



**Merri-bek**  
City Council

## COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

Wednesday 11 June 2025

Commencing 6.30 pm

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

### Language Link

This is the Agenda for the Council meeting.  
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## **Acknowledgement of the traditional custodians of the City of Merri-bek**

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

## Information about Council Meetings

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**NEXT MEETING DATE** The next Council meeting will be held on Wednesday 9 July 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 25 June 2025 commencing at 6.30 pm.

## **WELCOME**

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

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

### **3. MINUTE CONFIRMATION**

The minutes of the Council Meeting held on 14 May 2025 be confirmed.

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

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12.1	MERRI-BEK AFFORDABLE HOUSING PIPELINE	
	<i>Pursuant to section 3(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 2020 this report has been designated as confidential because it relates to Council business information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations if prematurely released.</i>	
12.2	CONFIDENTIAL FINANCIAL MATTER	
	<i>Pursuant to section 3(1)(e) of the Local Government Act 2020, this report has been designated as confidential because it relates to legal privileged information, being information to which legal professional privilege or client legal privilege applies.</i>	

## **5. PETITIONS**

### **5.1 PETITION - PARKING CONDITIONS WHEATSHEAF ROAD GLENROY**

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A petition (D25/287682) has been received containing 35 signatories requesting Council to review the parking conditions on Wheatsheaf Road, Glenroy.

#### **Officer Recommendation**

That Council:

1. Receives the petition, requesting Council to review the parking conditions on Wheatsheaf Road, Glenroy.
2. Refers the petition requesting Council to review the parking conditions on Wheatsheaf Road, Glenroy to the Director City Infrastructure for consideration and response.

#### **Attachment/s**

- 1 [!\[\]\(c6a8736a601a632e2c96605cf66055ed\_img.jpg\)](#) Petition - Parking conditions Wheatsheaf Road, Glenroy D25/287720

We, the undersigned residents of Wheatsheaf Road in Glenroy, respectfully petition the Merri-bek City Council to review the current parking conditions on our street.

Since the opening of the Glenroy Community Hub in 2022, the volume of vehicles parking along Wheatsheaf Road has significantly increased. While we welcome the positive community developments, this increase in street parking has resulted in:

- Difficulty accessing and exiting private driveways, particularly during peak periods;
- Regular traffic congestion, especially during community events or busy service hours;
- Restricted access for emergency vehicles, posing a serious safety risk;
- A general decline in the quality of life for local residents due to reduced accessibility.

We are not requesting a complete ban on parking, but rather a **reasonable limitation or regulated parking solution** that ensures:

- Driveways remain accessible for residents;
- Street remains passable for emergency and service vehicles;
- A safer and more liveable environment for all who live on Wheatsheaf Road.

We urge the Council to consult with the local community and consider implementing time-restricted parking, line marking so cars do not block drive-ways and or line marking of car parks.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to a prompt and thoughtful response.

Sincerely,

**The Residents of Wheatsheaf Road, Glenroy**









## Petition to Merri-bek City Council

Date \_\_\_\_\_

31/5/2025

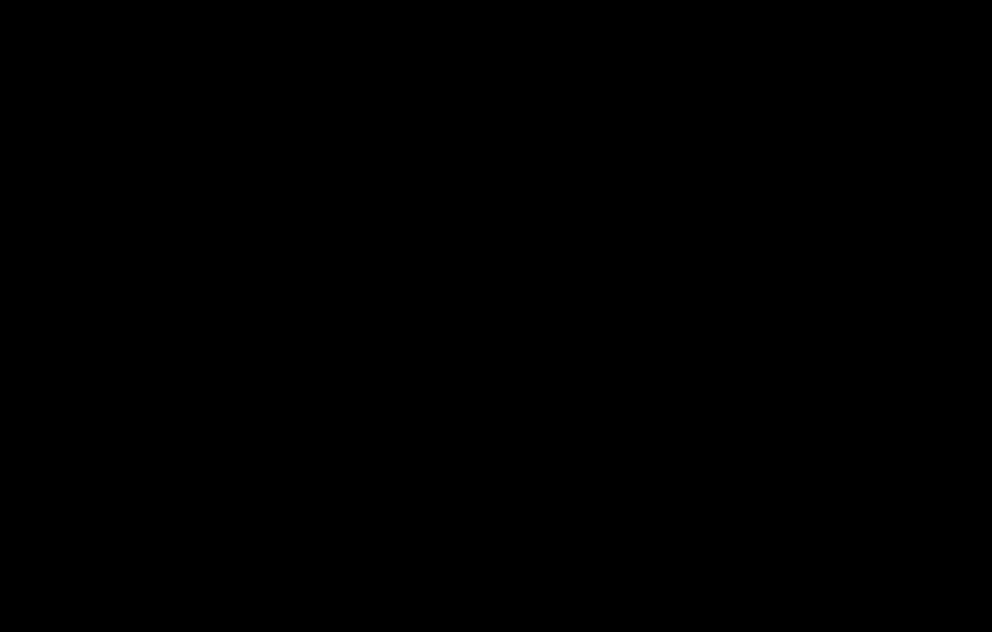
Petition Organiser

Address

Email address

Telephone number

We, the undersigned, petition Merri-bek City Council to:

Name	Address	Signature
		
Number of signatures on page		

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## 7. COUNCIL REPORTS

### 7.1 NORTH WEST BUILDING PHOENIX STREET AND BRUNSWICK BATHS GYM EXPANSION OPTIONS

Director Community, Eamonn Fennessy

Community Wellbeing

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#### Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the assessment of possible options for the North-West building, including partial gym expansion, arts/community space fit-out, and demolition.
2. Notes that gym expansion into the North-West building offers poor long-term value, due to title separation, structural limitations, significant cost to enable second floor use and lack of alignment with Council's future electrification aspirations for Brunswick Baths.
3. Endorse the staged implementation of enabling works to support the future expansion of the Brunswick Baths Health Club, including:
  - a) Demolition of the North-West building.
  - b) Relocation of the Outdoor Activity Zone to the current site of the North-West building; and
  - c) Commencement of preliminary concept design and consultation for a new gym facility extension on the current Outdoor Activity Zone within the Brunswick Baths footprint, including provision of structurally suitable roof space to support infrastructure to allow for future electrification of Brunswick Baths.
4. Refers the below financial implications to the 2025/29 budget process:
  - a) Brings forward \$160,000 from the 2026/27 capital works program to 2025/26, so that in 2025/26 a total \$460,000 is allocated in the capital works program for the demolition of the north-west building, relocation of the outdoor activity zone, and design and consultation for a new gym facility;
  - b) Removes the remaining \$2.19 million in the 2026/27 capital works program.
5. Refers the costs of the new gym facility extension (including provision to support future electrification of Brunswick Baths), expected to be over \$5 million, to future capital works planning and the 2026/30 budget process.

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

This report outlines future use options for the North-West (NW) building in Phoenix Street Brunswick and the Brunswick Baths Health Club, in response to growing community demand, operational pressures, and the current condition of the NW Building.

Following detailed review and consideration, it is recommended that Council proceed with enabling works to support a future extension of the Brunswick Baths Health Club onto the current outdoor activity zone/courts on the Brunswick Baths site. This would include demolition of the NW building, relocation of the outdoor activity zone (at a cost of approximately \$460,000 in the 2025/26 financial year) and commencement of the gym extension design and consultation. This recommendation would result in a reduction of the current 2025/26 capital works program by \$2.19 million.



This report is also noting that the construction of the new gym facility (\$5.0 million) is unbudgeted and recommended to be considered in future years capital works program development and budget considerations.

The report notes that while repurposing the NW building for gym expansion would offer some short-term capacity relief for existing users, it provides limited long-term value due to size limitations, structural compliance, building integrity and title constraints and the high cost to upgrade and maintain. Instead, redevelopment on the existing outdoor activity zone adjacent to the Brunswick Baths Health Club is identified as the preferred long-term solution to address capacity, safety, and future electrification requirements for the Brunswick Baths.

### **Previous Council Decisions**

#### **Land adjacent to Brunswick Baths - Options for Future - 10 July 2024**

*That Council:*

1. *Notes the information provided in this report which outlines the comparative benefits, risks, costs and community impact of use options including:*
  - a) *Expansion of Brunswick Baths Health Club*
  - b) *Destination arts venue*
  - c) *Making space (affordable arts)*
2. *Defers a decision on the future use of the North West building until early 2025, in the new Council term.*
3. *To inform this decision, receives a report in early 2025 on options and indicative costs for a future expansion of the Brunswick Baths Health Club within the current facility footprint and in particular gym operations to cater for future service growth and demand.*

#### **Land adjacent to Brunswick Baths - Options for Future - 13 March 2024**

*That Council:*

1. *Notes that the endorsed concept plan for the 33 Saxon Street hub identified the footprint of the North-West building (fronting onto Phoenix Street) as being for potential use for future expansion of Brunswick Baths.*
2. *Acknowledges that if the North-West building is not retained for future aquatics and leisure purposes, the likely best use of the site would be an arts related usage which preferably also increases activation of the site.*
3. *Commissions cost estimates for repurposing the building for arts use, and for Brunswick Baths Health Club (gym) use.*
4. *Undertakes a targeted market sounding during April 2024 to investigate if there are destination arts tenancies who can provide capital investment to repurpose and activate the building.*
5. *Receives a report in June 2024 that outlines the comparative benefits, risks, costs and community impact of Aquatics and Leisure or arts and culture usage including the options of:*
  - a) *Expansion of Brunswick Baths Health Club extension*
  - b) *Destination arts venue*
  - c) *Making space (affordable arts).*

## 1. Policy Context

This report aligns with the Merri-bek Council Plan 2021–2025 objectives relating to healthy, inclusive, and resilient communities.

The proposed redevelopment of the Brunswick Baths Health Club aligns with Merri-bek City Council's Aquatic and Leisure Strategy 2018–2038, which sets overarching direction for the provision of high-quality, sustainable, and accessible leisure infrastructure across the municipality.

The strategy highlights the need to respond to population growth, particularly in Brunswick and other inner-urban areas where demand for indoor health and fitness services is projected to increase significantly over the coming decades.

Key objectives of the strategy that support the proposed gym expansion include:

- Objective 1.3: Optimise the use of existing infrastructure through upgrades and redevelopment where appropriate.
- Objective 3.1: Expand indoor health and fitness services in locations with high current and projected demand.
- Objective 4.3: Progressively plan for the transition of aquatic and leisure centres away from gas toward energy-efficient alternatives.

Expanding the Health Club within the existing Brunswick Baths footprint also supports Council's Zero Carbon Merri-bek targets by allowing for integrated design that includes electrification infrastructure such as heat pumps. In doing so, the proposal supports long-term environmental goals while addressing current operational capacity issues, safety constraints, and service demand in one of Council's highest-use leisure facilities.

## 2. Background

Council purchased the former school site at 33 Saxon Street Brunswick in 2010. In 2012, 800sqm of the site was annexed and subdivided to become part of the redeveloped Brunswick Baths, with the old sports hall becoming a gym and the basketball court for the Baths.

The remainder of the site was kept and temporarily activated as an affordable arts precinct known as Siteworks whilst longer term plans were considered. Once a Community Needs Assessment and Strategic Framework had been developed, plans were made to redevelop the site to provide a long-term use of affordable arts and community spaces.

The old school building to the North-West of the site (the North-West Building) was originally considered for demolition to maximise the amount of open space in the precinct. However, once more detailed assessments of the building condition had taken place, it was determined that it was not at end of life, and that due its basic soundness as a building as assessed at that point, it would not be good practice from an embedded energy perspective to demolish it.

This also presented an opportunity, as the building is immediately adjacent to the buildings of the Brunswick Baths, which is experiencing more demand in its Health Club (gym) than its existing footprint can accommodate. The building was therefore removed from the scope of the 33 Saxon Street project and investigated as a separate opportunity.

The concept plan endorsed by Council at its November 2021 meeting, notates the space that the NW Building occupies as 'potential future Baths extension'.

During the development of Balam Balam Place, the NW building was retained for a potential expansion but delivered as a cold shell and remains non-operational without a certificate of occupancy.

In July 2024 Council considered a range of possible uses for the site, the benefits, risks, costs and community impact of use options including:

- a) Expansion of Brunswick Baths Health Club
- b) Destination arts venue
- c) Making space (affordable arts).

Council deferred a decision on the future use of the NW building until 2025, in the new Council term. To inform this decision, Council requested a report in early 2025 on options and indicative costs for a future expansion of the Brunswick Baths Health Club within the current facility footprint and in particular gym operations to cater for future service growth and demand.

This report presents updated findings and financial assessments for these future use options.

### **3. Issues**

#### **Community Impact**

The current gym at Brunswick Baths provides 352 square meters of floor space for over 3,600 members. This is well below industry standards. Current demand significantly exceeds capacity, resulting in service limitations and user dissatisfaction. In July 2024 Council received a petition from approximately 400 people to strongly consider allocation of the NW building for an expansion of the gym space based on community needs.

In parallel, there is ongoing demand for accessible, affordable creative making and rehearsal spaces in Brunswick. Many artists and arts organisations have approached Balam Balam Place operators and Council to express interest in such spaces within the NW building. There is also significant need from Balam Balam Place tenant, Blak Dot Gallery, for space for printmaking and other workshops and residencies that cannot be delivered within the existing infrastructure at Balam Balam Place.

Some initial scoping work to increase arts usage in Brunswick Town Hall has commenced but there is inadequate plumbing and ventilation infrastructure, and shared office tenancies that would make messy art making difficult at that site without significant renovations.

#### **Climate Emergency and Environmental Sustainability**

Retaining and reusing the North-West building is environmentally preferable to demolition, however the very significant costs associated with meeting compliance and functional needs to bring the facility into safe and usable condition outweigh the benefits of retention.

Brunswick Baths currently contributes 10 per cent of Council's corporate gas emissions, primarily to enable year-round pool heating. Transitioning the facility to an all-electric operation is an important strategic priority that will require significant future investment.

A challenge with electrification of the baths is ensuring adequate, ventilated, outdoor spaces for a large volume of heat pumps on a very constrained site. Redevelopment of the Health Club will enable integration of heat pump infrastructure onto a structurally suitable roof and help achieve Council's zero carbon ambitions.

#### **Economic Sustainability Implications**

Extending the gym into the NW building would deliver only 179 square meters of additional space at a cost of \$3.5–\$4 million, representing a poor return on investment.

## **Legal and Risk Considerations**

The NW building and Brunswick Baths are located on separate land titles, which presents challenges for infrastructure integration, legal compliance, and asset management. The NW building also has unresolved structural issues on the upper floor and contains known asbestos. Site contamination has been identified; if demolition proceeds, the site would be capped and contamination appropriately managed as part of the remediation process.

The NW building sits adjacent to the recently completed Balam Balam Place precinct. Although not current used, the building has previously been used for creative practices. Its potential removal from the site's creative remit poses reputational risks, given longstanding aspirations that the space could support arts uses not accommodated in the new development. Officers will work through alternative options within other community spaces to where possible service this identified need.

## **Human Rights Consideration**

This report has been reviewed under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. No rights are negatively impacted by the proposed recommendations. A gender equity and accessibility lens has been applied in the assessment of community needs and infrastructure outcomes.

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

Community consultation on both the Health Club and NW building has occurred through multiple avenues:

- A 2022 survey of 145 Brunswick Baths members on services offered including the gym.
- Ongoing customer feedback to the YMCA and Council regarding the gym including overcrowding concerns.
- A petition signed by over 400 community members supporting gym expansion.
- Feedback from the arts sector through the development of the Arts and Culture Strategy 2023–2030, highlighting the urgent need for making spaces.

A targeted engagement process will follow any Council decision to confirm implementation priorities and inform stakeholders of the endorsed direction.

**Affected Persons' Rights and Interests** There are no direct impacts on individual rights. Broader community stakeholders will be consulted further during implementation.

**Communications** A communications and engagement plan will be prepared following Council's decision, to support effective information sharing and implementation planning with affected stakeholders and service providers.

## **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, Resources Implications and Implementation

The below table shows the current capital works allocation based on Council's draft 2025/2026 budget.

	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
<b>2024-25 forecast</b>	50,000	-	-	-	-
<b>Carry forward funding into 2025/26</b>	-	150,000	-	-	-
<b>2025/26 budget (proposed)</b>	-	150,000	2,350,000	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>50,000</b>	<b>300,000</b>	<b>2,350,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

The table below outlines the costed options and their respective shortfalls.

These options reflect a range of approaches from minimal compliance upgrades through to full-scale redevelopment. While the baseline option of the North-West building (as an arts/community space) fits within the existing budget, it offers only short-term functional value and does not address the underlying building condition long term or meet broader service demand. Conversely, the gym expansion into the existing Brunswick Baths footprint, though requiring a future funding commitment, presents the most cost-efficient solution in terms of space value, and alignment with Council's climate action targets.

This pathway also allows Council to avoid costly and inefficient retrofitting of the North-West building for a use (gym) it is not structurally suited for.

Retaining the North-West building presents a range of ongoing financial, operational, and strategic risks to Council. Despite receiving a Certificate of Final Inspection (for a permitted use for Public Assembly), the building remains a legacy asset that requires ongoing maintenance attention to meet minimum compliance standards particularly around accessibility, fire safety, and egress.

