final version of the Statements.

 Principal Accounting Officer (Chief Financial Officer) to implement any non-material changes to the statements as recommended by the Auditor-General and provide a summary of such changes to the Audit and Risk Committee at its next meeting. Any material changes will be discussed with the Chair of Audit and Risk Committee prior to being presented to Council; and

 Chief Executive Officer to send the statements to the Auditor-General.

**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**

Council’s Audit and Risk Committee examined the 2024-25 Statements at its meeting on 2 September 2025.

**5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

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

**6. Financial and Resources Implications**

The preparation of the Statements and the associated auditing fees are included in the approved budget and therefore do not have any further financial or resource impacts.

The outcome of the Statements, in particular the Auditor-General’s assessment of Council’s long-term financial sustainability will provide useful guidance for Council’s long-term financial planning.

**7.** **Implementation**

The Statements will form part of Council’s Annual Report and will be published on Council’s website. It will also be formally received by Council at the October 2025 Council meeting.

**Attachment/s**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | Draft Financial Statements 2024-25 | D25/464134 |  |
| **2** | Draft Performance Statement 2024-25 | D25/366191 |  |
| **3** | Capital Carry Forwards into 2025-26 | D25/439984 |  |

7.10 Governance Report - September 2025 - Cyclical Report

**Director Business Transformation, Sue Vujcevic**

**Governance and Strategy**

## Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the summary of minutes from the Friends of Aileu Community Committee held 7 August 2025, at Attachment 1 to this report.

2. Notes the Records of Meetings, at Attachment 2 to this report.

3. Notes a response to a question taken on notice during Public Question Time at the 13 August 2025 Council meeting, provided as Attachment 3.

**REPORT**

**Executive Summary**

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

This Governance report includes:

 A summary of the minutes of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee held 7 August 2025, with a recommendation that Council notes the summary.

 Records of Meetings, with a recommendation that Council notes the records.

 A response to Public Question Time item taken on notice at the13 August 2025 Council meeting, with a recommendation that Council notes the responses.

**Previous Council Decisions**

Nil.

**1.** **Policy Context**

Reports from Advisory Committees to Council are provided in accordance with the Terms of Reference.

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 contain 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.

## 2. Background

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

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

## 3. Issues

**Advisory Committee minutes**

A summary of the minutes of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee held 7 August 2025 is provided at **Attachment 1** for Council’s information. There are no recommendations from the Committee for Council to note.

**Records of Meetings held under the auspice of Council**

Records of matters discussed at meetings organised or hosted by Merri-bek that involve Councillors and Council officers are kept in accordance with the Governance Rules.

Meeting Records must include meeting attendees, including organisations represented by external presenters; the title of matters discussed; and any conflicts of interests disclosed and whether the declarant of a conflict of interests recused themselves from the meeting.

Some examples include Councillor Briefings, meetings with residents/developers/ clients/organisations/Government departments/statutory authorities and consultations.

Records of Meetings received since the previous Council Meeting are presented at **Attachment 2** as follows:

 Councillor Briefing – 11 August 2025

 Councillor Briefing – 18 August 2025

 Planning Briefing – 25 August 2025

 Central Coburg Oversight Committee - 27 August 2025

 Councillor Briefing – 1 September 2025

 Audit and Risk Committee – 2 September 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 responses to questions taken On Notice at **Attachment 3** to this report relate to questions from 13 August 2025 Council meeting regarding Tate Reserve.

**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.

## Attachment/s

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | Reports from Advisory Committees to Council - September 2025 | D25/449763 |  |
| **2** | Records of Meetings - September 2025 | D25/450764 |  |
| **3** | Responses to questions taken On Notice - September 2025 | D25/449850 |  |

7.11 Contract Award: RFT-2025-34 - Road Reconstruction - Devon Road, Pascoe Vale (View Street to Oak Street)

**Director City Infrastructure, Anita Curnow**

**Capital Works Planning and Delivery**

## Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to:

a) Make a formal offer to Kaizen Civil Pty Ltd and ACN 619 423 068 (Contractor) to award the Contractor contract RFT-2025-34 Road Reconstruction Devon Road, Pascoe Vale (View Street to Oak 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 $1,139,504.51 (excluding GST), comprising of fixed lump sum of $893,883.63 (excluding GST) and provisional amount of $245,620.88 (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.

REPORT

## Executive Summary

The Road Reconstruction of Devon Road, Pascoe Vale (View Street to Oak Street), has been included in the 2025–2026 Capital Works Program under the Roads and Carparks Program. The project is part-funded through the Development Contributions Plan (DCP).

The scope of works includes the installation of underground major drainage system and associated pits, full depth pavement upgrade, reconstruction of the existing kerb and channel, vehicle crossings, footpaths, and garden bed installation.

Following the tender evaluation process, Kaizen Civil Pty Ltd has been identified as the preferred tenderer based on the strength of their submission. Subject to contract award on 10 September 2025, the contractor has confirmed readiness to commence offsite preparatory works from 22 September 2025.

Kaizen Civil 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 the first week of October 2025 and is expected to be completed over a six-month including industry shutdown period by March 2026 (weather permitting). The works will be delivered in up to 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 Devon Road, Pascoe Vale (View Street to Oak Street) as per the detailed drawings and specifications.

The tender was advertised via Council Procurement portal and in *The Age* newspaper on 3 July 2025, inviting tenderers via the e-tender portal from suitably experienced contractors to undertake the works.

The Tender closed on Tuesday 25 July 2025, with tenders received from following six contractors. Five out of six 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 | AMH Civil Pty Ltd | 25 626 019 734 |
| 4 | Etheredge Mintern Pty Ltd | 36 006 521 151 |
| 5 | GP Bluestone Pty Ltd | 21 664 700 435 |
| 6 | Kaizen Civil Pty Ltd | 18 619 423 068 |

### 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, traffic management, work program, working methodology, capability, capacity, experience and past performance, complete project management plan, customer service, social, environmental, and economic sustainability considerations.