The building lacks a lift to the upper floor, relies on reduced stair compliance, and has unresolved access barriers that are only partially mitigated through alternative ground-level spaces. Maintaining this building would lock Council into recurrent costs for essential safety measures, quarterly and annual inspections, and ongoing reactive maintenance without delivering a fit-for-purpose or fully accessible facility. Further, its outdated infrastructure limits integration with future electrification works at Brunswick Baths, undermining long-term sustainability objectives.

The North-West building represents a high-cost, low-value asset that impacts operational resources while constraining strategic outcomes. Demolition and site readiness investment offer better long-term value, greater flexibility, and alignment with Council's community and environmental priorities.

Option	Detail	Estimated Cost	Key Considerations
Affordable Arts (Ground level only)	Baseline fit out for occupancy permit	\$2.5M	Meets minimum compliance, short-term activation only
Affordable Arts (Both levels)	Full fit-out incl. lift and upper floor activation	\$5M+	Higher community benefit, but costly to retrofit for access and to maintain

Option	Detail	Estimated Cost	Key Considerations
Gym Extension – North-West Building (Ground level only)	179sqm addition into North-West Building	\$3.57–\$4M	High cost for limited gain, not fit for long-term needs or capacity requirements
Gym Expansion – into Brunswick Baths Site	Redevelopment into Outdoor Activity Zone (720sqm total incl. 400sqm new space)	\$5M	Best long-term solution, also enables the building to be designed to support heat pumps for future electrification of Brunswick Baths
Relocation of Outdoor Activity Zone	Shift fitness programs to new area to enable gym build	\$400K	May enable demolition and future use of North-West site

A breakdown of the financial implications is summarised below:

Item	Description	Cost
1	Demolish the North-West Building	\$200,000
2	Relocate / construct Outdoor Activity Zone	\$200,000
3	Design and consult on gym extension (incl. provision for electrification infrastructure)	\$60,000
	<b>Recommended use of 2025/26 Budget Allocation</b>	<b>\$460,000</b>

It is recommended that Council proceed with Items 1 to 3 above within the current allocation to enable progress on demolition, implementation of new outdoor activity space, and preliminary design of the gym expansion. These works will prepare the site for future delivery and allow integration of electrification infrastructure into the planning phase.

The current 4-year budget does not have capacity to fund the construction of the new Health Club gym extension and it is recommended that this is considered through future years capital works program development and budget cycle considerations.

### Attachment/s

There are no attachments for this report.

## 7.2 ACTIVITY CENTRES PROGRAM MERRI-BEK CLUSTER - PHASE 1 ENGAGEMENT

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade

City Strategy and Economy

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### Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the State Government's Activity Centres Program (Program), which includes the Brunswick and Coburg Station Activity Centres (collectively referred to as the Merri-bek Cluster), and the draft submission provided at Attachment 1.
2. Endorses the draft *Activity Centres Program – Phase 1 Submission: Merri-bek Cluster*, June 2025 at Attachment 1 as Council's formal submission to the State Government for Phase 1 of the Program.
3. Receives a report on the draft Activity Centre Plan(s) and any associated planning controls to be released by the State Government during Phase 2 engagement, for the purpose of endorsing a formal Council submission.

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

The State Government's Activity Centres Program (Program) is a priority action under the new state-wide planning strategy, *Plan for Victoria*. It aims to deliver more housing in well-connected areas across Melbourne. The State Government advises the Brunswick and Coburg Station Activity Centres, located along the Upfield Line, have been included in the Program due to their:

- Transport capacity
- Market viability
- Proximity to jobs and services
- Planned infrastructure upgrades, such as level crossing removals.

The State Government is describing the Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres as the "Merri-bek Cluster". The land within the Merri-bek Cluster plays a vital role in supporting the municipality's residential, economic, and employment functions. Anchored by Sydney Road and the Upfield rail corridor, the area accommodates a diverse and vibrant mix of commercial, industrial, residential, and creative land uses. It is serviced by Merri-bek's integrated transport network, including pedestrian, cycling, public transport, and road connections as well as a range of civic and open spaces.

Phase 1 of community engagement for the Activity Centres Program (Program) commenced on 6 May and will close on 15 June 2025. This stage seeks preliminary feedback from councils and the community to inform the development of Activity Centre Plans for 25 centres, including the Brunswick and Coburg Station Activity Centres (collectively referred to as the Merri-bek Cluster). As a key stakeholder, it is important that Council plays an active advocacy role to help ensure the Program delivers positive outcomes for the Merri-bek community.

At this early stage, no draft Activity Centre Plans (Plans) or supporting technical documentation have been released. As such, the draft submission (Attachment 1), prepared for Council's endorsement, provides important high-level feedback based on available information, adopted Council strategies, local priorities, and known conditions.

The draft submission supports the State Government's objective to focus housing growth in well-serviced areas such as the Merri-bek Cluster. However, this growth must be carefully planned to ensure the delivery of affordable, sustainable, and diverse high-quality housing, supported by essential infrastructure, transport, and open space. The draft submission outlines seven key issues, and associated advocacy asks to ensure the fast-tracked Program does not negatively impact the liveability of Coburg and Brunswick.

The State Government has advised that detailed planning will continue throughout 2025, with a second phase of engagement to occur later in the year, when draft Plans and proposed planning controls are expected to be released. At that time, Council will consider a further report and a draft submission in response.

An amendment to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme to implement the outcomes of the Plans is anticipated in early 2026.

## Previous Council Decisions

There are no previous Council decisions relating specifically to the State Government's Activity Centre reforms, which were announced shortly before the local government caretaker period in late 2024.

### 1. Policy Context

#### Community Vision and Council Plan

##### Merri-bek 2021-31 Community Vision

The *Merri-bek Community Vision 2021–2031* supports sustainable, inclusive growth in well-connected locations like Brunswick and Coburg. It prioritises low-emission development, safer built environments, and diverse, affordable housing close to services and open space.

The Vision also promotes vibrant, well-designed activity centres that reflect local identity, alongside transparent, community-led planning and strong local leadership.

##### Council Plan 2021 – 2025

The *Merri-bek Council Plan 2021–2025* supports sustainable, inclusive, and well-serviced growth in key locations like Brunswick and Coburg. It reinforces Council's commitment to climate action, equitable infrastructure, vibrant activity centres, and meaningful community engagement.

#### Planning Framework

##### State Planning Strategies

##### *Plan for Victoria*

The Activity Centres Program is a priority action under *Plan for Victoria*, the State Government's new long-term planning strategy released in February 2025. The Plan:

- Sets a housing target of 69,000 new dwellings for Merri-bek by 2051.
- Reinforces the longstanding 70/30 growth policy, aiming for 70% of new homes in established areas, such as Brunswick and Coburg, and 30% in growth areas.
- Builds on *Victoria's Housing Statement: The Decade Ahead 2024–2034*, which prioritises affordable, well-located housing for all Victorians.

##### Merri-bek Planning Scheme

The Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) of the Merri-bek Planning Scheme includes the following key directions for Brunswick and Coburg:

- 53% of future growth is expected in the Brunswick–Brunswick East–Coburg corridor.
- With no greenfield land and limited brownfield opportunities, growth must be managed through urban densification near public transport, shops, and services.



- Brunswick and Coburg Major Activity Centres are prioritised for intensification, with Brunswick forecast to absorb the greatest share of new dwellings.
- Growth is managed in line with the 20-minute neighbourhood principle, enabling residents to access daily needs within a short walk, ride or public transport trip. This supports:
  - Sustainable and climate-resilient neighbourhoods.
  - A healthy and active community.
  - Stronger social connection.
  - A thriving local economy.

The MPS aligns with the key objective of the Activity Centres Program which is to focus housing growth in well-serviced locations.

#### Related amendments to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme:

Council currently has several planning scheme amendments awaiting a decision from the Minister for Planning. These proposed amendments seek to introduce the following changes to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme:

- A strengthened Environmentally Sustainable Development policy to raise sustainability standards for new buildings and support a transition to net zero carbon development. Council resolved to seek authorisation for Amendment C223mbek in May 2022.
- The introduction of the Activity Centre Zone in the Brunswick Activity Centre to guide land use, encourage business investment and job creation, and support the ongoing vibrancy of the area. Council resolved to seek authorisation for Amendment C230mbek in May 2024.
- Updated local planning policy to align with Council's transport and open space strategies. Council resolved to adopt Amendment C231mbek in February 2025.
- An increased open space contribution rate to ensure the provision of new public open space in response to growing demand. Council resolved to seek authorisation for Amendment C235mbek in March 2025.
- A new 15-year Development Contributions Plan to help fund essential infrastructure. Council resolved to seek authorisation for Amendment C236mbek in May 2025.

Council officers continue to advocate for a timely decision by the Minister for Planning to enable these amendments to proceed and be implemented into the Merri-bek Planning Scheme.

In addition, Council is progressing Amendment C196mbek, which applies new flood controls (Special Building Overlay 2) to properties at risk of flooding from local stormwater drains. This amendment is not yet with the Minister for decision.

#### Related strategic studies:

Council is also progressing several strategic planning projects relevant to the Brunswick and Coburg Station Activity Centres, including:

- Brunswick built form review: In May 2023, Council resolved to undertake a comprehensive built form review of the Brunswick Activity Centre. This review is well advanced but is currently on hold to avoid duplication with the State Government's Activity Centres Program and to minimise potential community confusion.
- Brunswick and Coburg heritage reviews: In 2023, Council resolved to undertake heritage reviews of both the Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres. These reviews are currently underway and are expected to be finalised by mid-2025.

## 2. Background

### State Government Activity Centres Program

The State Government's Activity Centres Program (Program) aims to deliver over 300,000 new homes by 2051 across 60 designated activity centres in Melbourne. The first 10 "pilot" centres have already been finalised.

The Program focuses on increasing housing in well-serviced locations with strong access to public transport, jobs, and services. It seeks to create compact, walkable, and vibrant centres that support greater housing choice and urban renewal.

Each activity centre in the Program will consist of two key components (refer to Image 1):

- **A 'core':** The area surrounding the train station, including the commercial centre. It is intended for larger apartment buildings, with building heights of 6 to 12 storeys envisaged.
- **A 'catchment':** The surrounding area, extending up to 800 metres (roughly a 10-minute walk) from the core, intended for townhouses and smaller apartment buildings:
  - **Inner catchment:** Up to 6 storeys on lots over 1,000m<sup>2</sup> with a 20-metre frontage and up to 4 storeys elsewhere.
  - **Outer catchment:** Up to 4 storeys on lots larger than 1,000m<sup>2</sup> with a 20m frontage and up to 3 storeys elsewhere.

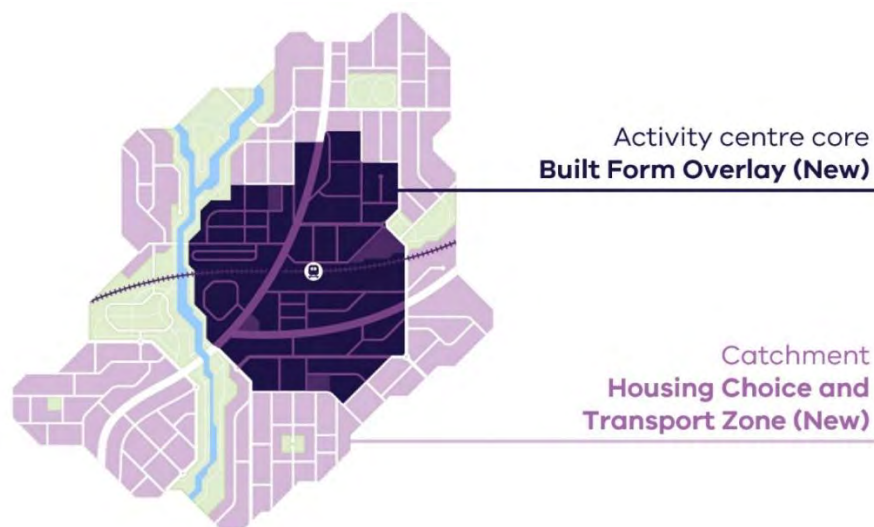


Image 1. Indicative plan of what a centre in the Program will look like.

To support implementation, two new planning tools have been introduced into the Victoria Planning Provisions:

- **Built Form Overlay (BFO):** Establishes preferred building heights and design requirements. It introduces a streamlined planning process to accelerate housing delivery.
- **Housing Choice and Transport Zone (HCTZ):** Applies to residential land in the catchment, encouraging diverse housing types while retaining current planning approval pathways.

The design intent is for building heights to transition gradually from the midrise core to the surrounding lower scale neighbourhood (refer to Image 2).

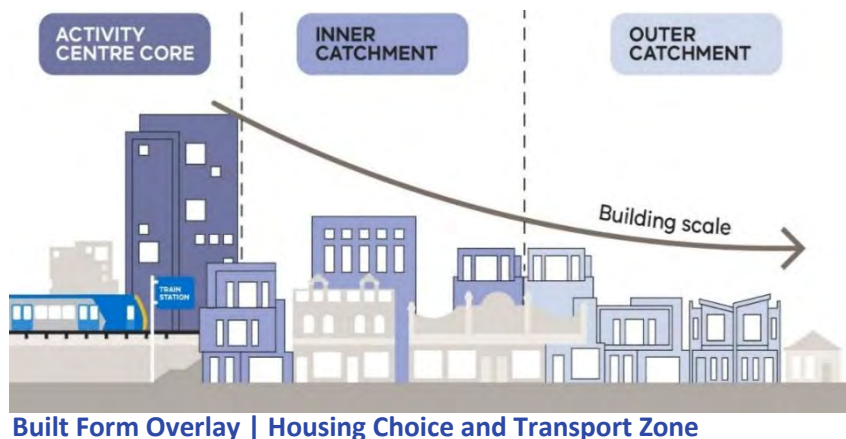


Image 2. Envelope transitions in scale from mid-rise in the core to the lower-rise outer catchment.

The State Government is preparing Activity Centre Plans (Plans) for each designated location. These plans will form the strategic basis for future changes to the Planning Scheme.

### **Expansion of the program and inclusion of the Merri-bek Cluster**

On 27 February 2025, the Premier announced the expansion of the Activity Centres Program to include 60 centres. Among the 25 newly added centres are Brunswick Station and Coburg Station, which together form the “Merri-bek Cluster”. These centres are part of the first tranche of the expanded Program, involving 18 councils, with implementation expected to occur throughout 2025 and finalisation in early 2026.

The State Government’s selection of the Merri-bek Cluster was based on key criteria:

- Transport capacity.
- Market viability.
- Proximity to jobs and services.
- Planned infrastructure upgrades (e.g. level crossing removals).

Centred on Sydney Road and the Upfield rail line, the corridor has strong multi-modal access and supports a mix of residential, commercial, industrial, and creative uses. Brunswick’s core is transitioning from manufacturing to creative and knowledge-based industries, while surrounding residential areas have seen increased housing density.

The Merri-bek Cluster currently has a population of approximately 76,721, projected to grow by 29,947 people (39%) by 2051.

### **Community engagement**

Phase 1 of the State Government’s community engagement for the expanded Program launched on 6 May 2025 and will close on 15 June 2025. This initial stage seeks early feedback from councils and the community to help shape the development of Activity Centre Plans for the 25 new locations, including the Brunswick and Coburg Station Activity Centres (Merri-bek Cluster).

The State Government has confirmed that detailed planning will continue throughout 2025, with a second phase of community engagement to be undertaken later in the year. During this phase, the draft Activity Centre Plans (Plans) and proposed planning controls are expected to be released. Final Plans are expected by the end of 2025, with a planning scheme amendment to implement the outcomes anticipated in early 2026.

## **Planning investigation area**

As part of Phase 1 community engagement, the State Government released a high-level map outlining the proposed planning investigation areas for the Merri-bek Cluster (**Attachment 2**). However, the limited level of detail currently available constrains Council's ability to provide comprehensive or site-specific feedback at this stage. Initial observations and key points are provided below.

### Extent

The investigation area generally follows a linear north–south corridor along the Upfield rail line, capturing six train stations (Batman, Coburg, Moreland, Anstey, Brunswick, and Jewell) across approximately 5 kilometres. Brunswick and Coburg stations located 700–800 metres apart, serve as the primary anchors of this corridor.

The planning investigation area extends 700–900 metres east and west of the rail line and includes:

- Sydney Road, parts of Lygon and Nicholson Streets.
- The Pentridge redevelopment precinct.
- Key open spaces such as Gilpin Park, Clifton Park, Reaburn Reserve and Coburg City Oval.
- Coburg Civic Centre.
- The Brunswick Design District (BDD), incorporating RMIT's Brunswick Design Campus and Council's new \$28 million Balam Balam Place arts hub.
- Major tram routes: Route 19 (Sydney Road), Routes 1 & 6 (Lygon Street), and Route 96 (Nicholson Street).
- An integrated transport network of walking, cycling, public transport, and road connections.

### Upcoming proposed State Government projects

Seven level crossings along the Upfield Line are scheduled for removal by 2030, with Anstey, Brunswick, and Jewell Stations to be consolidated into two new stations.

The planning investigation area also includes the public housing tower at 351 Barkly Street, Brunswick, identified for future redevelopment under the State Government's plan to replace 44 ageing public housing towers by 2051. No relocations are expected before July 2026.

### Sydney Road Shopping Strip

The Sydney Road shopping strip in Brunswick and Coburg is a key destination for local and neighbouring communities. It is a place where people shop, work, meet, relax, and live—characterised by a high concentration of commercial, residential, social, and cultural activity.

In Brunswick, Sydney Road features a largely intact collection of late 19th and early 20th-century retail and commercial buildings, many with original upper-floor facades. These contribute to a strong and valued heritage streetscape. A large, precinct-wide Heritage Overlay (HO149) applies.

In contrast, Sydney Road in Coburg is covered by multiple, smaller individual Heritage Overlays, rather than a precinct-wide overlay. The area consists primarily of late 19th and early 20th-century retail, commercial, and community buildings.

### Existing planning framework

The Merri-bek Cluster currently comprises a range of planning zones and built form controls, reflecting its diverse land use mix and strategic development opportunities.

#### Brunswick Station Activity Centre:

- Sydney Road, Nicholson Street, and Lygon Street are primarily zoned Commercial 1 Zone (C1Z), with adjacent land in the Mixed Use Zone (MUZ), Industrial 1 Zone (IN1Z), Public Park and Recreation Zone (PPRZ), and Public Use Zone (PUZ).
- Built form controls introduced in 2016 through a schedule to the Design and Development Overlay (DDO) allow for building heights of 5–6 storeys along Sydney Road, and 7–8 storeys between Sydney Road and the rail line (Victoria Street to Brunswick Road).
- Surrounding residential areas are mostly zoned Neighbourhood Residential Zone (NRZ), supporting development up to two storeys.
- The Brunswick Station Activity Centre is expected to accommodate approximately 10,700 dwellings—equivalent to 15.6% of Merri-bek's overall housing target.

#### Coburg Station Activity Centre:

- Sydney Road is mostly zoned Activity Centre Zone (ACZ), with surrounding MUZ, PPRZ, and PUZ.
- Built form controls, introduced through the ACZ in 2015, allow for a height range of 6-12 storeys in the commercial core.
- Residential land is mainly zoned General Residential Zone (GRZ), allowing for three-storey development.
- The Coburg Activity Centre can accommodate approximately 7,700 dwellings, or 11.6% of Merri-bek's housing target.

### 3. Issues

As a key stakeholder, Merri-bek City Council has a critical role in bringing the local community's perspective to the State Government's reforms. It is an opportunity for Council to advocate to the State for integrated, place-based outcomes that reflect local knowledge, strategic priorities, and community aspirations. This role is particularly significant given the Program's focus on facilitating substantial housing growth and built form change in the Merri-bek Cluster.

It is essential that the State Government fully considers Council's strategic planning framework, existing commitments, and community expectations as it progresses this work.

At this early stage, the absence of draft Activity Centre Plans and technical documentation limits Council's ability to assess the technical planning implications of the Program. In response, a high-level draft submission, *Activity Centres Program – Phase 1 Submission: Merri-bek Cluster*, June 2025 (**Attachment 1**) has been prepared for Council's endorsement.

The draft submission provides important high-level feedback based on available information, adopted Council strategies, local priorities, and known conditions. It is intended that the submission is shared with the State Government and also with the Merri-bek community.

It also raises key areas of State investment that are needed to support further housing growth along the Sydney Road corridor. This includes school infrastructure (with two current critical school expansions in these catchments currently stalled), transport infrastructure (duplicating the Upfield line, delivering the Brunswick level crossing removal, upgrading accessibility for the Sydney Road tram line, and delivering 2021 bus reform upgrades). It also includes ongoing commitment to local developer contribution models to ensure that local infrastructure such as parks, community centres, kindergartens, sporting facilities, parking and other services are available to the thousands of new residents the Activity Centre reform may bring to this area.

### **Draft submission to Phase 1 of the Activity Centres Program**

The draft submission provides support for the objective of the Activity Centres Program, which seeks to focus housing growth in well-served, infrastructure-rich locations. However, to be successful, this growth must be carefully planned to ensure the delivery of affordable, sustainable, and diverse high-quality housing, supported by essential infrastructure, transport, and open space.

The draft submission outlines seven key issues, and associated advocacy asks to ensure the fast-tracked Program does not negatively impact the liveability of Coburg and Brunswick. Reform to housing “layers” in the Planning Scheme, without associated economic layers, and critical transport and community infrastructure investment, risks significant negative impacts to liveability in Merri-bek.

In summary, these include:

- **Transport** – investment is needed to improve the capacity, accessibility, and integration of public and active transport networks, including duplication of the Upfield Line and bus network and accessible tram stop improvements.
- **Infrastructure** – Growth must be accompanied by timely upgrades to local and State infrastructure, including open space, drainage, roads, schools, and community facilities.
- **Economic growth and employment** – the Program should safeguard and expand employment floorspace. Council requests authorisation of Amendment C230mbek to support Brunswick’s employment role and retain commercial land.
- **Affordable and diverse housing** – Council seeks increased State investment in social and affordable housing, and planning controls that encourage diverse, accessible housing types, including family-sized apartments and dwellings designed to support people at all life stages.
- **Design quality** – Council emphasises the need for clear, enforceable design controls to ensure new development delivers high-quality, liveable, and contextually responsive outcomes.
- **Climate adaptation and resilience** – Council advocates for strong environmentally sustainable design (ESD) provisions, flood resilience planning, and integration of precinct-scale water management strategies.
- **Community and Council engagement** – the Program must commit to meaningful, inclusive engagement.

Council’s submission also highlights alignment with existing planning scheme amendments (C223mbek, C230mbek, C231mbek, C235mbek, and C236mbek) which are still awaiting a decision. It advocates for the Minister for Planning to make a prompt determination on these amendments to support the timely delivery of strategic planning outcomes in the Merri-bek Cluster.

The submission reinforces Council’s commitment to managing growth in a way that delivers long-term community benefit and reflects local priorities. Council looks forward to ongoing collaboration with the State Government through the next stages of the Program.

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

Council has declared a climate emergency and urges the State Government to progress Amendment C223mbek to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme, which seeks to strengthen sustainability requirements for new development and raise the standard of environmentally sustainable design (ESD) across the municipality.

### **Economic sustainability implications**

The draft submission outlines Merri-bek's efforts to ensure that its planning scheme supports job growth.

### **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 was found to be in line with these requirements. This report seeks endorsement of a submission to the State Government that reinforces existing Merri-bek policy and adopted strategies.

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

The State Government is undertaking community consultation for its Activity Centres Program.

For the Merri-bek Cluster, the first phase of community consultation commenced on Tuesday, 6 May 2025. Led by the State Government, this early-stage engagement aimed to inform the community and gather feedback on where additional housing could be located. Information was made available on the State Government's online engagement platform, and several drop-in sessions and online Q&A events were held throughout May and June 2025.

A second phase of community consultation is planned for later this year. During this second stage, the state government will share its draft Activity Centre Plans for the Merri-bek Cluster and seek further community input as plans are finalised. The draft Activity Centre Plans that will be released by the state government during the Phase 2 engagement, will be reported to Council for endorsement of a submission.

### **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 rights and interests affected by the recommendations of this report.

### **Communications**

The State Government is leading communication with the community about this state led program, including a letterbox drop in the area shown at **Attachment 2**. Information about this state led consultation has been included on Council's website, encouraging Merri-bek residents and businesses to participate in the State Government's survey and attend drop-in sessions and online Q&A events.

## **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 resources required to prepare submissions will be met within existing budgets. There are no financial implications to action this resolution.

## 7. Implementation

Once endorsed by Council, the submission will be lodged with the Victorian Government by the Director Place and Environment on Council's behalf.

A further report will be presented to Council during Phase 2 engagement, seeking endorsement of a technical submission in response to the draft Activity Centre Plans and any associated draft planning controls.

### Attachment/s

- 1 [↓](#) Activity Centres Program - Merri-bek Cluster Phase 1 engagement - D25/232786  
Merri-bek City Council draft submission
- 2 [↓](#) Activity Centres Program consultation and planning investigation area D25/244574  
Merri-bek Cluster



# Activity Centres Program – Phase 1 Submission: Merri- bek Cluster

June 2025



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

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## **Introduction**

As a key stakeholder, Merri-bek City Council (Council) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on Phase 1 of community engagement for the State Government's Activity Centres Program (Program).

At this early stage of the Program, Council has not received Activity Centre Plan(s) or any other supporting technical documentation for the Brunswick and Coburg Station Activity Centres (collectively known as the Merri-bek Cluster). This submission provides important high-level feedback based on available information and Council's close knowledge of the local community.

## **Merri-bek City Council submission**

Council is supportive of the State Government's objective to focus housing growth in well-served areas such as the Merri-bek Cluster. Council's existing total housing capacity across these suburbs is 25,859 (39% of Merri-bek's capacity), which can accommodate more than 34,000 people by 2051. This growth must be carefully planned to ensure delivery of affordable, sustainable, and diverse high-quality housing supported by essential infrastructure, transport, and open space.

Council has several material concerns with the current approach and asks the Minister for Planning to address these to ensure the accelerated Program does not compromise the liveability of Brunswick and Coburg. It is critical that the Program enables the long-term success of these Activity Centres. Seven key issues are raised below: transport, economy, infrastructure, climate, affordable housing, design quality, and genuine community engagement.

### **1. Transport**

An integrated, accessible and efficient transport system is essential to supporting housing growth and creating liveable communities. However, Merri-bek's transport network, in particular public transport, is not keeping pace with population growth and evolving travel needs.

Significant increases in housing density without corresponding transport and public transport investment will see liveability standards drop significantly in both Brunswick and Coburg. Brunswick in particular has experienced significant housing development in recent years, but investment in public transport has fallen behind. The Upfield Line is already under significant pressure, and local roads are congested, with many streets operating at or near capacity. By focusing narrowly on housing delivery without corresponding investment in transport infrastructure and services, the State Government's Activity Centre program is at risk of significantly exacerbating these issues. Challenges include:

- The bus network is slow, infrequent, and lacks adequate coverage.
- Tram stops remain largely inaccessible, and trams are frequently delayed in mixed traffic.
- The Upfield rail line, essential to Melbourne's northern growth, has limited capacity and infrequent peak-hour trains.

- Walking and cycling infrastructure also requires improvement. Uneven footpaths, missing links, and steep ramps reduce safety and accessibility.

Council has significant initiatives in train to address local transport priorities, through the *Moving Around Merri-bek Transport Strategy (2024)* and the “Streets for People” approach which is currently undergoing community consultation. These seek to deliver better local transport and streets as shared, multi-modal spaces that support walking, cycling, and public transport use.

At the State level, *Victoria’s Bus Plan (2021)* sets out a vision for a modern, productive and sustainable bus network, with simpler, safer and more reliable services. The Plan was to be delivered through a staged Bus Reform Implementation Plan, developed in partnership with industry and the community. However, implementation has not progressed as scheduled.

### **Key asks**

To absorb any more housing along this corridor, it is essential that the State Government upgrade critical public transport links and fast track:

- Duplicating the Upfield line between Gowrie and Upfield.
- Extending the Upfield line to Craigieburn to enable Wallan V/Line services.
- Electrifying the Craigieburn–Wallan line to expand capacity and reduce travel times.
- Deliver a revitalised bus network that better connects people to jobs, education, and services, including preparing and implementing the Bus Reform Implementation Plan as outlined in *Victoria’s Bus Plan (2021)*.
- Upgrading tram stops and public transport infrastructure to meet overdue 2022 accessibility targets.

It is also vital that the State Government’s Activity Centre Plan for the Merri-bek Cluster:

- Address walking and cycling infrastructure by identifying missing links, unsafe paths, and connectivity gaps.
- Increase and improve bike parking requirements alongside any reduction to car parking requirements.

## **2. Economic growth and employment**

Brunswick and Coburg are thriving hubs of creativity, innovation, and economic diversity. Brunswick, in particular, is known for its vibrant arts and culture scene, anchored by the Brunswick Design District and recently enhanced through Council’s \$28 million investment in the Balam Balam Place arts hub. RMIT’s design hub adds further strength to the precinct, while a growing cluster of technology and innovation businesses is shaping Brunswick’s future as a key centre for creative industries and knowledge-based jobs.

In Coburg, a mix of retail, professional services, and the city’s iconic jewellery and wedding precinct contributes to a strong and distinctive local economy. Together, these centres reflect Merri-bek’s diverse economic fabric and cultural identity. Ongoing strategic planning is essential to support and expand these dynamic economies—creating more local jobs and promoting inclusive, future-ready economic growth.

Employment in Merri-bek grew from 44,261 jobs in 2021 to an estimated 52,735 in 2023–24, driven largely by population growth and demand for services like health, education, retail, and hospitality. To

support continued growth, Merri-bek will require 87,000 to 241,000 square metres of additional employment floorspace by 2035.

However, Council's 2021 report *A Job in Moreland* identified that commercial floorspace is being lost through redevelopment, and market delivery remains inconsistent. There is a critical need to retain the role and function of employment land and precincts, and to support the delivery of diverse commercial spaces that meet the needs of a changing economy, particularly in activity centres such as Brunswick and Coburg Station.

To address this, Council consulted with the community on a Planning Scheme amendment to secure commercial floorspace and support Brunswick's role as a key hub for jobs, services, and housing. Unfortunately, Amendment C230mbek has been awaiting a decision from the Minister for over a year.

#### **Key asks**

- Authorise Amendment C230mbek, which aims to encourage business investment and jobs in the commercial and industrial areas of the Brunswick Activity Centre to ensure the vibrancy of the area does not decline.
- Ensure that the Activity Centres Plan(s) include an evidence-based and economically viable plan to grow jobs and employment floorspace and ensure no net loss of employment floorspace in the Merri-bek Cluster.

### **3. Infrastructure**

Population growth and development creates increased demand on essential infrastructure such as roads, footpaths, stormwater drains, public open spaces, schools, and community facilities. In high-growth areas like the Brunswick and Coburg Station Activity Centres, this demand is particularly acute and requires timely, coordinated infrastructure delivery.

Responsibility for delivering this infrastructure is shared between developers and all levels of government, including both Local and State Governments. Council is proactively planning for growth and addressing infrastructure needs through a coordinated framework of four proposed amendments to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme. All but one of these amendments are currently awaiting a decision from the Minister for Planning:

- Applying the new flood controls to properties at risk of flooding from local stormwater drains (Amendment C196mbek).
- Updating local planning policy to align with Council's transport and open space strategies (Amendment C231mbek).
- An increased open space contribution rate to ensure the provision of new public open space in response to growing demand (Amendment C235mbek).
- A new 15-year Development Contributions Plan to fund key infrastructure (Amendment C236mbek).

Delays in progressing these amendments limit Council's ability to plan, fund, and deliver critical infrastructure in response to ongoing population growth and development pressures.

To ensure the Merri-bek Cluster grows sustainably and remains liveable, the State Government must also commit to funding and delivering critical State infrastructure, including:

- Arterial roads, paths, and public transport.
- New and upgraded public schools.
- Enhanced health and community facilities.
- Parks, playgrounds, and sport and recreation spaces.
- Coordinated investment in broader regional infrastructure.

A clear, streamlined, and collaborative approach across all levels of government is essential to unlock local infrastructure contributions and ensure the timely delivery of state infrastructure that supports vibrant, resilient communities.

#### **Key asks**

- Progress reforms to infrastructure contributions planning mechanisms—including the Activity Centre Infrastructure Contributions Plan—as a priority, to improve fairness, simplicity, and timeliness.
- Ensure delivery of committed upgrades to public schools, including Coburg High and John Fawcner College, where State-funded works have yet to be completed.
- Introduce legislative reform to ensure build-to-rent developments contribute fairly to the provision of public open space.
- Make timely decisions on the three Merri-bek Planning Scheme Amendments currently with the Minister (C231, C235, and C236mbek) to secure essential infrastructure funding for the growing Merri-bek Cluster.

#### **4. Climate adaptation and resilience**

Merri-bek's activity centres are already experiencing the effects of climate change. Areas such as the Merri-bek Cluster can be up to 8°C hotter than surrounding suburbs due to low tree canopy cover and high urban density. Several streets within these centres are also vulnerable to overland flooding, with stormwater systems under increasing pressure. Rainfall intensity during short-duration events is projected to rise by over 30% by 2050, amplifying flood risks.

The Activity Centres Program must consider these climate impacts when planning for the Merri-bek Cluster. Intensifying housing in areas already exposed to extreme heat and flooding poses serious risks to community health, safety, and wellbeing. Future growth must be directed to locations that can support climate-resilient and liveable communities.

#### **Environmentally sustainable development**

The Merri-bek community has a long-standing commitment to advancing best-practice Environmentally Sustainable Development (ESD). In July 2022, Merri-bek and 23 other councils submitted a group amendment (Amendment C223mbek) to the State Government seeking to elevate sustainability standards in new development. The amendment is still under consideration.

Progress on Amendment C223mbek is increasingly important, as recent changes to state-wide residential design standards may reduce the sustainability outcomes achieved by many councils. Under the new State requirements, average ESD performance in townhouse and apartment developments will materially decline. This will negatively impact both the climate and the liveability standards of future dwellings.

### **Flooding**

Effective water and flood management is essential to sustainable urban growth. Several areas within the Merri-bek Cluster are flood-prone. Council is progressing Amendment C196mbek to apply flood controls to properties at risk of inundation from local stormwater drains. While these controls focus on raising floor levels, they do not guarantee well-designed, flood-resilient buildings. Additional planning guidance is needed to support appropriate building heights, active ground-floor uses, and smooth transitions between raised floors, footpaths, and overall building form.

At the precinct scale, Integrated Water Management (IWM) strategies (such as permeable surfaces, floodable open space, and distributed detention) will be essential for managing more intense rainfall, reducing flood risk, and improving amenity, cooling, and liveability.