The membership of the tender evaluation panel was as follows:

| **Title** | **Generalist or Nominated Speciality** | **Full Voting / Advisory Member** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Senior Construction Engineer | Engineering Services (Chair) | Full Voting |
| Project Engineer Roads and Drainage | Engineering Services | Full Voting |
| Senior Urban Designer | Generalist | Full Voting |
| Senior Design Engineer | Engineer | Non-Voting |
| Procurement Partner | Procurement | Procurement Compliance |

In assessing the tenders, consideration was given to the following pre-defined criteria:

| **Criteria** | **Weighting** |
| --- | --- |
| Cost | 40% |
| Traffic Management | 2% |
| Work Program | 3% |
| Work Methodology and Staging Plan | 5% |
| Capability | 5% |
| Experience and Past Performance | 5% |
| 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 evaluation process identified as the preferred supplier based on the results of the evaluation matrix, as identified in **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.

### Interviews

Kaizen Civil was interviewed on 7 August 2025. During the interview, the supplier was required to demonstrate and clarify the following:

1. Clarifications on Tender Submissions

2. Project Execution and Capacity

3. Methodology and Traffic Management

The panel members were satisfied with the interview.

### Social Implications

Kaizen Civil has 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. Kaizen Civil is actively involved in local charity works and engages people of First Nation for their Traffic Management works in their projects.

### Local Implications

Kaizen Civil is in Coburg North within Merri-bek City Council as well the Northern Councils Alliance area. Demonstrating a strong commitment to supporting the local economy, the company regularly engages local people, suppliers in its operations and has identified three local businesses to be involved in the upcoming Devon Road Reconstruction project.

### Environmental Implications

Kaizen Civil has established processes to recycle and reuse waste materials wherever possible and actively incorporates recycled products into their projects. For the Devon Road Reconstruction, the company will ensure that all excavated spoil, concrete, and asphalt are transported to appropriate recycling facilities. Additionally, they noted that their office is fully powered by solar energy and that their fleet includes an electric vehicle, reflecting their commitment to improving energy efficiency and minimising the environmental impact of their operations.

### Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities

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 Devon Road, Pascoe Vale (View Street to Oak 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

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

A total budget of $1,176,600 has been allocated in Council Capital Works Program for the financial year of 2025/26 for the Road Reconstruction Works of Devon Road, Pascoe Vale (View Street to Oak 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 Devon Road, Pascoe Vale (View Street to Oak Street) | $1,176,600 |
| **Total Budget** | $1,176,600 |
| Less |  |
| *Recommended contract award RFT-2025-34 Road Reconstruction* Devon Road, Pascoe Vale (View Street to Oak Street). | $1,139,505 |
| Provision for latent conditions or unforeseen costs | $37,095 |

## 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 September 2025.

Construction works are planned to commence in early October 2025 and be completed by the end of March 2026.

## Attachment/s

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | RFT-2025-34 Tender Recommendation Report  *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.* | D25/421154 |  |

7.12 Contract Award: RFT-2025-18 - Moomba Park - New Modular Pavilion (Design and Construct)

**Director City Infrastructure, Anita Curnow**

**Capital Works Planning and Delivery**

## Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to:

a) Make a formal offer to Modular Spaces Pty Ltd as trustee for Modular Buildings Unit Trust ABN 202 108 735 54 **(Contractor)** to award contract RFT-202518 for the Moomba Park – New Modular Pavilion (**Contract)** on the following terms and otherwise subject to and in accordance with paragraph 1(b) of this Resolution:

i. for the lump sum of $1,769,492.62 (excluding GST) plus provisional sum(s) of $250,000 (excluding GST), totalling $2,019,492.62 (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.

REPORT

## Executive Summary

The “Moomba Park Pavilion Reconstruction project” was initiated to address the outdated and insufficient facilities at Moomba Park. With a notable increase in female participation in the traditionally male-dominated sport of soccer, there was a clear demand for more inclusive and accessible amenities. Recognising this, the Council identified an opportunity to develop a joint-use facility catering to both community groups and sports clubs.

The Council successfully secured a Federal Government grant of $1,456,539 for the Fawkner Sports and Community Hub Project: which encompasses upgrading the sports pavilion to better support community activities, alongside the installation of new public toilet facilities.

This project aligns with strategic objectives outlined in the Council Plan, emphasising community engagement, sustainability, and the enhancement of recreational infrastructure. Designs for the new modular pavilion have been finalised and approved by key stakeholders. The pavilion upgrade will ensure compliance with Football Victoria’s current standards and guidelines.

In addition to the new pavilion, the existing social room at the south end of the sportsground will be demolished. This and construction of a new public toilet at this location will begin under a separate contract once the new pavilion is nearly complete.

Tender invitations were issued on 31 May 2025 to qualified contractors for the Moomba Park – New Pavilion (Modular) project, with submissions closing on 4 July 2025. A total of 11 tenders were received.

Following a comprehensive evaluation process—considering cost, capacity, capability, and risk—Modular Spaces Pty Ltd (as trustee for Modular Buildings Unit Trust) has been identified as the preferred service provider.

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.

## 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 new pavilion at Moomba Park will be a new pavilion featuring an expanded building footprint to accommodate a social room, shared kitchen between sporting clubs and community groups, change rooms, storeroom, bin storage and wash area, accessible toilets and a verandah.

All works will comply with current Australian Standards, including disability access requirements, and will incorporate female-friendly change rooms to promote inclusivity. The proposed sports pavilion is designed to fully meet these standards, and the designs have been finalised and approved by key stakeholders.

The tender advertisement was placed in *The Age* newspaper on 31 May 2025 inviting tenders via the e-tender portal. The request for tender closed on 4 July 2025 and 11 tenders were received with all submissions received deemed as conforming.

| **Tenderers Name** | **ABN** |
| --- | --- |
| ATG Projects Property Solutions Pty Ltd | 94 160 517 493 |
| Kozcon Pty Ltd | 55 671 499 899 |
| Construction and Building Design Pty Ltd | 39 125 786 914 |
| Fleetwood Australia | 78 114 678 349 |
| Harris HMC | 77 130 177 614 |
| Marathon Modular | 22 144 939 293 |
| Modular by SHAPE | 70 605 949 826 |
| Modular Spaces Pty Ltd | 202 108 735 54 |
| Prefab 1 | 66 636 258 423 |
| Rendine Constructions Pty Ltd | 29 005 366 129 |
| WIBS | 52 611 567 009 |

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** |
| Price | 40% |
| Capability | 20% |
| Capacity | 10% |
| Methodology and Task Appreciation | 10% |
| Tender Program/ Works Program | 10% |
| Social, environmental and local | 10% |
| **Total** | **100%** |

The membership of the tender evaluation panel was as follows.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Title and/or company** | **Project Manager/ Generalist or Nominated Speciality** | **Full Voting / Advisory Member** |
| Senior Project Manager | Project Manager (Chair) | Full |
| Acting Senior Project Manager | Generalist | Full |
| Acting Manager Community Wellbeing | Generalist | Full |
| Head of Building Unit | Advisory | Advisory |
| Sustainable Buildings Officer | Advisory | Advisory |
| Senior Procurement Partner | Procurement | Advisory |

The evaluation process identified Modular Spaces Pty Ltd as trustee for Modular Buildings Unit Trust as the preferred tenderer based on the results of the evaluation matrix, included as (**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 construction project with specific timing requirements and there is a healthy local market of contractors.