### **Key asks**

- Ensure that the Activity Centre Plan(s) and associated planning controls:
  - Provide strong, consistent ESD and climate response requirements, informed by a Climate Response Plan for the Merri-bek Cluster.
  - Guide building height in areas subject to inundation.
  - Resolve transitional issues between raised floor levels, footpaths, and final building heights.
  - Embed precinct-scale Integrated Water Management (IWM) strategies into the Program.
- Work with Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE) to embed best-practice ESD into the entire State government Activity Centre program.
- Work with the Metropolitan Melbourne Integrated Water Management (IWM) Forum and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) to embed best-practice IWM Design Guidelines into the Program.
- Authorise Amendment C223mbek to Merri-bek Planning Scheme.

## **5. Affordable and diverse housing**

While there is a need to increase housing supply, it is equally important that new development delivers an affordable, diverse and accessible range of housing options to meet the evolving needs of our community. Merri-bek has a long-standing commitment to the delivery of diverse housing including social and affordable housing.

### **Housing diversity and accessibility**

As people's lives change, so do their housing needs. Diverse and accessible housing is essential to creating inclusive, resilient communities. A mix of apartments, townhouses, and detached homes—offered in various sizes, layouts, and tenures—provides choice for people of all ages, incomes, and household types.

Accessible design ensures homes meet the needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and those with temporary mobility challenges. Embedding universal design principles helps ensure housing remains functional and inclusive at every stage of life.

### **Affordable housing**



Merri-bek is experiencing a significant and growing shortfall in affordable housing. As housing costs rise, more households are unable to secure affordable rentals. Current 4,341 households (6.4% of Merri-bek's population) are unable to access affordable market-priced housing. On current growth and housing supply settings, the number of households in need of subsidised/below-market housing in Merri-bek is predicted to reach 6,800 by 2041. Nearly three-quarters of current jobs in Merri-bek are done by key workers; nearly 4,000 Merri-bek key workers have relocated outside the municipality over the past five years, as a result of housing unaffordability.

Delivery of affordable housing in Victoria is constrained by its reliance on voluntary agreements. This creates uncertainty and places a continuing resource burden on councils, developers, and landowners.

#### **Key asks**

Council has long advocated for the State government to introduce mandatory inclusionary zoning to secure affordable housing supply, increase State investment in social housing, and support new affordable housing models through funding, partnerships, and use of public land.

However, in relation to the Activity Centre work in Brunswick and Coburg, Council asks that the Activity Centre Plan(s) and associated planning controls:

- Include affordable housing requirements.
- Encourage the integration of universal design to promote flexible, lifelong housing.
- Support the delivery of larger dwellings in apartment developments, suitable for families and shared households.
- Encourage a diversity in apartment types to meet a range of lifestyle and household needs.

#### **6. Design quality**

Council supports increased housing in the Merri-bek Cluster but emphasises the need for strong built form planning controls to ensure high-quality, well-integrated outcomes, especially on smaller or irregular sites.

Without clear guidance, there is a risk of developments with poor street engagement, limited natural light, and low-quality finishes. Robust design standards can help deliver liveable, attractive, and contextually appropriate buildings.

Council also supports balancing growth with heritage protection, ensuring new development complements the existing streetscape.

#### **Key asks**

To provide good development outcomes, the Activity Centre Plan(s) and associated planning controls must:

- Respond to site conditions including topography, orientation and context.
- Minimise the dominance of vehicle access and parking and prioritise usable private open space at ground level.
- Require high-quality materials and finishes.

- Align with Heritage Overlay objectives to ensure new development respects the location, bulk, form, and appearance of heritage places.

## 7. Community and Council engagement

The Activity Centres Program will bring significant change and must be guided by clear, inclusive, and ongoing local engagement. A critical component of this is ensuring the notification boundary is broad, logical, and captures all areas directly or indirectly affected by the Program. This includes locations such as eastern Coburg between Bell Street and Moreland Road, which was excluded from the initial engagement without clear justification.

Council expects that the engagement process will provide accessible information, genuine opportunities for input, timely communication, and transparent decision-making that respects local knowledge and builds community trust. These are the same principles Merri-bek applies when undertaking changes to the Planning Scheme, and the community should be afforded the same standard by the State.

### Key asks

- Release all technical information to support transparency, context, and informed participation.
- Expand the notification boundary to include all affected areas, including the section of eastern Coburg between Bell Street and Moreland Road.
- Provide timely, accessible materials in plain English and translated formats. This includes the Activity Centre Plan(s) and the draft planning controls.
- Commit to meaningful community participation. This includes offering more community engagement touchpoints, allowing more time for community and Council to digest proposed changes and prepare submissions, and committing to listen and respond to feedback.
- Refer submissions to an independent Advisory Committee with public hearings, broad terms of reference, with the Minister for Planning publicly explaining any deviations from its recommendations.

## Conclusion

Merri-bek City Council supports well-planned growth in activity centres that reflects local priorities and delivers lasting community benefit. Council looks forward to working with the State Government to achieve these outcomes.



**Activity Centres Program**

**Consultation and planning investigation area Merri-bek Cluster**



## 7.3 PARKING AVAILABILITY ON PARK STREET SERVICE ROAD, BRUNSWICK

Director City Infrastructure, Anita Curnow

Transport

### Officer Recommendation

That Council notes that the parking restrictions on the Park Street Service Road between McVean Street and the Upfield Railway Line are generally operating well and no changes to parking restrictions are warranted at this time.

## REPORT

### Executive Summary

In response to resident concerns about parking availability and a request for resident permit parking zones, Council officers have conducted a comprehensive review of the parking conditions along Park Street Service Road between McVean Street and the Upfield Railway Line in Brunswick. This assessment was guided by the Parking Management Policy (PMP), which outlines criteria for implementing resident permit parking zones, including high occupancy rates and the presence of 1P timed restrictions.

In July 2024, an initial proposal to introduce 1P timed parking restrictions was put forward to replace some of the existing 2P restrictions on Park Street, accompanied by a questionnaire which was distributed to 189 affected properties. The survey required a minimum 25 per cent response rate with at least 60 per cent support to proceed with the proposed changes. However, only 18 per cent responded, with 79 per cent opposing the changes, primarily due to concerns about guest parking limitations. Consequently, the proposal did not advance.

Following continued resident feedback, Council resolved on 11 September 2024 to monitor parking conditions further. Subsequent occupancy surveys conducted in May 2025 revealed that most sections recorded occupancy rates below the 80 per cent threshold necessary for implementing 1P restrictions, with the exception of one area (south side of the Service Road between 815 Park Street crossover and Dollman Street), which approached or exceeded this threshold during certain periods. Additionally, number plate analysis indicated that approximately two-thirds of parked vehicles belonged to residents with valid permits, suggesting that local residents primarily drive parking demand.

Based on these findings, Council officers determined that existing parking arrangements sufficiently meet current demand, and no changes to parking restrictions are warranted at this time. Council officers remain committed to ongoing monitoring to ensure parking policies continue to align with community needs and usage patterns.

### Previous Council Decisions

**Petition - Park Street, Brunswick Parking - 11 September 2024**

*That Council:*

1. *Receives the petition requesting Council take appropriate action to rectify and standardise parking arrangements in Park Street, Brunswick, between McVean Street and the Upfield Railway Line.*
2. *Refers the petition requesting Council to take appropriate action to rectify and standardise parking arrangements in Park Street, Brunswick, between McVean Street and the Upfield Railway Line to the Director City Infrastructure.*

## Park Street Parking - 11 September 2024

*That Council requests Council Officers to continue monitoring the parking availability on the Park Street Service Road and present a report back to council about these matters.*

### 1. Policy Context

#### Parking Management Policy

The following table set out the priority, from highest to lowest, given to various user groups when introducing or modifying parking restrictions.

Table 3: User Priority Guidelines for residential and other streets

User Group	Purpose
Safety and other conditions	To improve safety for all road users and to provide access for emergency vehicles, waste collection and street cleansing
Public transport	Typically tram or bus stop, or taxi rank
Accessible parking	On-street medium term parking bays in locations suitable for people with a disability (e.g. 2 to 4 hours)
Car sharing	Where high scheme membership and demand in particular locations justify the allocation of bays
Drop-off/pick-up	Where required, short-term parking for drop-off/pick-up e.g. 5-minute parking
Residents and their visitors	If required, use of 2P restrictions, 1P restrictions and parking permit zone – resident permit zones should be used as the last resort and after other measures (such as short-term restrictions) have proven to be inadequate
Customers	Short stay private vehicle parking if required by business as retail activities in the area
Local employees	Local employees should have a low priority as this undermines parking turnover
Commuter parking	Commuter parking should have a low priority as this undermines resident parking and parking turnover

### 2. Background

Park Street Service Road, situated between McVean Street and the Upfield Railway Line, offers parallel parking on both sides. The northern side falls under the jurisdiction of Merri-bek City Council, while the southern side is managed by the City of Melbourne and is outside the scope of this report. The northern side predominantly features residential properties, including heritage homes with rear laneway access and small apartment units with direct crossovers to Park Street.

According to Section 4.1.2 of Merri-bek City Council's Parking Management Policy (PMP), residents are eligible for parking permits unless their property experienced an increase in separate occupancies after 31 August 2011, such as through subdivision or a new occupancy certificate. Except for one new apartment development, all eligible residential properties on Park Street qualify for one or two parking permits. This high eligibility rate contributes to increased demand for on-street parking compared to other residential streets.

To address the elevated parking demand driven by residents, visitors to Royal Park, and patrons of the Sydney Road Activity Centre, various parking restrictions have been implemented over time. These measures aim to balance the needs of residents and visitors while managing limited parking resources effectively.

Residents have expressed concerns regarding the inconsistency of parking restrictions along Park Street Service Road. Feedback indicates a preference for standardised parking regulations to enhance clarity and fairness for all users. Council acknowledges these concerns and has considered changes as part of this report.

### **3. Issues**

#### **Request for residential permit only parking**

In July 2024, a resident request was made to provide resident permit parking zones on Park Street in place of some of the existing 2P parking restrictions.

As outlined in Section 5.2 of the Parking Management Policy (PMP), resident permit parking zones will only be considered in residential areas with high parking occupancy due to competing demands from other users (e.g. businesses or commuters). It should be recognised that residents do not have exclusive rights to park directly in front of their property, but they should have opportunity to park within a reasonable distance of their residence.

Resident permit zones:

- Will be considered where there is 85 per cent occupancy or greater over a 250-metre section on both sides of a street for continuous period of five hours or more
- Will only be considered after 1P timed restrictions have been introduced and after in-ground parking sensors have been installed
- Will be introduced on one side of the street only initially to help provide a broad range of parking opportunities
- Will be minimised to ensure all available parking is well utilised
- May be appropriate near fee parking areas to protect residential amenity

Authority is delegated to officers to introduce or modify resident permit zone restrictions based on the guidelines in this section of this policy.

As such, in response to the request for resident permit parking restrictions, in accordance with the PMP, Council officers proceeded to consult on the proposal to install 1P parking restrictions on Park Street

#### Proposal to install 1P parking restrictions

As outlined in Table 8.2 of the PMP, the Conditions for delegation to install 1P parking restrictions on individual streets is that one of two conditions to be met:

1. Obtain written response from at least a quarter of the affected properties, with 60 per cent in support, or
2. Parking occupancy of the area affected by proposed restrictions is 80 per cent or higher over a period of four hours

As is standard practice, Council officers then proceeded to survey all affected residents of Park Street to seek their support on the proposal.

Through discussions with affected residents regarding the proposed change to parking restrictions, it was established that a 15-minute parking space was required to service the adjacent childcare centre. Council officers assessed the request and found it appropriate to install 15-minute parking, 7.30am – 9.30am and 4pm to 6pm Monday – Friday, outside 785 Park Street Service Road.

The circular survey letter included a notification of the 15-minute parking restriction and an invitation to take part in the questionnaire to seek support for the 1P parking restrictions.

Some 340 survey letters were issued to owners and occupants of 189 properties on Park Street that would be affected by the proposed 1P parking restrictions. Thirty-three questionnaire forms were returned which accounted for a response rate of 18 per cent. Of the respondents there were

- Seven in favour of the proposal (21%)
- 26 opposed to the proposal (79%)

Many of the respondents who voted against the proposal stated that 1P was too restrictive and would not give their guests sufficient time when visiting their home and that the status quo worked well.

As the requirement of a 25 per cent response rate and a 60 per cent support rate was not achieved, Council officers notified all affected owners and occupiers that the proposal was not proceeding.

Residents who were supportive of the 1P parking restrictions then approached Councillors and at the 11 September 2024 Council meeting, it was resolved that Council Officers continue monitoring the parking availability on the Park Street Service Road and present a report back to council about these matters.

#### Car parking occupancy surveys

In response to the resolution, Council officers organised car parking surveys on the Park Street Service Road between McVean Street and the Upfield Railway Line. To capture the typical busy periods of car parking occupancy influenced by Sydney Road Activity Centre and Royal Park sporting activities, surveys were undertaken on Thursday 8 May between 4pm and 8pm as well as Saturday 10 May between 10am and 8pm.



The existing parking restrictions are as follows

Service Road Parking Restrictions (McVean Street to Upfield Railway Line):

- Section A (north side, McVean Street to 815 Park Street crossover): 2P, 8am–11pm
- Section B (south side, McVean Street to 815 Park Street crossover): 2P, 8am–6pm
- Section C (north side, 815 Park Street crossover to Dollman Street): 2P, 8am–11pm; P15, 7:30–9:30am & 4–6pm
- Section D (south side, 815 Park Street crossover to Dollman Street): 2P, 8am–6pm
- Section E (north side, Dollman Street to Upfield Line): P, 8am–11pm
- Section F (south side, Dollman Street to Upfield Line): 4P, 8am–6pm

The following three tables outline the results of the car parking occupancy surveys. Where the hourly occupancy was recorded to exceed the threshold of 80 per cent, the result is highlighted in orange.

Car parking occupancy, Thursday 8 May afternoon						
Section	Capacity	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm
A	20	50%	55%	35%	45%	50%
B	19	58%	58%	68%	53%	63%
C	20	75%	70%	55%	55%	60%
D	24	83%	100%	79%	88%	79%
E	29	55%	38%	59%	76%	66%
F	23	61%	57%	61%	57%	52%

Car parking occupancy, Saturday 10 May morning and afternoon						
Section	Capacity	10am	11am	12noon	1pm	2pm
A	20	45%	25%	40%	45%	40%
B	19	74%	63%	58%	58%	58%
C	20	60%	65%	70%	65%	65%
D	24	75%	79%	71%	71%	63%
E	29	59%	83%	72%	72%	72%
F	23	61%	70%	78%	78%	78%

Car parking occupancy, Saturday 10 May car parking occupancy afternoon and evening							
Section		3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm
A	20	35%	40%	40%	30%	30%	40%
B	19	53%	58%	68%	68%	63%	68%
C	20	65%	60%	60%	65%	65%	65%
D	24	58%	58%	71%	67%	67%	71%
E	29	76%	72%	62%	66%	66%	66%
F	23	74%	70%	52%	52%	52%	48%

As such, the surveys outline that generally, the car parking occupancy is below the 80 per cent warrants to install 1P timed restrictions. The exception to this is that in Section D, on Thursday afternoon, the recorded occupancy was almost over 80 per cent or was effectively over the threshold for the four hour window. Given most respondents to the circular strongly opposed 1P timed restrictions and there has been a community petition received to create more standardised car parking restrictions, Council officers would not recommend installing 1P parking restrictions in this section of Park Street Service Road. Based on the survey results, all other car parking restrictions appear to be operating well and within the capacity outlined in the PMP.

Similarly, the demand for parking in Section F, where the restrictions are 4P is operating well and no changes are proposed.

In reviewing the parking restrictions along Park Street Service Road, consideration was given to standardising the existing 2P time limits, as some currently conclude at 6pm while others extend until 11pm. However, community feedback indicates that the current arrangements are functioning effectively, with residents expressing satisfaction and noting that the extended hours accommodate visitors who stay later in the evening.

Given this feedback and the absence of significant parking occupancy issues, it is recommended that the existing 2P parking restrictions remain unchanged. Maintaining the current varied time limits provides flexibility for residents and their guests, aligning with the community's preferences and ensuring that parking availability continues to meet local needs.

#### Number plate analysis

As part of the car parking occupancy survey, the number plates of the parked cars were recorded once per day to understand whether the vehicles had eligible parking permits. This can demonstrate the level of parking demand driven by the adjacent residents compared to visitors wanting to park short term to visit the residents or attend nearby attractions.

The summary of the analysis is provided below:

On Thursday,

- 61 of the 98 recorded number plates have valid residential parking permits
- The remaining 37 vehicles were likely visitors to the area

On Saturday

- 60 of the 94 recorded number plates have valid residential parking permits
- The remaining 34 vehicles were likely visitors to the area

As such, two thirds of the car parking demand is driven by residents of Park Street.

#### Summary of assessment

Car parking occupancy surveys were undertaken across a typical Thursday and Saturday to determine the demand for car parking on the Park Street Service Road between McVean Street and the Upfield Railway Line. The car parking occupancies are generally below 80 per cent and are therefore operating with spare capacity. A record of the number plates of some vehicles was noted to determine that about two thirds of the vehicles parked have eligible residential parking permits and are therefore associated with the adjacent residential properties.

Based on the assessment, there appears to be no clear need for changes to the on street parking restrictions on the Park Street Service Road.

#### **Community impact**

The community will not be impacted as the recommendations is to maintain the existing parking restrictions.

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

Nil.

#### **Economic sustainability implications**

Nil.

#### **Legal and risk considerations**

Nil.

## **Human Rights Consideration**

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. The recommendations for the closure of Barrow Street does not limit or interfere with any Human Rights, in particular 'section 12 - right to freedom of movement' as residents will continue to have access to their properties. Additionally, the proposed road closures will contribute positively to the freedom of movement by making walking and cycling safer modes of transport.

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

A circular questionnaire was distributed to 340 owners and occupants recipients of 189 properties on Park Street. 33 responses were received. A letter indicating the outcome of the survey was the sent to all original recipients advising that the proposed 1P parking restrictions did not receive the required support and would not be installed.

### **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.

## **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**

Nil.

## **7. Implementation**

Nil.

## **Attachment/s**

There are no attachments for this report.



## 7.4 CIRCULAR ECONOMY STRATEGY AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN 2025 - 2030 - DRAFTS FOR ENDORSEMENT TO CONSULT

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade  
Sustainability and Climate

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### Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Endorses the draft Circular Economy Strategy (Attachment 1) and the draft Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 – 2030 (Attachment 2) for public exhibition and four weeks of community engagement commencing 23 June 2025.
2. Receives a further report at the September 2025 Council meeting presenting a final version of the Circular Economy Strategy and Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 – 2030, incorporating community feedback, for adoption.
3. Acknowledges the valuable contribution that the Merri-bek community, external partners and stakeholders have made to community outcomes over the past five years of the Zero Carbon Merri-bek – Climate Emergency Action Plan 2020 – 2025 (Attachment 3), and the development of the draft strategy and action plan.

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

This report progresses three related actions in the Council Action Plan 2024-25 (being CAP #1 for the next Zero Carbon Merri-bek action plan, #199 development of Circular Economy Strategy and action plan, and #206 for the next Climate Risk action plan).

The report presents Council's first draft *Circular Economy Strategy: Towards a zero waste Merri-bek* (Attachment 1). The draft strategy provides direction for Council's role in accelerating the transition towards a circular economy. It reflects the need to move beyond 'managing waste' towards 'avoiding waste and pollution', by rethinking how we can all use precious resources much more efficiently.

The report also presents the draft *Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 – 2030: Towards a zero carbon, zero waste and climate resilient Merri-bek* (Attachment 2). This action plan incorporates all the implementation responses across the three strategies of ZCM 2040 Framework, draft Circular Economy Strategy and our Climate Risk Strategy (2022).

Spread across five strategic directions, the action plan proposes 29 goals and 34 programmatic actions (with sub-initiatives) for achievement/delivery by 2030.

Beyond advocacy for critical policy and legislative changes at the state and federal level, the very highest priority/impact actions across the three strategy areas are:

- Climate Risk / Resilience – actions focused on supporting vulnerable/at-risk residents (Actions 1.4, 1.7, 1.9), increasing local canopy cover/cooling in recognized hot spots (Action 1.8), and delivering climate-ready infrastructure (Action 5.4).
- Zero Carbon Merri-bek (ZCM) – actions focused on broadscale residential uptake of energy efficiency, electrification and solar (Actions 2.2, 2.3, 2.6) and transport mode-shift (Actions 3.2, 3.3).
- Circular Economy – optimising our kerbside waste services (Action 4.3) to minimise waste to landfill, using our substantial buying power to deliver low-carbon/circular buildings and infrastructure (Actions 5.3, 5.4), and influence our many suppliers.

Where relevant, the action plan notes where actions or activities may be subject to funding allocation through a business case or external grant.

The action plan also notes the relevant Directorate, Branch or Unit delegated as lead delivery partner, in recognition that as the impacts and risks from climate change, waste and pollution accelerate, Council's proactive response must take a 'whole of Council' approach, progressively embedding capability and responsibility within teams across the organisation.

## **Previous Council decisions**

### **Zero Carbon Moreland – 2030 targets review – 8 December 2021**

*That Council:*

1. *Notes the summary of updated climate science and the advice regarding the extent of emissions reductions required by 2030 to keep the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5C (above pre-industrial levels), alive.*
2. *Notes that the Zero Carbon Moreland (ZCM) 2040 Framework (ZCM Framework) and associated 5-year ZCM Climate Emergency Action Plan (endorsed in November 2019) are providing a solid foundation for Council to continue demonstrating local government leadership in responding to the climate crisis through:*
  - a) *progressively eliminating emissions from Council's own operations*
  - b) *inspiring and enabling community and businesses to reduce emissions, with a focus on ensuring equity and co-benefits such as community health and resilience*
  - c) *facilitating collective advocacy calling for urgent and effective action by state and federal government.*
3. *Endorses interim and aspirational ZCM targets for the Moreland community:*
  - a) *75 per cent emissions reduction by 2030*
  - b) *Net zero by 2035*
  - c) *Drawdown ('negative emissions') by 2040*
4. *Call on our community, businesses, state and federal governments to join Council in collective action towards these community targets and the safe and fair future that success would help to achieve.*
5. *Endorses the additional highly ambitious ZCM 'target range' for Council (corporate/operational) emissions:*
  - *80 – 100 per cent emissions reduction by 2030 (precluding offsets, against 2011-12 baseline). Note: Council has taken significant actions to reduce its operational emissions by 70 per cent from the 2011-12 baseline and that Council has been certified as 'carbon neutral' (or 'net zero') since 2012 under the national Climate Active scheme, whereby Council annually purchases carbon offsets for all its remaining emissions.*
6. *Note the following conditions related to achievement of corporate emissions target:*
  - a) *Achievement of 80 per cent emissions reduction by 2030 is contingent on additional funding allocation and re-scoped capital works forward plan (to bring forward a transition of Council's light fleet to zero emissions and converting approximately 27 Council buildings to 'all electric'). High-level cost estimate to deliver these actions may be up to \$16M over the 9 years to 2030.*
  - b) *Progress beyond 80 per cent, towards 100 per cent reduction (the upper end of the target range) is also contingent on commercialisation and availability before 2030 of suitable new or emerging technologies (that is, zero emissions waste trucks and construction materials).*

7. *Pending adoption of corporate ZCM target range, develop business cases for referral to the 2022-23 budget process and consideration within Council's long term financial plan (i.e., to enable accelerated transition to zero emissions light feet and accelerated transition off gas in Council buildings)*
8. *Endorse revisions to the ZCM Framework and Climate Emergency Action Plan as necessary to reflect the newly endorsed targets.*
9. *Acknowledges and thanks all community members, including those involved in the Moreland Climate Coalition, that are acting and advocating for the many local and regional and national systems changes required to ensure a safe, fair and resilient Moreland into the future.*

#### **Planning for the next waste strategy – response to notice of motion – 13 October 2021**

*That Council:*

1. *Notes the proposed approach and project schedule to develop Council's next draft Waste Strategy to 2030 (8-year strategy) and associated medium-term (3-4 year) action plan. The new strategy and action plan would be finalised by mid-2023 and will supersede the expiring Waste and Litter Strategy 2018. The approach includes the high-level strategy scope, required technical research / advice and resourcing, estimated budget and the schedule for drafting and consulting on the future strategy and action plan.*
2. *Refers the required project resourcing (approximately \$40,000) to the mid- year budget review, and a related budget proposal (approximately \$40,000) for consideration in the FY22-23 budget process.*
3. *Noting that waste incineration (also known as waste to energy) options have major environmental, health and economic costs and undermines a transition to a circular economy, Council maintains that it should not be considered as part of its future waste strategy.*

#### **Climate risk strategy - for adoption – 9 November 2022**

*That Council:*

1. *Notes the outcomes of community and stakeholder engagement on the draft Climate Risk Strategy, as summarised in the engagement consultant's outcomes report (Attachment 1), and thanks community members and stakeholders for their feedback on the draft Strategy.*
2. *Adopts the revised Climate Risk Strategy (Attachment 2).*
3. *Notes that preparation of a foundational action plan is being developed to inform new program/initiative submissions for the 2023/24 budget setting process and beyond.*

### **1. Policy Context**

Council's efforts to address the climate emergency are reflected in the Council Plan 2021 – 2025:

- 'Theme 1: *An environmentally proactive Merri-bek*, and associated strategic objective:  
*To strive for maximum protection of people's health, plants, and animals through leading an urgent response to the climate emergency and a regeneration of our natural environment*

- *Theme 3: A healthy and caring Merri-bek, and associated strategic objective:  
To support Moreland to become a more inclusive, connected, healthy, and caring community through providing equitable access to community facilities and services, facilitating local partnerships and programs, mitigating the effects of climate change, and supporting the community to adapt and build climate resilience.*

The draft Circular Economy Strategy and Climate Emergency Action Plan fulfill three actions outlined in the Council Action Plan 2024-25:

- CAP #1 – Finalise implementation of ZCM Climate Emergency Action Plan and develop new action plan to commence in 2025
- CAP #199 – Development of a Circular Economy Strategy: Towards a Zero Waste Merri-bek
- CAP #206 – Continue to implement the Climate Risk Foundational Action Plan and develop a new action plan to commence in 2025

The draft action plan aligns with and complements other Council strategies, plans and policies contributing to sustainability and climate action, including:

- Moving Around Merri-bek Strategy and Streets for People Plan
- Urban Forest Strategy
- Nature Plan
- Integrated Water Management Strategy
- Sustainable Buildings (Council) Policy
- Food Systems Strategy
- Procurement Policy.

Victorian legislation designates certain climate change accountabilities to all local governments. *The Local Government Act 2020* S. 9(2)(c) states ‘the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted’. Additionally, the *Victorian Climate Change Act 2017* explicitly states that climate change decisions should be based on the Act’s guiding principles including being evidence-based, integrated and equitable.

## 2. Background

The draft Circular Economy Strategy supersedes Council’s expired Waste and Litter Strategy (2018). The draft strategy has been informed by:

- Quarterly meetings since September 2022 of an internal Circular Economy Strategy Project Control Board (PCB)
- A Waste Options Development Report by consultants Ricardo (2022)
- A Material Flow Analysis for Merri-bek by consultants Blue Environment (2023)
- Stage 1 Community and business engagement from February to March 2024
- Council participation in the Circular Economy Leadership Program, a collaboration between 13 councils in 2024, funded by Sustainability Victoria and facilitated by Aurecon, with dedicated sessions for senior leadership, changemakers, department professionals, and procurement practitioners
- Cross-council workshops and stakeholder discussions.

The draft Climate Emergency Action Plan supersedes, and expands on, Council's ZCM Climate Emergency Action Plan 2020 – 2025. It has been informed by:

- Council's Climate Resilience Integration Board (CRIB) and ZCM PCB discussions
- Review of outcomes from past zero carbon, waste, and climate risk action plans
- Cross-council workshops and stakeholder discussions, including assessment of evolving external context (social, political, environmental etc)
- Review of neighbouring/leading local government climate emergency plans
- Officer networks, alliances, and experience.

Both documents have also been refined based on briefing discussions and feedback from the Executive, Councillors, and community members of Council's Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee (ESAC).

### 3. Issues

The draft Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 – 2030 (**Attachment 2**) integrates priority actions for 3 related strategies:

1. Zero Carbon Merri-bek 2040 Framework – our approach to reducing community and Council climate pollution ('zero carbon') through Energy Transition, Sustainable Transport, and Waste & Consumption.
2. Circular Economy Strategy (draft, **Attachment 1**) – our evolved approach for tackling the unsustainable way we buy, use, and dispose of goods and materials ('zero waste') to mitigate climate and ecological damage.
3. Climate Risk Strategy – collaborating to identify and address Council and community climate risks, and increase our resilience against climate impacts, particularly heat and other weather extremes.

#### **Strategic directions for action across 2025-2030**

The draft action plan is structured around 5 strategic directions:

1. 'Socially just and climate resilient transition: No one left behind' (NEW)

This direction focuses on actions to ensure our diverse community is well informed about the changing local climate and the effective actions they can take. This includes tailored programs, such as our solar thermal subsidy program, to reach out to at-risk residents to support them to stay healthy in the heat and manage their energy bills. Recognising the importance of nature-based solutions to climate risk, it includes trialling approaches to increase shade trees and cooling on private land, with a potential focus on schools and retirement villages. And because climate resilience must be responsive to local place-based context, the plan proposes to test the development of a Resilient Neighbourhood Hub model in Fawkner.

2. 'Energy transition: efficient and 100 per cent renewably powered energy'

This direction focuses on addressing the dominant sources of direct greenhouse emissions in Merri-bek, being electricity use (36 per cent) and fossil gas use (26 per cent) (source – 2022/23 profile [snapshotclimate.com.au](https://snapshotclimate.com.au)). Residential energy use accounts for most of these emissions. As grid electricity transitions to 65 per cent renewably powered by 2030 and 95 per cent renewable by 2035, gas use (especially by households) will become the dominant source of energy-related emissions. As such, priority actions are focused on enabling households to benefit from health and financial savings possible through transitioning to efficient and all-electric homes. Through collaboration, innovation and advocacy, we will progress smart energy solutions that could work at the community scale, as well as seek to overcome barriers preventing residents living in existing apartments from making their homes more energy efficient and sustainable.

3. 'Sustainable transport: active or zero emissions transport'

As emissions from electricity use decrease, transport emissions – from the combustion of diesel and petrol by cars, vans, and trucks – will account for a growing proportion of community (and Council) climate pollution. Actions under this strategic direction focus on creating a more pedestrian and bike-friendly city, with better public transport. This could enable many more local trips to be safer, healthier, cheaper and pollution-free. Initiatives are proposed to support young people to 'ride and stride' to and from school actively and provide innovative services to ensure that all members of our diverse community can benefit from active travel. Council will also continue promoting the shift to zero emissions vehicles by expanding and promoting affordable access to public EV charging, powered by renewables.

4. 'Waste and consumption: circular economy with zero waste'

The actions under this section reflect four of the five focus areas identified in the draft Circular Economy Strategy. The shift to a circular economy requires extensive cultural and economic change, much of which Council's may influence but cannot control. Hence 'advocacy for system change' is a priority focus, calling on state and local government to incentivise innovation and robustly regulate economy-wide elements of design, manufacturing, distribution and disposal that are causing social and environmental harm. Locally, engagement with community and businesses will encourage waste avoidance and circular economy participation, with potential cost-of-living and health co-benefits. More directly in Council's control, initiatives are proposed to continue evolving our kerbside waste services to deliver the best possible waste and recycling outcomes and community value, with cost recovery through the service fees and charges.

5. 'Council as role model: creating a zero carbon, circular and climate resilient city'  
(NEW)

This new strategic direction brings together the ways that Council can 'walk the talk' by holding ourselves accountable for embedding responsive climate action and circularity principles across high-impact functions of city planning, our building and infrastructure projects, our fleet, services, operations, and climate governance. It recognises that Council has significant potential to evolve our approach to capital and goods procurement to 'green our supply chains' while delivering infrastructure projects and services that are climate-ready and have a much lighter ecological footprint. It includes actions (focused on building and fleet electrification) required to achieve Council's corporate 2030 emissions reduction goal.

**Action plan draft goals for 2030**

In addition to the updated ZCM goals for community and Council emissions reduction by 2030, the draft action plan proposes a series of goals across each strategic direction:

- A total of 14 'Community 2030 goals' which we invite everyone (community and other levels of government) to adopt and help achieve.
- A total of 15 'Council 2030 goals' which Council could achieve, pending successful delivery/resourcing of proposed actions.

**Advocacy for climate and nature**

We cannot achieve our goals and outcomes in isolation. Effective collaboration and mobilisation of civil society and businesses in campaigning for urgent and effective action by state and federal governments is critical. It is the foundation for the 'political will' required to prioritise zero carbon, zero waste and climate resilience.

Some policy and regulatory progress has been made over the past five years, and so the draft documents reflect an updated suite of priority 'advocacy asks' across each of the strategic directions.

### **Economic sustainability implications**

Merri-bek has a rapidly growing and diverse population experiencing housing and cost of living pressures. At the household level, more thoughtful consumer behaviours can offer ways to sustainably reduce household costs. Our local economy provides employment, goods and services to the community. Merri-bek is experiencing a shift from its historical reliance on manufacturing to a focus on service-oriented sectors. The circular economy presents many opportunities for local businesses to improve resource efficiency, lower costs, mitigate risks, and explore new revenue streams. Emerging business models can redefine product-consumer relationships and foster markets for services like sharing, leasing, repairing, reusing, remanufacturing, and resource recovery.

### **Legal and risk considerations**

Where legal or risk-related matters arise, delivery of actions will involve consultation with the relevant internal officers or specialists. This ensures that actions are developed and implemented with appropriate oversight and alignment with Council's legal and risk frameworks. Examples of potential legal and risk issues include insurance coverage for new or non-standard infrastructure or assets (e.g. boom EV charging) or contractual risks in partnership or procurement arrangements.

Action delivery will also consider climate risks, including physical risks and transition risks, and continue to integrate these into Council's risk management framework, including the operational risk register.

### **Human Rights consideration**

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. The draft Circular Economy Strategy and Climate Emergency Action Plan aim to have a broadly positive impact on human rights as defined in the Charter such as the 'right to life' (e.g. through advocating and acting to improve the thermal performance of homes and Council facilities), the 'right to protection of families and children' (e.g. through action and advocacy to minimise the extent of climate impacts on current and future generations) and 'cultural rights' (e.g. through engaging with Traditional Owners and other First Nations people on climate and care for country).