### Interviews

Interviews were held with 2 shortlisted tenderers.

### Social / Environmental / Local Implications

Modular Spaces Pty Ltd as trustee for Modular Buildings unit Trust has a Social Procurement Policy in place. The policy is designed to address disadvantage and principles of diversity, acceptance, fairness, compassion, inclusiveness and access for all people and abilities. Modular Spaces Pty Ltd has also indicated they will engage local sub-contractors and suppliers for this project.

Modular Spaces Pty Ltd as trustee for Modular Buildings unit Trust is the only contractor complied with all sustainability requirements set in the design for this project. Some of the Initiatives company promotes are:

1. Achieve or better the target of re-use of demolished materials. All new materials will be investigated for use from recycled sources, e.g. modwood decking etc

2. Recycled materials in use and waste minimization through prefab methods are main method of contributing to a circular economy.

3. Energy efficient lighting in their factory, recycle bins for steel, paper etc.

4. Fabricate 90 per cent of all items in house reducing fuel emissions.

### 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

Building Projects as the leading service unit for this tender process consulted other Business Units.

Public consultation has been through Conversations Merri-bek page, and nearby property owners and residents will be informed prior to the works commencing on site via a letter drop from Council and the contractor. While they have previously been engaged on scope and timing of works, the sporting clubs at Moomba Park will receive updated advice regarding the impending works to ensure impacts on their activities are understood and planned for.

It is recommended that the Contract be awarded to Modular Spaces Pty Ltd as trustee for Modular Buildings Unit Trust and the project progress in line with the plans that have been agreed with the sporting clubs at Moomba Park, to minimise disruption on use of Moomba Park for active recreation.

## 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 project has a life of project budget of $3,016,5391 (excluding GST). This budget is to cover this contract as well as works to be separately procured at the south end of the sportsground to demolish the social room and deliver a public toilet. With a contract award cost of $2,019,492.62 (excluding GST) including provisional items, it is expected that there will be savings, provided there are no unforeseen issues arise during the project.

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

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Amount (excluding GST)** |
| 2023-24 actuals | $16,540 |
| 2024-25 actuals | $34,225 |
| 2025-26 budget (adopted budget) | $2,806,539 |
| 2025-26 budget (1additional carry forward - pending Council approval at September 2025 meeting) | $159,236 |
| **Total Allocated Budget** | **$3,016,539** |
| **Less** |  |
| Project expenditure to date | $50,764 |
| Budget allocated towards social room demolition and delivery of new public toilet at the south end of the sportsground | $460,000 |
| **Total Available Budget** | **$2,505,774** |
| **Less Pavilion Costs** |  |
| *Pavilion: Recommended contract amount*: RFT-2025-18 - Moomba Park - New Modular Pavilion | $2,019,492 |
| Pavilion: ESD scope outside contract (reusing bricks for paving/paths) | $50,000 |
| Electrical upgrade | $100,000 |
| Provision for latent conditions or unforeseen costs | $100,000 |
| Other costs outside of the current contract | $236,281 |

The adopted budget includes grant funding of $1,456,539.00

## 7. Implementation and Timeline

This report is seeking a Council decision to authorise the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to execute the contract and any other required documentation.

Upon approval by Council of these this report recommendations, contract between the Contractor and Council is estimated to be executed in September 2025.

The contract will commence as soon as possible following Council endorsement.

It is estimated that the works will take 9 months and there will subsequently be a 52 weeks defects liability period under the Contract.

## Attachment/s

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | RFT -2025-18 - Moomba Park Modular Pavilion Tender Recommendation  *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.* | D25/402424 |  |

7.13 Contract Award: RFT-P-2025-6 - Provision of Dry Goods

**Director Community, Eamonn Fennessy**

**Aged and Community Support**

## Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to:

a) Accept the Schedule of Rates submitted by Tenderers and make a formal offer to each of the individual panel contractors listed in Table 1 below according to the service categories, for the **Contract RFT-P-2025-6 Provision of Dry Goods (Contract)** on the following terms and otherwise subject to and in accordance with paragraph 1(b) of this Resolution:

ii. For a period of two (2) years commencing 1 October 2025, with an option for a further two (2), two (2) year extension at the discretion of Council.

iii. For a maximum contract expenditure of $2,327,000 (excluding GST) across all suppliers for the term of the contract including extension options.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Preferred Tenderers Fully Legal Name** | **ABN** |
| **Dry Goods** | |
| AR Food Service Pty Ltd | 39 614 538 484 |
| P Manettas & Co Technical Pty Ltd T/as Bidfood Truganina | 95 003 044 997 |
| PFD Food Services Pty Ltd | 29 006 972 381 |
| **Packaging** | |
| P Manettas & Co Technical Pty Ltd T/as Bidfood Truganina | 95 003 044 997 |
| Rollerskate Investments Pty Ltd | 27 103 796 596 |
| PFD Food Services Pty Ltd | 29 006 972 381 |
| **Chemicals** | |
| P Manettas & Co Technical Pty Ltd T/as Bidfood Truganina | 95 003 044 997 |
| PFD Food Services | 29 006 972 381 |
| Cleaner Future Pty Ltd | 28 607 341 515 |

b) Negotiate and finalise the terms of the Contract between Council and each Contractor provided that:

i. the terms specified in paragraph 1(a) of this Resolution shall not be altered without a further Resolution of Council; and

ii. other than terms referred to in paragraph 1(a) of this Resolution, the terms of the Contract are acceptable to the Chief Executive Officer.

c) Conditional on acceptance of the Contract by each Contractor in accordance with the terms of this Resolution authorises the Chief Executive Officer to:

i. Do all things necessary to execute the Contract;

ii. Exercise the option to extend contracts in accordance with the provisions within the Contract;

iii. Accept new panel contractor(s) during the contract term subject to the same public tender/evaluation process as adopted for the original panel contractors, to ensure we can maintain a range of suitable suppliers to meet Council’s needs, providing the total contract amount to remain as paragraph 1 (a).

iv. Advises all tenderers of Council’s decision in relation to the Contract.