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

Community engagement and communications activities are planned for the endorsed draft strategy and action plan (pending any final adjustments). Engagement is planned to launch on Monday 23 June and close on Sunday 20 July, providing opportunity for community feedback across a 4 week period.

Community engagement activities will include:

- An updated (stage 2 engagement) Conversations Merri-bek project page for the draft Circular Economy Strategy, with a survey seeking feedback.
- A separate but linked Conversations Merri-bek project page for the draft Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 - 2030, with a survey seeking feedback.
- An in-person workshop with interested community and targeted stakeholders, including past and present members of the Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee and community groups that are part of the Merri-bek Climate Coalition.

- Social media posts will promote opportunities for engagement and awareness of the draft strategy and action plan
- Direct engagement with neighbouring councils.

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

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

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

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

## **6. Financial and Resources Implications**




The proposed consultation process will be undertaken within existing resources. Proposed actions have been listed as either within existing resources or subject to a future internal business case or external grant funding.

## **7. Implementation**

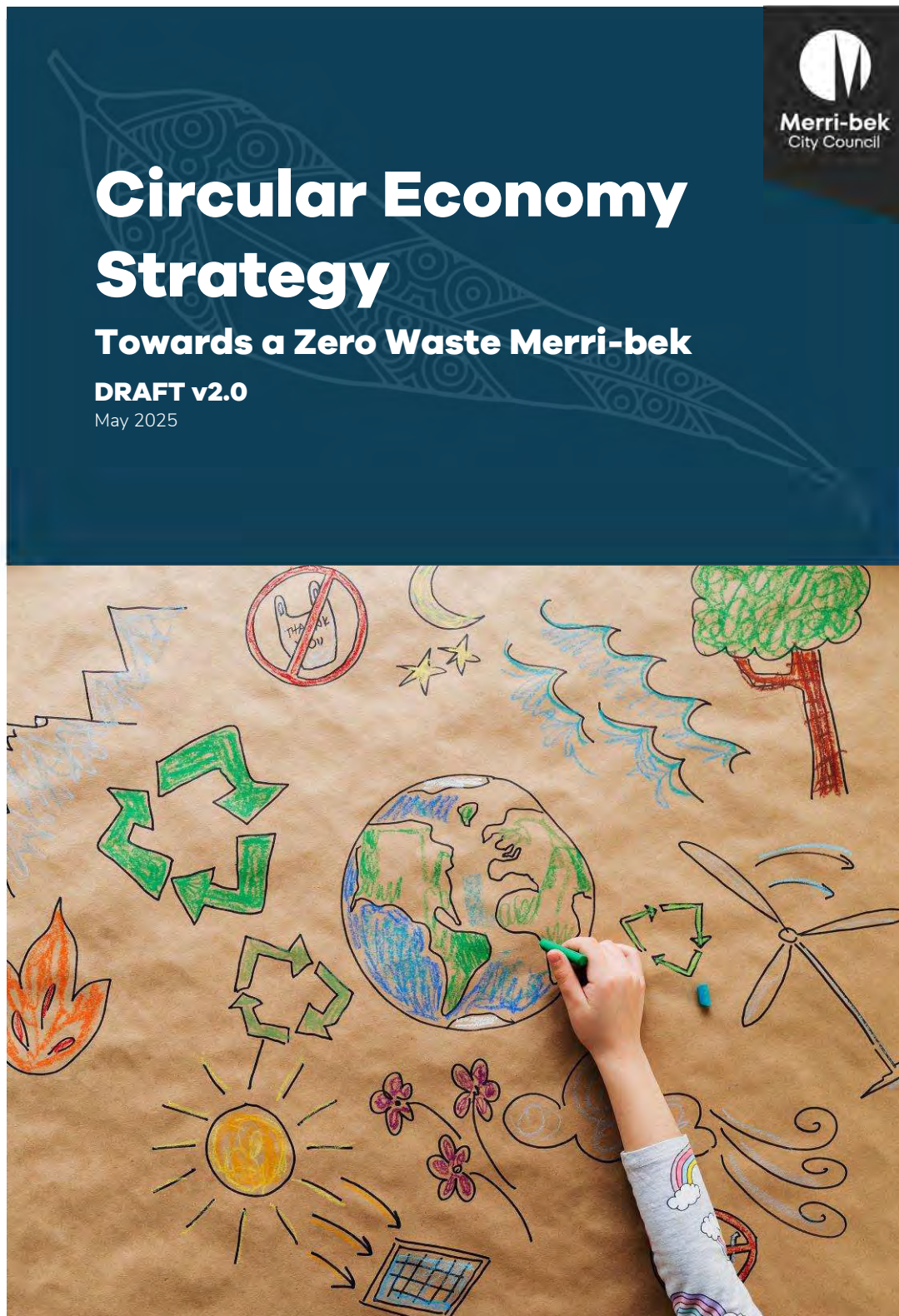
Community and stakeholder feedback will be sought on the draft strategy and action plan as outlined in Section 4.

We will review the engagement outcomes and refine the draft strategy and action plan before preparing a report for Council to present the final versions for adoption at the September 2025 Council Meeting.

### **Attachment/s**

<b>1</b> 	Circular Economy Strategy 2025 - Draft for endorsement to consult	D25/181646
<b>2</b> 	Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 - 2030 - Draft for endorsement to consult	D25/183789
<b>3</b> 	ZCM Action Plan 2020 - 2025 Outcomes - summary	D25/186018





## **Mayor's Foreword**

TBC

DRAFT

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### Version control

Version	Date	Author	Activity	Section
1.0	19/2/2025	Tammy Sherar	Draft for Branch Mgrs / PCB review	All
1.1	8/4/2025	Tammy Sherar	Draft for Executive review	All
1.2	13/05/2025	Tammy Sherar	Draft for Councillors review	All
2.0	22/05/2025		Draft for June Council Meeting	

## Acknowledgment of Country

Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways of the municipality of Merri-Bek, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, and pays respect to their elders, past, present and emerging, and to all First Nations peoples of the lands on which we live and work.

Council is also very grateful to the Elders of the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation. We especially thank Aunty Julieanne Axford, Aunty Gail Smith, Aunty Doreen Garvey-Wandin and Charley Woolmore for generously sharing their perspectives on the significant connections between traditional ways of living and the 'circular economy' concept and principles.

## Statement from Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation

Wurundjeri are pleased to provide this statement for inclusion in Merri-bek's first Circular Economy Strategy. A circular economy is a sustainable practice that was employed by Wurundjeri, Woi-wurrung and other First Nations tribes across Australia for countless generations.

The phrase 'Money is the root of all evil' is a commonly known expression, and there is a great deal of truth behind it. Trade and the barter system – where goods and tools are swapped – avoids a system centred on the concept of monetary value. More value is placed on skills and craft. There is also less waste using a circular economy system, as an over-abundance reduces the value of these trade items.

A system that respects and values peoples' skills – and the craft and knowledge behind them – creates a mindset that is more considered and kind, as well as being more sustainable in how it operates. Trade items were traditionally crafted from locally sourced biodegradable materials, and due to the value placed on craft, these items were maintained and repaired, being highly prized, rather than just discarded.

There are many examples of a circular economy in which items were traded widely. The green stone from a Wurundjeri quarry site at Mt William was highly prized and has been found as far as northwest Victoria and southwest New South Wales. The green stone from Mt William was used to make green-stone axes; an important cultural tool that was used for many purposes.

First Peoples world view is one that is deeply connected to the natural world and their place within it is one of custodianship; meaning we have cultural responsibilities to care for Country. Further to this, consideration is always given to those that come after so the Country's future prosperity is also front of mind.

- Aunty Julieanne Axeford and Aunty Gail Smith  
Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation

## Credits

To assist in the development of this Strategy, Council commissioned background research including an **Options Analysis** by Ricardo Energy, Environment and Planning (Ricardo) in 2022 and a **Material Flow Analysis** by Blue Environment in 2023. Copies of these reports are available in the document library of the [Conversations Merri-bek Circular Economy Strategy page](#).

## Executive Summary

This (draft) *Circular Economy Strategy: Towards a zero waste Merri-bek* (the Strategy), provides direction to Merri-bek City Council on our role in accelerating the transition towards a circular economy over the next 5 years. It reflects the need to move beyond 'managing waste' towards 'avoiding waste', by rethinking how we can use precious resources much more efficiently.

It is widely recognised that our current 'linear economy' is inherently unsustainable, with the extraction of resources (including coal, oil and gas) being a major driver of global greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to the triple planetary crisis of climate change, environmental pollution, and biodiversity loss. To play our part in addressing these global crises, **fostering a circular economy means prioritising its three fundamental principles:**

1	<b>Eliminate waste and pollution (from the start)</b>
2	<b>Keep products and materials in circulation at their highest value</b>
3	<b>Regenerate nature</b>

This Strategy explores how these principles can be applied at a local level and what the biggest opportunities are for Merri-bek. It provides local examples of how the community, local businesses, and Council are already implementing these principles and contributing to a more circular economy. Our capital works program is highlighted as a key opportunity for Council to take a leading role in adopting smart, innovative, and sustainable approaches within our built environment.

Background data about how much material flows across the 3 waste streams – municipal solid waste (MSW), commercial & industrial (C&I) and construction & demolition (C&D) – has helped identify priority materials (including food organics, plastics and textiles) for action across Merri-bek, as well as opportunities for community, business, and organisational change.

Transitioning to a circular economy requires change across the entire supply chain to address the economic, environmental and social costs of our current system of production and (over)consumption. Yet, together with our community, there are many opportunities Council can pursue locally. This Strategy proposes **5 strategic directions for Council action:**

1	<b>Advocating for system change</b>
2	<b>Community education and behaviour change</b>
3	<b>Optimised kerbside waste and recycling services</b>
4	<b>Fostering circularity in our local economy</b>
5	<b>Circular design and environmentally sustainable procurement (Council as Role Model)</b>

Each strategic direction has an objective and key priorities. Goals for 2030 and programmatic actions to deliver on the 5 strategic directions are outlined in Council's draft Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 – 2030.

Council will maintain a critical focus on enabling the Merri-bek municipality to transition towards zero waste, without reliance on thermal Waste to Energy. At the same time, through our advocacy and empowering residents, businesses and Council staff to grow our circular economy, we can play our part in creating a healthy, inclusive and sustainable economy and society.

## 1. Introduction

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**This Circular Economy Strategy: Towards a zero waste Merri-bek, provides direction to Merri-bek City Council on our role in accelerating the transition towards a circular economy. It outlines why and how we can embed circular economy principles to the way products and materials are used by Council and across our municipality.**

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This strategy updates our approach to increasing resource recovery and reducing waste across the municipality.

Our previous Waste and Litter Strategy 2018 has now expired. Over the strategy lifespan Council implemented several significant programs, including:

- The introduction of food and garden organics collection (FOGO), encouraging food waste into the kerbside green waste fortnightly collection service (2019/20)
- Implementation of Plastic Wise Policy and delivery of the Sydney Road Plastic Free Places trial (2020/21)
- The trial of reusables (crockery, cutlery, cups) at selected Council venues (2021/22)
- The introduction of a subsidy program for purchase of reusable cloth nappies and period products (2022/23)
- The hard waste service changing from 2 municipal-wide collections per year to a booked service (2023)
- The introduction of a 4-stream kerbside waste service, with separated glass recycling and universal weekly FOGO collections (2023/24).

For many years Council and other stakeholders had been advocating to the Victorian Government for the introduction of a Container Deposit Scheme in this state, which finally occurred in late 2023. During the life of the strategy the Victorian Government also introduced bans on e-waste in landfill, light-weight plastic bags and a range of single-use plastic take away items.

These and other actions have helped reduce our municipal waste to landfill and increase the recovery of resources through our FOGO and recycling bins. However, much more needs to change as we strive towards our ambitious goal of 'zero waste to landfill'.

This draft Circular Economy Strategy reflects the enormous societal challenge – at home and abroad – to transform how we manage resources for the benefit of people and the planet. It has been informed by consultation with the community and research into 'material flows' across the 3 waste streams – Municipal Solid Waste (MSW), Commercial & Industrial (C&I) and Construction & Demolition (C&D). It outlines a broader scope of strategic directions to contribute towards a more circular economy by making more efficient use of precious resources whilst minimising harm caused from waste.

In line with Merri-bek's credentials as a progressive and environmentally proactive Council and community, this strategy maintains Council's commitment to strive for zero waste to landfill, without reliance on thermal Waste to Energy. The primary goal is to reduce total waste generation (across all 4 municipal bins). Additionally, Council will seek to support businesses operating in Merri-bek to improve their material efficiency and reduce waste.



## 2. What are the challenges?

### 2.1 Global context

Our modern lifestyles depend upon the earth's finite resources for how we live, work and play. The unfolding breakdown of our climate and ecological support systems calls for an urgent transition to a truly sustainable, fair and resilient society.

In the conventional 'linear economy' model of production and consumption, resources are extracted, goods are manufactured and used, then discarded to landfill or incinerated. This model assumes a limitless supply of natural resources and prioritises profit and growth through the increasing consumption of goods. This "take, make, dispose" approach values short-term convenience without considering the long-term impacts on resources, human health or the environment.



Figure 1: The Linear Economy

Our society is dependent on the Earth's finite resources as well as all the essential services provided by natural ecosystems such as clean air, fresh water, healthy soil and disease control. The linear economy is inherently unsustainable, with the extraction of resources (including coal, oil and gas) being a major driver of global greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to the triple planetary crises of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss.

Addressing the climate crisis requires the urgent transition to 100% renewable energy, which can eliminate around 55% of global emissions. However, the remaining 45% of emissions are embedded within the physical resources and goods we use, and the way land is managed<sup>1</sup>. Reducing these 'embedded emissions' is also urgent, requiring much more efficient use of resources and less consumption. Material consumption has more than tripled since 1970, and we are currently consuming resources 1.7 times faster than nature can regenerate.<sup>2</sup>

These crises disproportionately affect vulnerable communities, with pollution contributing to over 9 million premature deaths globally each year<sup>3</sup>. Many pollutants such as heavy metals and microplastics persist in the environment for years, damaging both ecosystems and human health. Relatedly, the growing demand for the materials essential for the renewable energy transition – such as critical minerals and rare earth elements – must be very carefully managed to maximise resource efficiency and avoid exploiting local communities and damaging ecosystems.

Concurrently, deforestation and land clearing are driving an unprecedented loss of biodiversity. The UN warns that there are up to one million species at risk of extinction within decades<sup>4</sup>. Environmental degradation and climate change are also impacting the ability of natural carbon sinks (oceans, forests, soils) to absorb human-made greenhouse gas emissions and, in the case of oceans, the extra heat that these emissions are creating.

To address the triple planetary crises, new economic paradigms are needed that decouple economic activity from resource use, while addressing issues like inequality, over-consumption and environmental degradation.

<sup>1</sup> Ellen MacArthur Foundation, [The circular economy: a missing piece in city climate action plans?](#) September, 2023

<sup>2</sup> Earth Overshoot Day, [overfootprintnetwork.org](#), website accessed December 2024

<sup>3</sup> The Lancet Planetary Health, 2022 [Pollution and health: a progress update - The Lancet Planetary Health](#)

<sup>4</sup> UN [Biodiversity - our strongest natural defense against climate change](#) | United Nations

## 2.2 Our local context

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**As well as the above global challenges, the circular economy strategy for Merri-bek must also consider our local and regional challenges.**

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Merri-bek has a rapidly growing and diverse population experiencing housing and cost of living pressures. Our community expects Council to provide waste and recycling services that meet their needs affordably. More thoughtful household behaviours (like following a list when shopping, growing and swapping produce or passing on clothes etc) can offer ways to sustainably reduce household costs.

The waste and recycling industry in Victoria is immature, with limited competition between players and a market biased toward demand for virgin goods and resources over recycled content products. Prior to China's National Sword Policy, local councils were paid per tonne for recycling that they delivered to the processor. Now the costs to have our recycling and organics processed is significant. The Victorian Waste Levy increases annually to ensure that sending waste to landfill is more expensive than having material recycled, which helps to incentivise diversion and maximise recycling rates.

Research undertaken into material flows in Merri-bek in 2023 identified that in the 2021/22 financial year the Construction and Demolition (C&D) sector accounted for 49% and the Commercial and Industrial (C&I) sector for 35% of total waste generated in Merri-bek.<sup>5</sup> This highlights the importance of these sectors reducing their material inputs and transitioning to a circular economy. Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) accounts for the remaining 16% of waste generated. The research also found that the estimated recycling rate for each of the streams was 86% for C&D, 59% for C&I and 44% for MSW.

The C&D sector is estimated to recycle 86% of its waste and to be responsible for 24% of waste going to landfill from Merri-bek<sup>6</sup>. Key circular economy opportunities for the C&D sector include reuse of building materials, adaptive reuse, refurbishment of buildings instead of demolition, purchasing recycled content products and the increased recovery and recycling of waste materials.

The C&I sector is estimated to recycle 59% of its waste and to be responsible for 45% of waste going to landfill from Merri-bek<sup>7</sup>. The C&I sector generates significant amounts of food waste and paper/cardboard, both of which represent opportunities for avoidance (through improved material and supply chain efficiencies) as well as recovery for recycling or composting.