REPORT

## Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to recommend the award of a panel contract for the supply of dry goods to Council. This includes packaging, dry goods and chemicals.

The aim of the tender process is to establish a panel of dry goods suppliers to support the operations of Merri-bek’s Meals Production Kitchen. This kitchen functions as a Class 1 Food Production Business and is responsible for preparing and delivering meals to eligible recipients under the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP), the Home and Community Care Program (HACC), and individuals with Home Care Packages who have supply agreements in place. In addition to servicing Merri-bek residents, the meals service fulfills contractual obligations with Banyule, Yarra, and Darebin Councils. Meals are delivered directly to homes in Merri-bek and Darebin, providing not only nutritional support but also opportunities for social connection and welfare checks.

To facilitate procurement of these services and in the light of the expiry of the previous contract through which Council used to procure these services, Merri-bek City Council is establishing a new panel of contractors with competitively sourced schedules of rates to provide the following Panel of Dry Goods Services.

Council sought tenders from suitably qualified contractors for each of these categories and assessed the tenders in accordance with Council’s Procurement Policy and with the Procurement Evaluation and Probity Plan. Contracts are recommended to be awarded as outlined in the Officer Recommendation above. The tender complies with section 109(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020*

**Previous Council Decisions**

Nil

## 1. Policy Context

## This report is in keeping with Council’s commitment to accountability and sound financial management. It also addresses the requirement under section 109(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* which requires Council to 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) as well as the policy commitments contained in the Procurement Policy.

## 2. Background

Council is seeking to appoint a panel of suppliers for the Provision of Dry Goods. The contract will be managed by the Meals Production Kitchen, operated by the Aged & Community Support branch from the Bob Hawke Community Centre located on Hudson Street, Coburg. The recommendation is to appoint a panel for an initial term of two years, with the option for two further extensions of two years each. Establishing a panel will ensure business continuity and deliver best value for Council.

The Meals Production Kitchen prepares approximately 3,000 healthy meals per week. Each meal includes a soup or sandwich, a main course, dessert, and fruit juice. All meals are reviewed by an Accredited Practicing Dietitian to ensure compliance with the National Meal Guidelines for Meals on Wheels. Meals are delivered by paid staff who also provide a welfare check and social interaction with recipients. In addition to Merri-bek and Darebin, meals are distributed to Banyule and Yarra City Councils for onward delivery to their clients. Recipients include individuals supported by CHSP, HACC for Younger People, and those receiving Home Care Packages through contracted providers.

An advertisement was placed in *The Age* newspaper on Wednesday, 16 April 2025 inviting tenders via the e-tender portal. The request for tender closed on 9 May 2025 and 7 tenders were received with 6 of those submissions received deemed as conforming submissions.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Tenderers Name** | **ABN** |
| AR Food Service Pty Ltd | 39 614 538 484 |
| Auxico Corporation Pty Ltd | 52 089 113 780 |
| P. Manettas & Co Technical Pty Ltd T/as Bidfood Truganina | 33 000 228 231 |
| Cleaner Future Pty Ltd | 28 607 341 515 |
| Rollerskate Investments Pty Ltd T/as Enterline | 27 103 796 596 |
| F.Mayers (Imports) Pty Ltd T/as Mayers Fine Foods | 51 000 697 889 |
| PFD Food Services Pty Ltd | 29 006 972 381 |

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

Interviews were not conducted as the panel was satisfied with the information in the tender submission and the post tender clarifications.

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

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Weighting %** |
| **Price** | **45%** |
| **Qualitative Criteria Response** |  |
| Capability | 15% |
| Capacity | 5% |
| Quality | 15% |
| Social Sustainability | 7.5% |
| Economic Sustainability | 5% |
| Environmental Sustainability | 7.5% |
| **Total Qualitative Criteria Response** | **55%** |
| **Total Scores** | **100%** |

The membership of the tender evaluation panel was as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Title and/or company** | **Full Voting / Advisory Member** |
| Unit Manager Social Support | Full |
| Unit Manager Integrity Risk and Resilience | Full |
| Operations and Quality Management Coordinator | Full |
| Chef | Non-Voting/Advisory |
| Procurement Partner | Procurement Process Advisory |

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

## 3. Issues

The preferred panel are being recommended as they met the requirements for price, experience, resources, capacity, social/environmental/local considerations and OHS compliances/relevant insurances. Having a panel of suppliers in each category provides flexibility and allows us to obtain competitive pricing when purchasing goods.

The Officer Recommendation is to allow the CEO to approve new suppliers, as required, to ensure we maintain a number of suppliers over the life of the contract to meet council’s needs and address circumstances which may arise, such as contractors that cease their operations during the term of the contract. This would be subject to the same public tender/evaluation process as adopted by the original evaluation panel, to ensure we maintain a suitable range of suppliers to meet Council’s needs. The ability to bring on new suppliers also enables Council to potentially increase the number of contractors who align with our Procurement Policy environmental, social and economic objectives e.g. provide opportunities to business such as refugee businesses, social benefit suppliers etc. Any additional suppliers added to the panel would not change the overall maximum spend amount of $2,327,000 (excluding GST).

**Collaboration**

Section 109(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires that any report to the Council that recommends entering into a procurement agreement must include information in relation to any opportunities for collaboration with other councils or public bodies which may be available. Under this contract, there are no opportunities to collaborate with other Councils because other local government agencies have existing contracts that do not align with Council’s current contract requirements.

### Merri-Bek Meals service produces meals for distribution to Banyule, Yarra and Darebin Councils through various contracts.

### Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

All tender submissions by vendors were scored and assessments weighted against Economic, Environmental and Social Sustainability requirements. Council officers engaging with suppliers and service providers will ensure these are adhered to as part of ongoing contractor performance monitoring.