Priority materials identified through the Material Flow Analysis research were:

- Organics
- Plastics
- Textiles
- Paper and cardboard
- Construction and demolition waste

**Our local economy provides employment, goods and services to the community.** Merri-bek is experiencing a shift from its historical reliance on manufacturing to a focus on service-oriented sectors. Research undertaken for Council in 2023 identified local industry sectors which have the potential for circular economy initiatives. They consulted 21 local businesses to better understand how they use resources, what circular economy initiatives they already have in place and any

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<sup>5</sup> MFA and opportunities assessment, Blue Environment, 2023, [Conversations Merri-bek – Developing our Circular Economy Strategy](#)

<sup>6</sup> MFA and opportunities assessment, Blue Environment, 2023, [Conversations Merri-bek – Developing our Circular Economy Strategy](#)

<sup>7</sup> MFA and opportunities assessment, Blue Environment, 2023, [Conversations Merri-bek – Developing our Circular Economy Strategy](#)



opportunities businesses saw for Council to support circular economy in the region. The research identified a range of challenges and potential opportunities.

**Common challenges for businesses:**

- Lack of knowledge on sustainable products and cost comparisons to conventional products.
- Packaging materials, especially cardboard and soft plastics, are major components of businesses waste streams. It's difficult to avoid packaging and to access recycling options suited to businesses.
- Isolation between businesses wanting to pursue sustainable options, with connections mainly being business-to-Council rather than business-to-business.
- Space is the major constraint for local reuse and repair activities.

**Potential opportunities for Council:**

- Providing information and assisting businesses to build their capability.
- Investigate and make available existing resources for businesses, e.g. state government directory or database that compares materials or products based on sustainability and cost for items e.g. takeaway coffee cups and single use containers.
- Facilitate networking and professional development opportunities on sustainable business practices including waste management.
- Council officer role for circular economy and sustainable business to facilitate networking with business and other stakeholders.
- Research and development opportunities for businesses through partnerships with organisations such as RMIT University and CoLabs (a co-working and start up space).
- Create a space or precinct for circular economy businesses, social enterprises and not for profits to increase the volume of goods being repaired, recycled or upcycled.
- Provide support and resources for businesses to influence their supply chain and reduce packaging passed on to them by suppliers.
- Provide a separate cardboard and soft plastic packaging collection service for businesses.
- Opportunities to work with Council and participate in circular economy trials and initiatives.

The circular economy presents many opportunities for local businesses to improve resource efficiency, lower costs, mitigate risks, and explore new revenue streams. Emerging business models can redefine product-consumer relationships and foster markets for services like sharing, leasing, repairing, reusing, remanufacturing, and resource recovery.

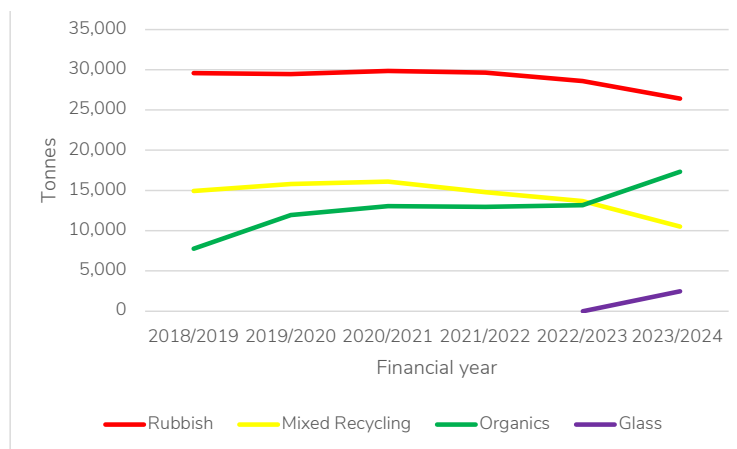
**At the time of the Material Flow Analysis municipal solid waste accounted for 31% of all waste going to landfill from Merri-bek (across the MSW, C&I and C&D streams).<sup>8</sup>** At the time of the research in 2021/22 our diversion rate was 48%. Latest data on the new 4-bin kerbside waste and recycling service shows that average landfill waste per household has decreased, and the amount of FOGO processed has increased since the changes were made. Our overall diversion rate has increased to 53% (2023/24). However, there is still a lot of food waste in the garbage bin and contamination in the mixed recycling bin is still too high.

These changes to household waste generation in the kerbside service are illustrated below in Graph 1 and Figures 2 and 3. Less food waste in landfill (where it breaks down to release methane) also reduces our carbon pollution. More information on municipal waste generation over the past 5 years can be found in the Towards Zero Waste Data Report in the document library of [Conversations Merri-bek – Developing our Circular Economy Strategy](#).

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<sup>8</sup> MFA and opportunities assessment, Blue Environment, 2023, [Conversations Merri-bek – Developing our Circular Economy Strategy](#)

#### Annual waste tonnages from kerbside bins - 2018/19 to 2023/24



Graph 1: Rubbish, FOGO and Mixed recycling, and glass tonnages, 2018/19 to 2023/24

An audit of our kerbside bins in 2024 found that 35% of the material in the rubbish stream could be recovered for recycling through proper sorting into the correct kerbside bin. The illustrations in Figures 2 and 3 below show the contents in the average bin across all 4 kerbside streams.

#### What's in our kerbside bins?



Figure 2: Average contents of rubbish bin and food and garden organics bin (2024 Audit)

The average rubbish bin is made up of 35% recyclable or compostable material. Of this, food waste accounts for 24%, garden organics makes up 3%, mixed recycling accounts for 7% and glass bottles and jars 1%.

The average food and garden organics bin is mostly used for garden waste (75%), with food waste making up 20% and contamination 5%.



Figure 3: Average contents of mixed recycling bin and glass recycling bin (2024 Audit)

In the mixed recycling bin, paper and cardboard represents the largest share at 51%, followed by plastic containers at 14%. This stream has the highest contamination at 23%.

The glass recycling bin is mostly used for glass bottles and jars comprising 96% of the stream and has relatively low contamination at 4%.

These findings highlight priorities for increased waste education and behaviour change programs to support our community to increase recycling rates and reduce contamination in their bins.

Since 2018 Council has aspired to achieve the target of 'zero waste to landfill'. Unfortunately, research undertaken in 2022 reveals that around 19% of our municipal waste has no alternative to landfill. This is because currently there are no scalable recycling solutions for items such as disposable nappies, plastic films, and soiled paper. This means that even with perfect material separation by households, the maximum 'diversion rate' we can achieve is capped at around 80%. The research also showed that significant amounts of materials are being improperly disposed of. In 2023/24 our diversion rate was 53%, indicating that huge community behaviour changes and state-wide waste sector changes will be needed to reach landfill diversion targets of 80% or more<sup>9</sup>.

Council established a position against the use of any thermal Waste to Energy (WtE) technology as an alternative to landfill, in the Waste and Litter Strategy 2018. This decision reflects Council's commitment to prioritising waste reduction and resource recovery over thermal treatment methods such as incineration, gasification, combustion, pyrolysis and plasma arc. Thermal technologies can produce a host of negative environmental impacts including release of toxins into the atmosphere. Such an approach does not align with the goal of creating a regenerative and sustainable system for resource use. Due to this position, reaching high landfill diversion targets must rely on recycling and organics recovery for recycling and composting or non-thermal technologies, rather than waste incineration or alternative thermal treatment options<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Waste Options Development Report, Ricardo, 2022 [Conversations Merri-bek Circular Economy Strategy page](#)

<sup>10</sup> Waste Options Development Report, Ricardo, 2022 [Conversations Merri-bek Circular Economy Strategy page](#)

### 3. Our emerging circular economy

#### 3.1 Local community champions

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##### Merri-bek Toy Library

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The Merri-bek Toy Library has been running since 1991, making a lasting impact on families, carers, and children in the local community.

The toy library offers low membership fees with concession rates providing families the opportunity to 'borrow not buy' age-appropriate toys for children as they grow and develop.

The toy library offers a sustainable alternative to toy ownership, teaching the values of sharing with others and taking care of what we have.

It also allows children access to toys that might otherwise be unobtainable due to the cost, and allows toys to circulate through multiple households, being maintained and repaired when needed, which means they can remain in use for longer.

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##### UpShop Industries

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UpShop Industries is a local design business based in Brunswick. The certified social enterprise is driven by a passion for sustainability and the desire to see a societal shift from 'throw away' to material circularity.

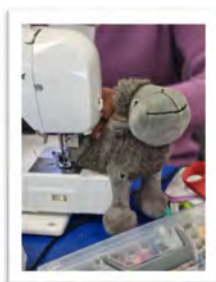
They specialise in developing products made from the used resources of businesses and industry, reusing, repairing or upcycling waste materials into new products, often making use of materials that cannot be readily recycled or reused.

UpShop Industries strives to be a circular economy leader providing tangible, creative and aesthetically pleasing solutions for the waste problems of industry and commerce, for the benefit of society.

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##### Pascoe Vale Repair Cafe

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Pascoe Vale Repair Café is part of the global, grassroots Repair Café movement and runs out of the Sussex Neighbourhood House once a month. The Repair Café offers residents the opportunity to have goods repaired by skilled volunteers for free.

The Repair Café also provides advice and tools to mend items such as clothing and textiles, electrical goods, knife sharpening, bikes and toys. By sharing skills and connection, it supports community resilience and social cohesion. The Repair Café movement aims to reduce overconsumption by providing a place for people to come together and repair their goods rather than replacing them.

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**Fawkner Food Bowls**

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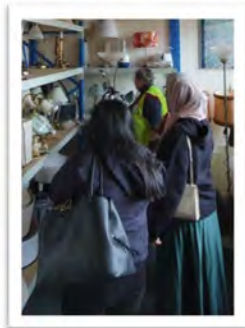
Fawkner Food Bowls is a community food growing initiative that has transformed a disused bowling green into a community food hub. Fawkner Food Bowls is a great example of repurposing an underutilised community asset to fit the changing needs of the local community.

The initiative was started by 2 local residents and has been incorporated since 2018. The Fawkner Food Bowls provides space for the community to come together to grow food, share skills and knowledge, learn about food systems as well as building community connection and resilience.

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**RIMERN**

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Rotary Inner Melbourne Emergency Relief Network (RIMERN) is a multi Rotary club project that helps locals in need and keeps good quality second hand homewares out of landfill.

RIMERN works with leading welfare agencies as they help their clients into secure housing following periods of homelessness, domestic violence, incarceration, refugee displacement or loss from disaster or illness.

At the RIMERN warehouse in Brunswick East, people can choose items that match their taste - from sofas, beds, white goods and linen to electrical goods and decor like cushions and artwork - to make their new house a home.

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**Brunswick Tool Library**

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The Brunswick Tool Library is a volunteer-led initiative providing tools on loan to the community as part of an annual membership. Established in 2013 the Brunswick Tool Library is one of the first tool libraries in Australia.

Members can access an ever-growing inventory of tools that they may otherwise not be able to afford, or only need on short term loan for a specific purpose.

Another aim of the tool library is to connect communities, share skills and learn from one another. They run workshops and a monthly repair café to share the knowledge and skills needed to repair and care for belongings.

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**ReWine**


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ReWine is a bottle shop on Lygon Street with a difference, providing quality wine in refillable bottles. They have designed a unique, ground-up zero-waste supply chain. From winery to wine glass, they provide sustainable wines that are locally made and waste-free.

At ReWine customers can buy wine in a special refillable bottle, that they bring back to be refilled in store. Wine is refilled straight from the barrel, into refillable bottles for takeaway, or straight into the glass without using a bottle at all. Their unique system and equipment enables bottles to be refilled repeatedly, saving hundreds and thousands of bottles from going to waste.

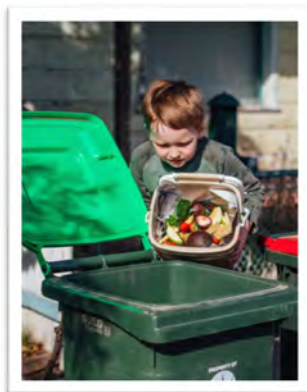
### 3.2 Council initiatives supporting a circular economy

Council is fostering the circular economy through a range of programs and activities, including:

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**Kerbside collection of food and garden organics (FOGO)**


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In 2019 Council began collecting food waste through the opt-in garden organics bin. In 2023 the FOGO service was rolled out to all households using Council's waste service, and collection frequency switched from fortnightly to weekly.

These changes have resulted in a steady increase in the amount of food and garden waste collected through this service, up from 7,700 tonnes in 2018 to 17,000 tonnes in 2023. The reforms have also seen a 7.5% reduction in waste sent to landfill via the garbage service and a 7% reduction in the carbon emissions caused by food waste decomposing in landfill.

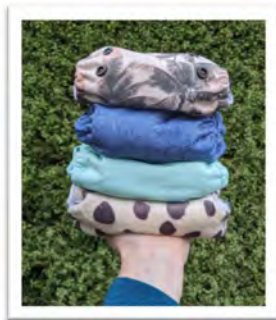
The food and garden waste collected through the FOGO service is turned into compost and used to enrich the soil at farms, parks and community gardens. Since July 2020, over 243 cubic metres of compost has been delivered to 12 community gardens across Merri-bek.



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### Reusable cloth nappy and period product subsidy

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On average, children use 5,000 to 6,000 disposable nappies before becoming toilet trained. Our 2024 waste audit shows that disposable nappies and period products make up 13.5% of waste going to landfill.

To support Merri-bek residents who want to cut their waste to landfill by making the switch to reusable cloth nappies or period products we offer a discount on the purchase price for these items.

Households can claim up to \$100 per year for cloth nappies and accessories. Individual residents can claim up to \$35 per year for reusable period products. Since the program launched in 2022, over 1,035 cloth nappies and reusable period products have been subsidised by Council.

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### Annual Garage Sale Trail

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Garage Sale Trail is a national waste education and behaviour change program that aims to reduce waste and support the transition to a circular economy.

Our annual participation in Garage Sale Trail supports households and community groups to hold in garage sales, extend the life of pre-loved items through reuse, and raise some money. Sellers can access free resources and buyers can find affordable second-hand goods. The program also enables community connection and helps to mainstream participation in the second-hand economy.

Merri-bek has participated in Garage Sale Trail since 2012, enabling thousands of households to host sales and keep goods circulating at their highest value.

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### Reuse of materials in the public realm

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Council regularly reuses products and materials in the upgrade or construction of public open space.

In 2020/21 the Bulleke-bek Park construction in Brunswick made use of old factory trusses in the arbours. Bricks salvaged from the demolished houses were also used in the paving.

Logs from tree removals and old car tyres are often reused as steppers or edging in our playgrounds. Mulch from tree removals is also used on playgrounds and garden beds.

Bluestone pitchers are reused as edging for footpaths or playgrounds, as low walls or steppers, and larger blocks can be reused as seating. Rocks and boulders dug up during excavation work will often be saved for use in future projects.

### 3.3 Built environment projects are a key opportunity

There are many opportunities for Council to support the local transition to a circular economy, including through the programs and services we provide to the community, and through our procurement of goods and materials.

Analysis by PwC has shown that incorporating circular economy principles into Australia's built environment projects could reduce emissions by 3.6 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e per year by 2040. It could also deliver \$773 billion in direct economic benefits over 20 years<sup>11</sup>. This highlights that embedding circularity into capital works projects is a key opportunity for Council to reduce embodied carbon emissions and the overall environmental impacts of municipal buildings and infrastructure.

Several projects on the horizon in Merri-bek present this opportunity for Council to include circularity in the project scope, from initial design right through to material selection, construction, use, maintenance and end-of-life management. In particular, the Coburg Library redevelopment represents a key opportunity to implement circular design strategies from the outset and showcase Merri-bek as a leader in sustainable buildings and community infrastructure.

Opportunities to increase circularity in built environment projects include:

- Design for long term use, aim for longevity, adaptability and potential disassembly.
- Preference adaptive reuse over knock-down rebuild.
- Design and build efficiently, eliminate unnecessary components and ensure material efficiency through the reuse of existing assets and materials where possible.
- Design for best practice operational waste management and consider procuring products as a service for the use phase of buildings.
- Select building materials with high recycled content and low-embodied carbon and reduce the use of virgin, carbon-intensive, non-renewable resources and hazardous materials.
- Consider incorporating green infrastructure e.g. raingardens, permeable paving, green roofs or walls, vegetable/native gardens, trees etc.

Two useful tools to assist with incorporating these design elements into building projects are:

[Circular Buildings Toolkit](#), Ellen MacArthur Foundation / ARUP

[Circular design guidelines for the built environment](#), NSW Government

## 4. Strategic framework

### 4.1 Vision

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**The Circular Economy Strategy provides strategic direction for incorporating circular economy principles and practices across Merri-bek, to help ensure the wellbeing of our people, economy and nature, now and into the future.**

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**Our vision is that in Merri-bek** resources are endlessly renewed and residents have access to local services and initiatives that enable them to live low waste lifestyles through hiring, repairing, skill-sharing and borrowing. In our local economy nothing is wasted, benefiting both people and the planet. Local businesses including social enterprises are thriving, they understand how to incorporate circularity into their business practices, products and services and are harnessing the opportunities presented by the circular economy.

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<sup>11</sup> PwC (2021), [Building a more circular Australia – The opportunity of transitioning to a circular economy](#), Australia.