### Human Rights Consideration

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

## 4. Community consultation and engagement

Engagement with external parties was not required.

## 5. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Two Council officers involved in the preparation of this report were perceived to have an indirect interest. No other conflict of interest was declared in this matter.

## 6. Financial and Resources Implications

The award of this contract does not have any direct financial implications as works will be funded through ongoing operational budgets. The anticipate spend for the life of contract are detailed in the table below

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Description** | **Estimate Budget Value ($ excluding GST)** |
| 2025-2026 | Chemicals  Dry Goods  Packaging | 35,000  160,000  128,000 |
| 2026-2027 | Chemicals  Dry Goods  Packaging | $37,000  $170,000  139,000 |
| 2027-2028 | Chemicals  Dry Goods  Packaging | $40,000  $180,000  $151,000 |
| 2028-2029 | Chemicals  Dry Goods  Packaging | $43,000  $190,000  $165,000 |
| 2029-2030 | Chemicals  Dry Goods  Packaging | $47,000  $205,000  $177,000 |
| 2030-2031 | Chemicals  Dry Goods  Packaging | $50,000  $220,000  $190,000 |

It is worth noting, for panel arrangements Council does not guarantee either a minimum quantity of work in relation to any of the Contract components or any particular mix of work within the Contract components.

## 7. Implementation and Timeline

It is proposed that the Chief Executive Officer be authorised to do all things necessary to execute the contracts and any other required documentation, including execution of the future optional contract extension.

The contract is anticipated to commence on 1 October 2025.

## Attachment/s

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | RFT-P-2025-6 - Tender Recommendation Report  *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.* | D25/307740 |  |

**8. Notices of Motion**

**8.1 Merri-bek team for 2026 Youth Parliament program**

**Cr Sue Bolton**

## Motion

That Council:

1. Sponsors a team in the 2026 Victoria Youth Parliament.

## 1. Background

Cr Bolton’s background:

The Victorian Youth Parliament is a civic engagement program run by YMCA Victoria that allows young people aged 16–25 to participate in a simulated parliamentary process. Participants form teams, draft bills on issues they care about and debate them in the chambers of the Victorian Parliament.

Many of the young people who attended the 2025 Youth Parliament found it to be a fantastic experience. But many young people don’t know about the existence of the Youth Parliament unless their school enters a team. Usually, there are teams sponsored by schools, many local councils, and some community groups.

The Youth Parliament program provides a forum to amplify youth voices on matters affecting their lives and communities and empowers young leaders to advocate for advocate for social, environmental, and political reform. Over the years 70 Youth Parliament Bills have shaped Victorian laws.

The program provides opportunities for young people to learn about democratic processes and ways to create social and legislative change and to develop their leadership skills through public speaking, teamwork, policy development and debate.

Through discussion with the young people involved in the Fawkner’s Future group I am aware that six young people from Merri-bek’s northern suburbs have formed a team and wish to participate in the program.

## 2. Policy Context

Officer’s comments:

This Notice of Motion aligns with the vision of the Children, Young People and Families Plan 2021-2025 outcome area three: Lifelong Learning and Participation.

It also aligns with the draft Merri-bek Community Vision (2025 to 2035) and Council Plan (2025 – 2029) theme: Healthy and inclusive communities.

## 3. Financial Implications

Officer’s comments:

The cost to sponsor a team can be met within existing operational budgets.

## 4. Resources Implications

Officer’s comments:

Recruitment to the team and coordination and support throughout the program can be managed within existing resource allocations.

**8.2 Procurement policy and subminimum wages for disabled people in segregated workplaces**

**Cr Sue Bolton**

## Motion

That Council investigate the implications of not procuring from organisations such as prison industries and businesses which use the Supported Wage System such as Australian Disability Enterprises for future contracts and provide a report back to Council by December 2025.

## 1. Background

Cr Bolton’s background:

Merri-bek Council’s Procurement Policy has a section on Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) Procurement Considerations. This section of the policy (4.16) includes Social Sustainability which aims to elevate the inherent social value of doing business, by *Increasing employment opportunities for people experiencing social and economic exclusion or disadvantage, including but not limited to a disability, refugees, disadvantaged people and long term unemployed.* The policy also includes a minimum evaluation weighting 10 per cent for sustainability will apply to all public tender procurement activities.

In late 2023, The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability final report was handed down which made 222 recommendations. Recommendation 7.31 relates to raising subminimum wages, and includes that the Australian Government takes a phased approach to introduce a scheme to ensure that employees with a disability are paid at least half the minimum wage by 2034; further that this scheme is reviewed after five years of operation and use the results of the review to develop a pathway to lift minimum wages payable to employees with a disability to 100% of the minimum wage by 2034.  Recommendation 7.32 relates to ending segregated employment by 2034. This recommendation calls for government to develop a roadmap to transform Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) and eliminate subminimum wages for people with disability by 2034; it also includes that this recommendation (7.32), would operate in advance of recommendation 7.31 to raise all subminimum wages to the full minimum wages by 2034.

In November 2024, The UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, Professor Tomoya Obokata, made an official visit to Australia. In his report after the visit, Obokata stated:  *In Australia, persons with disabilities can be employed in sheltered workshops, referred to as Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs), where they engage in manual labour work, such as warehousing, ‘picking and packing’, cleaning and laundry services, sometimes against their will. Disturbingly, they are paid a sub-minimum wage as low as $3 per hour for their work when the national minimum wage not covered industrial awards and registered agreement is $24.10. Although ADEs are supposed to be transitional arrangements into the open market, the Special Rapporteur was informed that many are stuck with segregated employment for a long time. Furthermore, the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability noted that persons with disability who work in segregated workplaces may be at heightened risk of violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The Special Rapporteur regards the ADEs to be discriminatory and therefore they should be abolished.*

Currently, under the Fair Work Act, employees with disability have the same minimum wage entitlements as other employees except when the Supported Wage System covers them. Employees eligible for a supported wage, under Schedule D of the Supported Employment Award, are entitlement to a minimum supported wage that is calculated differently to other awards. Employees are entitled to a percentage of the relevant minimum pay rate for their classification. The percentage applied is the higher of:

 the employee’s assessed work capacity, rounded to the nearest whole percentage, or

 $3.12 per hour.

In most awards, employees eligible for a supported wage can't be paid less than $109 per week. This also applies to casuals, and junior employees.

People with Disability Australia (PWDA) announced that it supports the Special Rapporteur’s recommendation to abolish ADEs, where workers with disability are often paid as little as $3 an hour.

## 2. Policy Context

Officer’s comments:

The Procurement Policy is made under Section 108 of the *Local Government Act 2020*. The Act requires each council to:

 Prepare and adopt a procurement policy which specifies the principles, processes and procedures applying in respect of the purchase of goods and services and carrying out of works by the Council.

 Review its Procurement Policy at least once during each 4-year term of the Council.

The procurement policy was reviewed and adopted by Council on 11 June 2025.

Section 4.16 of the policy states *Merri-bek City Council aims to use procurement processes to drive sustainability, using our buying power to make a difference beyond the financial value of the goods and services we purchase. We aim to contribute to a fair, inclusive, economically, environmentally and socially sustainable community for all, via our suppliers and supply chain, supporting the targets and measures established by Council.*

*Social Sustainability - aiming to elevate the inherent social value of doing business, by:*

 *Increasing employment opportunities for First Nations people and businesses to address inequity and strengthen their role in the Victoria economy*

 *Increasing employment opportunities for people experiencing social and economic exclusion or disadvantage, including but not limited to a disability, refugees, disadvantaged people and long term unemployed*

 *Promotion of equity, diversity and equal opportunity*

 *Ensuring suppliers do not exploit workers and provide fair wages, including business practices*

 *Respect for human rights, and the rule of law and international norms of behaviour*

## 3. Financial Implications

Officer’s comments:

The cost of preparing a report and (potentially) amendment to the procurement policy can be undertaken within existing resources/budget.

## 4. Resources Implications

Officer’s comments:

Preparing a report and investigating the implications of not procuring from organisations such as prison industries and businesses which use the Supported Wage System (such as Australian Disability Enterprises) for future contracts can be done with existing resources.

**8.3 Famine in Gaza**

**Cr Sue Bolton**

## Motion

That Council:

1. Notes the distress that has been caused within large sections of the Merri-bek community from witnessing the human-made famine in Gaza as a result of the denial of food, and the destruction of Gaza as a result of relentless bombing.

2. Adds its voice to renewed calls for Australia to impose sanctions on Israel, until a permanent ceasefire is enacted and the siege of Gaza is fully lived to allow Palestinians in Gaza to have unlimited access to food, water, fuel, electricity, medical supplies and construction materials to repair damaged homes and civilian infrastructure.

3. Raises the Palestinian flag.

4. Marks the UN-recognised International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people on 29 November with an event. (<https://www.un.org/en/observances/international-day-of-solidarity-with-the-palestinian-people>).

## 1. Background

Cr Bolton’s background:

In August 2025, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) declared that there is widespread famine in Gaza. A quarter of all Palestinians in Gaza are starving – more than 500,000 people – with that number expected to rise to more than 640,000 within six weeks.

## 2. Policy Context

Officer’s comments:

## The Merri-bek Human Rights Policy 2016–2026 states that Council will advocate to other spheres of government, business, partner organisations and the community to promote human rights and address issues of discrimination and marginalisation at the local, regional, national and international level.

## Council’s Community Flag Schedule is a living document that can be added to by Council resolution.

## 3. Financial Implications

Officer’s comments:

The cost of implementing this motion can be met within existing budget allocations.

## 4. Resources Implications

Officer’s comments:

This motion can be actioned within existing resource allocations.

**8.4 Support for public housing statement**

**Cr Sue Bolton**

## Motion

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. Background

Cr Bolton’s background:

Many groups involved in the Victorian housing sector, from tenants’ associations and advocacy groups to community housing associations and the established peak bodies have initiated a call on the Victorian government to support public housing. They are asking community legal centres, residents’ associations, neighbourhood houses, churches, unions, universities, local councils and other organisations to support their call.

United Housing Sector Statement

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 households with no relocation plans other than to be pushed to the front of the waiting list, meaning households 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.

One of the high-rise estates that the State Government wishes to demolish is seniors’ housing in Brunswick. 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 per annum). 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 The statement that organisations are signing onto, calls for the Victorian Labor government to:

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. End all ‘surplus’ public land sales and use that land to build more public housing.

3. Introduce inclusionary zoning on private land for a mandatory component of public housing.

## 2. Policy context

Officer’s comments:

Officers initial assessment of the three numbered points is that the first is consistent with Council policy but the second and third go outside of current Council policy positions.

## 3. Financial implications

Officer’s comments:

The cost of implementing this Notice of Motion can be undertaken within existing operational budgets.

## 4. Resources implications

Officer’s comments:

Implementation of this Notice of Motion can be undertaken within existing resource allocations to the City Strategy and Design Branch.

**8.5 Sweating our assets - pools**

**Cr Nat Abboud**

## Motion

That Council, as part of the forthcoming review of the Aquatic and Leisure Strategy, investigates ways that we can get more out of our aquatic assets such as extended opening times, early morning swim programs and other events over the warmer months.

## 1. Background

Cr Abboud’s background:

Merri-bek has 6 pools and we know that people get a lot out of what they provide but could we do more in partnership with the organisation that runs them, to “sweat our assets” when it comes to the pools.

## 2. Policy Context

Officer’s comments:

Provision and management of Merri-bek six aquatic and leisure centres is guided by the Aquatic and Leisure Strategy 2018 – 2038. A review of this strategy will be undertaken in 2025/2026.

## 3. Financial Implications

Officer’s comments:

The review of the Aquatic and Leisure Strategy and investigation of ways in which we could get more out of our aquatic assets can be undertaken within existing budget allocations. Any proposed service or program changes that are recommended will considered in the resourcing and operational needs of the revised strategy at a future date.

## 4. Resources Implications

Officer’s comments:

An investigation into ways that we can get more out of our aquatic assets can be managed within existing resource allocations.

**8.6 Addressing Tyre Dumping**

**Cr Helen Davidson and Cr Chris Miles**

## Motion

That Council:

1. Writes to the Minister for Environment requesting the State:

a) bolsters Environment Protection Authority (EPA) resourcing and powers to deal with the prevalence of illegal tyre dumping; and

b) invests in Recycling Victoria programs that improve access to appropriate waste disposal and recycling facilities and develop end-markets for the use of recycled tyre materials

2. Works with Tyre Stewardship Australia to develop and deliver public education programs and initiatives that support the Recycling Victoria programs.

3. Monitors illegal tyre dumping on Council owned land at known dumping sites for six months.

4. Explores opportunities to collaborate with our neighbouring councils to develop a regional response to tackle a common problem.

5. Receives a report back to Council within nine months on progress, including potential pilot programs or partnerships to reduce illegal tyre dumping in Merri-bek.

## 1. Background

Cr Davidson’s and Cr Miles’s background:

Councils across Victoria, including Merri-bek, are experiencing a significant and ongoing problem with illegal tyre dumping. Tyre waste is most often produced by commercial businesses and most of them pay licensed operators to collect and dispose of tyres responsibly. However, sometimes due to the cost and the limited facilities for receiving waste tyres, these tyres are dumped in locations that are not highly visible. This leaves Councils and residents to manage costly clean-up and disposal. This issue not only creates financial burdens but also poses environmental and public safety risks.

This Notice of Motion calls on the Victorian Government to improve policies and programs that increase resourcing for tyre recycling and material re-use and enforcement of illegal tyre dumping to ensure responsible disposal practices.

**Council Initiatives**

To complement this, it is also proposed that Merri-bek undertakes the following initiatives:

 Increase monitoring of illegal tyre dumping on Council land

 Collaborate with Tyre Stewardship Australia (TSA), neighbouring councils and community organisations such as Keep Australia Beautiful to educate the public and support litter enforcement.

 Maintain a record of local illegal dumping incidents in Merri-bek to support state-level enforcement and policy development.

 Provide a copy of the letter from Council to the Minister for Environment to local Members of Parliament to encourage a local voice at the State level.

## 2. Policy Context

Officer’s comments:

The proposed approach is consistent with Zero Carbon Merri-bek Framework that encourages circular economy opportunities and the re-use, repurposing and recycling of waste to reduce the carbon footprint and reducing waste to landfill.

The draft Council Plan 2025 to 2029 includes the themes ‘Care for nature and climate resilience’ and ‘Beautiful and liveable city’. Addressing the issue of tyre dumping is aligned with achievement of these themes.

The draft Council Plan 2025 to 2029 is being recommended to Council for adoption at the September meeting.

## 3. Financial Implications

Officer’s comments:

The CCTV costs Council approximately $600 per month which for a six month exercise can be accommodated within existing budgets.

## 4. Resources Implications

Officer’s comments:

There are currently no specifically allocated resources to collaborate with Tyre Stewardship Australia, neighbouring councils and community organisations. This work and the oversight of the CCTV process may reduce staff capacity to address other compliance and amenity issues.

**8.7 Protecting the Right to Protest**

**Cr Ella Svensson**

## Motion

That Council:

1. Notes with concern the State Government’s proposed changes to protest laws in Victoria, and the City of Melbourne’s proposals to restrict protesting in the CBD, which risk undermining the long-standing democratic right to protest.

2. Affirms that protest and peaceful assembly are fundamental democratic rights, essential to community organising, grassroots movements, and the ability of people to raise their voices on issues affecting them.

3. Recognises that communities in Merri-bek, including workers, students, First Nations peoples, young people, the LGBTIQA+ community, and multicultural groups, have historically relied upon peaceful protest to secure important social, environmental, and political reforms.

4. Expresses concern that restrictions on protest risk silencing vulnerable communities, narrowing civic participation, and criminalising people seeking to advocate for change.

5. Writes to the Premier, the Attorney-General, the Minister for Police and the City of Melbourne reaffirming the importance of protest as a democratic right, requesting a public commitment to protect it, and noting that the right to raise issues in peaceful protest at the state’s capital belongs to us all.

## 1. Background

Cr Svensson’s background:

The right to protest is a cornerstone of democratic society. Across Australia and beyond, protests have been the driving force behind some of history’s most impactful social movements, winning many of the rights and freedoms we today take for granted.

In Merri-bek, locals have taken to the streets to call for accessible public transport, to rally for women’s safety following the murders of Jill Meagher and Eurydice Dixon, to demand action to end the genocide in Gaza, and to call for action on climate change.

Proposed changes to Victorian protest laws threaten to undermine this longstanding democratic tradition. Criminalising protest does not foster ‘social cohesion’ or make our community safer, instead, it silences our community, suppresses our human rights, making it increasingly difficult to stay safe when holding the government to account. When democratic rights are eroded, marginalised communities are hit the hardest. People who already face inequality and discrimination face increased dangers when exercising their right to protest.

In Merri-bek, we are proud of our vibrant, diverse, and politically engaged community. Any attempt to weaken protest rights directly undermines our residents’ ability to advocate for themselves, our community, and future generations.

Local governments have a responsibility to defend our community’s human rights and civic freedoms. As the closest level of government to our community, we have an obligation to amplify our residents’ voices, particularly when their rights are at risk. Through this advocacy, Merri-bek Council stands in solidarity with our community and with the longstanding tradition of organising, activism, and protest that has shaped our city.

## 2. Policy Context

Officer’s comments:

Merri-bek’s Human Rights Policy (refreshed in 2022), is grounded in the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, committing Council to uphold freedoms such as peaceful assembly and participation in civic life, regardless of background, belief, or identity.

Council’s policy aligns with Commonwealth, Victorian and Local Government policies and legislation, and aims to achieve consistency in Council’s approach to diversity. The policy also conforms to international Human Rights instruments which seek to protect the rights of all people.

Section 16 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities protects ones right of peaceful assembly and the right to freedom of association.

Article 21 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Australia is a signatory includes the right to peaceful assembly.

## 3. Financial Implications

Officer’s comments:

There are no financial resource implications arising from actioning this Notice of Motion.

## 4. Resources Implications

Officer’s comments:

The motion can be delivered within existing staff resources.

**8.8 Councillor Attendance at ALGA Conferences**

**Cr Ella Svensson**

## Motion

That Council:

1. Notes in accordance with the Councillor Support, Expenses and Resources Policy an annual budget allocation for attendance at seminars, conferences and training and community events, including for attendance at the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly, which is an important forum for local government advocacy.

2. Notes the costs associated with Councillors attending ALGA multiple times in a single Council term can be significant, and that Council must balance professional development opportunities with responsible use of public funds.

3. Requests a report that reviews Council’s Councillor Support, Expenses and Resources Policy regarding Councillor attendance at the ALGA National General Assembly.

4. Explores options for limiting paid councillor attendance such that each Councillor may only attend one National General Assembly at Council expense per Council term.

5. Considers necessary exceptions, such as where a Councillor is elected to a national local government body or holds a representative role that requires ongoing attendance.

## 1. Background

Cr Svensson’s background:

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly is the peak annual gathering of local governments in Australia. It provides Councillors with an opportunity to learn from experts, connect with interstate colleagues, and to advocate for issues that matter to our community on a national stage.

Nevertheless, attending the conference isn’t free. Registration, travel and accommodation add up, and when multiple councillors attend more than once in a term, the expense becomes significant. In the midst of a cost of living crisis, where residents are struggling and councils are asked to do more with less, it’s reasonable to consider how we can limit costs and ensure that opportunities are shared fairly.

Currently, our policy allows Councillors to attend the ALGA conference more than once per term at Council's expense. In practice, that means that some councillors might attend repeatedly, whilst others never do. Putting a cap of one funded trip per councillor, per term, levels the playing field and helps keep costs under control. There will be exceptions where multiple paid attendances are justified, particularly for the Mayor, or if a Councillor is elected to the ALGA board or another representative role that requires their presence.

By seeking a report this will allow us to compare options, weigh up costs, and adopt a policy that balances professional development with fairness and fiscal responsibility.

## 2. Policy Context

Officer’s comments:

The Councillor Support, Expenses and Resources Policy establish the facilities, resources and support necessary or appropriate to provide to Councillors in the performance of their duties as elected representatives, this includes Councillor entitlements to paid professional development.

The Councillor Support, Expenses and Resources Policy sets out the processes for ensuring that the costs of resourcing and supporting Councillors, and the value of any expenses reimbursed, are reported to the community quarterly to promote good governance, transparency and accountability.

The Councillor Support, Expenses and Resources Policy includes that individual professional development expenditure should be tested against the following criteria:

 is it in the interest of the Merri-bek community,

 does it meet the budget determined by Council,

 does it clearly offer and promote public benefit, as distinguished from private benefit,

 is it directly relevant to the Councillor’s role, and

 does it take place and is it able to be utilised during the Councillor’s term of office.

Council at its meeting held 12 August 2020, in adopting the Councillor Support, Expenses and Resources Policy, included the additional wording at Section 5.4 Professional Development as follows: “The cost of training and development programs for each Councillor during their term of office will be capped at $10,000.00 and a resolution of Council will be required to exceed this cap. Any individual training activity that exceeds $1,500.00 (excluding GST) will require approval by resolution of Council”.

## 3. Financial Implications

Officer’s comments:

There are no financial resource implications arising from a review of the Councillor Support, Expenses and Resources Policy.

## 4. Resources Implications

Officer’s comments:

Addressing this motion can be delivered within existing staff resources.

**8.9 Urgent Action Required on Road Safety: Recent Fatal Incidents on Moreland Road**

**Cr Jay Iwasaki**

## Motion

That Council:

1. Recognises two recent deaths on the state‑controlled Moreland Road, of a cyclist on 25 August and a skateboarder in mid-May, both caused by motorists.

2. Acknowledges the urgent need for a safer road environment for vulnerable users along Moreland Road.

3. Writes to the Minister for Transport and relevant Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) officials to request:

a) An immediate safety audit of Moreland Road.

b) Implementation of priority interventions at Murdock Street, Gordon Street, and other high-risk locations.

c) That the State government fund and deliver safety enhancements including pedestrian crossings, speed reductions, infrastructure upgrades, safe cycling infrastructure and road user awareness campaigns.

## 1. Background

Cr Iwasaki’s background:

On Sunday evening, 24 August 2025, a cyclist was fatally struck by a hit‑and‑run vehicle while standing next to their bicycle on Moreland Road near Murdock Street before succumbing to life‑threatening injuries in hospital early on Monday morning. This follows a previous tragic incident less than a kilometre away in mid‑May, where a skateboarder died after being struck by a car near Gordon Street along the same road. Moreland Road remains increasingly dangerous for vulnerable road users, and as a state-controlled road, action by the State Government is necessary.

These incidents highlight a pattern of preventable, life-threatening risk to non-motorised road users at specific locations along Moreland Road.

As a state road, jurisdiction for infrastructure changes lies with the Department of Transport and Planning; however, Council has a duty to advocate and collaborate vigorously to safeguard our community.

Early intervention holds the potential to prevent further tragedies and improve overall amenity for all users of Moreland Road.

## 2. Policy Context

Officer’s comments:

The Moving Around Merri-bek Strategy reflects council’s commitment to addressing road safety throughout Merri-bek. Under the theme of “Safe” in the strategy, there are three key objectives.

1. Create streets where everyone feels safe.

2. Reduce the frequency and severity of crashes on our roads.

3. In line with Victoria’s *Toward Zero* Strategy*,* adopt a safe system approach to road safety.

Council works closely with the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP), Victoria Police and the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) to monitor road safety issues and trends in Merri-bek. Recently an investigation into the fatal incidents on Moreland Road and Bell Street/Elm Grove have been of particular concern. Some of these incidents are still being investigated by Victoria Police.

Council is hosting a community road safety forum on 13 September 2025 at Coburg Town Hall to discuss various road safety issues and solutions. Staff from state agencies have also been invited to attend and discuss these issues with council and community members. The forum will discuss both state and locally managed roads with a particular focus on vulnerable road users.

Council has a range of road safety infrastructure projects in its capital works plan. Many of these projects have received funding contributions from the TAC or DTP – including projects targeting vulnerable road users and school precincts. However, infrastructure projects on state managed arterial roads are typically funded entirely by the state government.

Following the upcoming community road safety forum, officers will prepare a report on outcomes and next steps to address road safety in Merri-bek at the October Council Meeting.

## 3. Financial implications

Officer’s comments:

The motion can be delivered within the existing council budget, noting that the State government is responsible for funding State road infrastructure.

## 4. Resources implications

Officer’s comments:

The motion can be delivered within existing council resources.

1. Charter Keck Cramer’s report COVID Impact Study – Merri-bek Population and Housing Scenarios Forecast (2021) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)