## 4.2 Circular economy principles

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**The circular economy presents us with an opportunity to rethink how we make, use and dispose of goods, and whether we need to build or buy something new in the first place.**

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Achieving circularity in the way we produce and consume products and materials requires change at all levels of society and the economy, from the individual or household level, right up to multi-national businesses and governments. The circular economy aims to eliminate waste and decouple economic activity from the consumption of finite resources by applying 3 fundamental principles:

**1. Eliminate waste and pollution:** this first principle identifies that it is the way products and materials are designed that ultimately leads to waste and pollution. Around 80% of a product's environmental impacts are determined at the design stage<sup>12</sup>.

Planned and perceived obsolescence are strategies used by brands to increase sales through product replacement. Planned obsolescence, which began in the 1920s, involves designing and manufacturing products with a limited lifespan. These are generally destined to be replaced when they no longer function because this is cheaper than having them repaired. Perceived obsolescence is when a product is no longer desirable to the consumer and is replaced to keep up with the latest trend. This strategy is often employed by both the fashion and consumer electronics industries.

In a circular economy products are instead designed and manufactured for durability and longevity. They are also designed for ease of maintenance, repair, component recovery and reuse. The resources and materials used to produce them can be recovered and returned to the material cycle at their end of life. Sustainable materials and manufacturing processes are also crucial for reducing pollution and waste.

Some examples of this principle include:

- Opting for zero-VOC paint (free from volatile organic compounds) or fertiliser or pesticide-free produce to reduce environmental pollution back through the value chain.
- Using paper products that do not contain plastics or PFAS chemicals so that they can be safely composted or recycled.
- Purposefully designing and choosing products that can be maintained and repaired to extend their use.

**2. Keep products and materials in circulation at their highest value:** this principle involves keeping products and materials circulating at their highest value and best use through rethinking whether you can make do with what you already have, including the remanufacture or reuse of products. This also includes careful maintenance to extend the life of products and repairing or replacing parts rather than discarding an entire item.

Additionally, circular business models, such as providing 'products as a service', can transform our approach to ownership and value generation. Instead of purchasing products outright, customers can access products through a subscription or lease, where the responsibility for maintenance and repair is retained by the producer or retailer, extending the life of the product.

Circular business models (such as repair, hire or share services) are essential to support the individual behaviours needed to keep goods and materials circulating.

Some examples of this principle include:

- Hiring or borrowing items or sourcing them second hand instead of buying new.
- Reupholstering a chair you already own rather than replacing it with a new one.

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<sup>12</sup> Source: Ellen MacArthur Foundation, [An introduction to circular design](#), June 2022

- Subscription services for household appliances, ride sharing, e-bikes as an alternative to ownership.
- Businesses diverting 'waste' materials into new products e.g. hairdressers collecting cut hair to make wigs.
- Carefully renovating a building rather than demolishing it to build a new one.

**3. Conserve natural resources and regenerate nature:** this final principle involves avoiding the use of virgin materials and returning nutrients to the soil. It moves beyond the goal of 'do less harm' to the environment towards the intention of leaving nature better off through the creation of habitat, increasing biodiversity levels, enriching soils, improving watersheds or enhancing ecosystems. It is about being a nature steward and 'caring for country'.

The circular economy goes beyond the aims of 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle'. As shown in Figure 4 below, it aims to evolve the values underpinning our economic system and seeks to re-think all stages of a product's lifecycle including supply, processing, manufacturing, distribution, and retail, not just end-of-life management.

Some examples of this principle include:

- Sourcing materials from responsibly managed natural ecosystems to ensure that harvesting does not exceed regeneration rates.
- Incorporating green spaces in urban areas to improve air quality, manage stormwater runoff, and provide habitat for wildlife.
- Keeping products and materials in use, so that less land is required for sourcing virgin raw materials, e.g. from mines.

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**The different stages of a product's lifecycle in a circular economy.**

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Figure 4: The Circular Economy

#### 4.3 Implementation approach

Our approach to strategy implementation will strive to:

- Ensure programs and services are designed to respond to the needs of community and are accessible and inclusive.
- Design interventions that also build climate resilience.
- Progressively integrate circular economy principles within Council operations, capital works and procurement.
- Trial and implement innovative approaches or technologies to progress circular economy outcomes.
- Partner with our community, other councils, not-for-profit organisations, businesses, state and federal government to pursue shared objectives.

#### 4.4 Strategic directions

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**Council has a role to play in the circular economy through our procurement of goods and services, our building and capital works program as well as through advocacy and the delivery of programs and services to the community that enable participation in the circular economy.**

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Whilst circular economy requires change across the entire supply chain to address the economic, environmental and social costs of the linear system of production and consumption, there are many opportunities Council can pursue locally. The 5 key areas for Council action are:

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##### 1. Advocating for system change

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Our objective is to:

Achieve regulatory reform to improve resource efficiency and minimise environmental pollution (including climate pollution) and drive a rapid transition to a circular economy in Victoria and Australia.

Our priorities are to:

- Advocate for Extended Producer Responsibility and mandatory national minimum product design and import standards to ensure goods are durable, repairable, reusable and recyclable at end-of-life.
- Seek further bans on problematic products and materials (e.g. single use plastics, PFAS chemicals in compostable and fibre-based packaging).
- Call on Federal Government to introduce policy measures that incentivise repair, refurbishment and the use of recycled content over virgin materials.

A full list of our circular economy advocacy asks can be found at Appendix 2.

Partnership/collaboration opportunities: MAV, NGOs, community groups, other Councils.

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## 2. Community education and behaviour change

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Our objective is to:

Increase opportunities and influence households and community groups to participate in the circular economy as conscious consumers.

Our priorities are to:

- Foster the expansion of local sharing groups and community initiatives that enable material reuse, repair or recovery and increase diversion from landfill, e.g. libraries of things, repair cafes, swap events, workshops and skill sharing meetups.
- Deliver programs and services that enable zero-waste lifestyles.
- Assist community to access services for hard to recycle or hazardous items.
- Engage and inspire Merri-bek's diverse community to act as 'conscious consumers' - to re-think their shopping and waste habits.

Partnership/collaboration opportunities: community groups, libraries team, Sustainability Victoria, social enterprises.

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## 3. Optimised kerbside waste and recycling services

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Our objective is to:

Continue reforming our kerbside waste collection services to maximise recycling and reuse, and to equitably and cost effectively meet the needs of residents and businesses.

Our priorities are to:

- Minimise the amount of organic waste (FOGO) and recyclables sent to landfill.
- Explore tailored services for businesses and Multi Unit Developments (e.g. food and bulk cardboard).
- Increase opportunities for reuse and recycling through the hard waste service.
- Reduce contamination and resource loss through correct bin use.

To minimise climate, noise and air pollution from our waste collection vehicles, Council aims to be an early adopter of emerging zero emissions truck technologies.

Partnership/collaboration opportunities: M9, local food businesses, social enterprises, retailers, private waste contractors.

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## 4. Fostering circularity in our local economy

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Our objective is to:

Increase awareness of circular business models and practices to help businesses reduce waste and costs and to increase job opportunities whilst also increasing community access to local sustainable businesses.

Our priorities are to:

- Support business networking, capacity building, innovation and research to help businesses adopt circular practices and capitalise on opportunities in the circular economy.

- Educate and engage the community, local businesses and suppliers in circular opportunities for priority materials.
- Further investigate opportunities identified through the analysis of material flows in Merri-bek to increase diversion of commercial and industrial waste from landfill and encourage greater circularity in the local economy.

Partnership/collaboration opportunities: NorthLink, Melbourne's North Food Group, Melbourne's North Advanced Manufacturing Group, LXRP, Trader Associations, local businesses including social enterprises, charities, and the education sector – in particular RMIT University Brunswick campus.

## 5. Circular design and environmentally sustainable procurement (Council as Role Model)

Our objective is to:

Be a leading Council in environmentally sustainable procurement, through greater adoption of circular economy principles in our capital works, operations and service delivery.

Our priorities are to:

- Evolve Council's procurement policy and guideline documents, processes and assessment criteria to embed circularity across the organisation and to stimulate demand in the supplier market for circular products and services.
- Explore 'goods as services' contracts for products e.g. lighting or IT hardware.
- Adapt tender specifications to increase the use of sustainable / low embodied carbon / recycled content materials; products that are durable, repairable, reusable and recyclable.
- Seek innovation in our infrastructure (streetscapes, roads, etc) and open space projects, to increase the reuse, repair and maintenance of goods and materials.
- Reduce embodied emissions from our built environment by preferencing adaptive reuse over demolition where possible, designing buildings for modularity, adaptability and disassembly and using recycled content, salvaged and/or sustainable/low carbon materials.
- Seek to deliver zero or low waste events and festivals for our community.

Partnership/collaboration opportunities: SV Buy Circular, local reuse/salvage/recycling businesses and social enterprises.

## 5. Policy and regulatory context

### Local strategic context

This strategy contributes to a range of Council plans and strategies, outlined in the table below.

Local Policy / Initiative	Overview
<b>Council Plan 2021 – 2025 (to be updated)</b>	Theme 1: An environmentally proactive Moreland Relevant strategies: 1.6 Strive for zero waste to landfill with best practice municipal waste minimisation through reform of kerbside services, community education and innovation.

	1.7 Foster a more circular economy through implementing kerbside waste reform, supporting community initiatives and businesses, minimising waste generated by Council activities and using collaboration to influence markets and advocate for greater commitment of state and/or federal governments.
<b>Community Vision 2021 – 2031 (to be updated)</b>	Articulates how the community wants Merri-bek to be in the next 10 years. The Community Vision is that: “Merri-bek is our home. We respect and look after our land, air, waterways, and animals. We care for our people and celebrate our diverse stories, cultures, and identities. “Merri-bek is enhanced by all of us supporting our local businesses, arts communities and social organisations. “We work together proactively and transparently to continue to create a: Vibrant; Safe; Healthy; Resilient; Innovative; Regenerative community. “Many faces, one Merri-bek.”
<b>Zero Carbon 2040 Framework</b>	Outlines Council's vision and strategic directions for the transition to zero carbon in Merri-bek by 2040. Acknowledges that the climate emergency calls for urgent action by all levels of government.  The framework reflects 3 key strategic directions: Energy Transition, Sustainable Transport and Waste and Consumption.  The 2040 goal for Waste and Consumption is: Circular economy with zero waste.
<b>Kerbside Waste Service and Charge Policy 2021</b>	The Kerbside Waste Service and Charge Policy 2021, adopted December 2021, introduced reforms to the kerbside waste collection service for implementation between 2022 to 2025 and defined a high performing 'end state' service model. General rubbish bins will be collected weekly until fortnightly collections have been trialled.

#### Victorian policy context

The Victorian Government introduced their circular economy policy *Recycling Victoria: A New Economy* in 2020 to guide the state's transformation of kerbside recycling and use of materials.

Where possible this strategy aligns with the goals and directions of *Recycling Victoria: A New Economy*.

State Policy / Initiative	Overview
<b>Circular Economy (Waste reduction and Recycling) Act 2021 (CE Act)</b>	The CE Act provides for the establishment of Recycling Victoria as the regulator of the Victorian waste and resource recovery sector and outlines the activities to be regulated by Recycling Victoria including waste, recycling and resource recovery services, the Container Deposit Scheme and the Waste to Energy Scheme.
<b>Recycling Victoria: a new economy (Victorian Government 2020)</b>	Outlines changes to the waste and resource recovery sector to enable Victoria's transition to a circular economy. Includes 4 targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Divert 80% of waste from landfill by 2030, with an interim target of 72% by 2025.</li> <li>- Cut total waste generation by 15% per capita by 2030.</li> </ul>

- Halve the volume of organic material going to landfill between 2020 and 2030, with an interim target of 20% reduction by 2025.
- Ensure every Victorian household has access to food and garden organic waste recycling services or local composting by 2030.

### National policy context

The Federal Government plays a critical role in enabling the transition to a circular economy. They set direction and can be drivers of innovation and investment. Many different policy levers can be applied to accelerate the transition, below are some key national policies and initiatives.

National Policy / Initiative	Overview
<b>Australia's Circular Economy Framework</b> (Australian Government 2024)	Australian government's first circular economy framework, which represents the commitment to a national circular economy transition. The framework includes the goal of doubling Australia's circularity by 2035. The framework aims to transform how we use, reuse, and regenerate resources across the economy. It also recognises that as we work to decarbonise our economy, circularity is an essential tool in reducing our carbon footprint while simultaneously restoring ecosystems and natural capital.
<b>Environmentally Sustainable Procurement Policy</b> (Australian Government 2024)	Australian government's first national procurement policy focused on climate, the environment and circularity. It reflects the commitment to reduce national GHG emissions to net zero by 2050 and enable the transition to a circular economy. It aims to ensure the Government uses its purchasing power to reduce emissions and waste to landfill by increasing local demand for recycled materials.
<b>Recycling and Waste Reduction Act 2020</b> (replaces the Product Stewardship Act 2011)	The Recycling and Waste Reduction Act 2020 establishes a legislative framework to better manage the environmental and social impacts of products and materials. This includes regulating exports and expanding product stewardship, as well as assisting businesses to adopt more resource efficient practices, better product design and repairability.
<b>National Waste Policy Action Plan</b> (Australian Government 2019)	Guides Australia's investment and national efforts to deliver against targets to better manage waste and resource recovery nationally, including to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulate waste exports</li> <li>• Reduce total waste generated by 10% per person by 2030</li> <li>• Recover 80% of all waste by 2030</li> <li>• Significantly increase the use of recycled content by governments and industry</li> <li>• Phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics by 2025</li> <li>• Halve the amount of organic waste sent to landfill by 2030</li> </ul>
<b>National Packaging Targets</b> (Australian Government 2018)	In 2018 Australia established the ambitious National Packaging Targets. The 4 targets to be achieved by 2025 were:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>100% of packaging being reusable, recyclable or compostable</li> <li>70% of plastic packaging being recycled or composted</li> <li>50% average recycled content included in packaging</li> <li>The phase out of problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic packaging.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note: These targets have not been achieved.</b></p>
<b>National Food Waste Strategy (DEE 2017)</b>	The <i>National Food Waste Strategy</i> provides a framework to support collective action towards halving Australia's food waste by 2030.

### Product Stewardship Schemes

Several national product stewardship schemes have a direct impact on the products and materials in the municipal waste stream. Product stewardship is a strategy used to ensure that producers take responsibility for minimising the environmental and human health impacts of the products they put on the market.

Product Stewardship and Extended Producer Responsibility Schemes are intended to shift the responsibility for collection, transportation, and the management of products at end-of-life away from local governments, who have traditionally borne these costs, to the manufacturers.

Product Stewardship Scheme	Overview
<b>Seamless Clothing Stewardship Scheme</b>	Voluntary product stewardship scheme for clothing launched in 2023. Aims to have 60% of industry sign up to divert 120,000 tonnes of end-of-life clothing from landfill by 2027.
<b>National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme</b>	The National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme (NTRCS) was established in 2011 to provide Australian households and small businesses free access to industry-funded collection and recycling services for end-of-life televisions and computers, including printers, computer parts and peripherals.
<b>Australian Packaging Covenant</b>	Established in 1999, the Australian Packaging Covenant is a voluntary, industry-led co-regulatory product stewardship scheme for packaging. Deemed no longer fit-for-purpose and in need of reform, national packaging regulation is currently under review.

## 6. Monitoring and evaluation

This Strategy's vision, principles and priorities will be implemented through the Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 – 2030, which will map out priority projects and programs for delivery. Measuring and reporting on progress towards circular economy outcomes is key to showing progress, measuring success and ensuring actions are meeting strategic objectives.

Australia currently lacks a comprehensive framework for measuring the circular economy, with metrics mostly centred around waste management. Global agencies and organisations gather data to reflect material consumption and the use of secondary materials (recycled content) in the economy.

Several high-level indicators can assist in measuring how successful a circular economy is at reducing waste, keeping materials circulating (use of salvaged and/or recycled content products/materials) and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.



Where feasible, these metrics will be tracked for the purposes of evaluating the outcomes of this strategy and associated actions.

Indicator	Measure	Source
Material circularity	Increase proportion of recycled content products/materials in capital projects	Capital works project-based reporting
	Increase reuse of products/materials in major capital works/building projects	
	Number of buildings renewed vs demolished	
Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions	Reduction in direct GHG emissions from landfill	Municipal solid waste data
	Low embodied carbon materials used in capital works/building projects	Capital works project reporting
Waste diversion	Divert 80% of waste from landfill by 2030	Municipal solid waste data
Total waste per capita	Cut total waste generation (across all 4 bins) by 15% per capita by 2030	Municipal solid waste data
Contamination and resource loss in kerbside bins	Reduce contamination in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- mixed recycling by 10%</li> <li>- FOGO and glass recycling by 2%</li> </ul> and Reduce occurrence of resource loss in general rubbish stream by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 10% for food and garden waste</li> <li>- 5% for mixed recycling and glass</li> </ul> (from 2021 baseline)	Municipal solid waste data Kerbside audit data Recycle Right bin inspection data
Community awareness	Increase in community participation in circular behaviours (repairing, repurposing etc) from 2025 baseline (TBD)	Sustainability Victoria, Annual State of Sustainability Report
	Increase in community awareness of the term 'circular economy' from 2025 baseline (TBD)	
Access to local circular services / opportunities	Increase or expansion of services / programs in Merri-bek that enable circular behaviours (e.g. tool libraries, repair cafes, food swaps)	Council monitoring
Advocacy outcomes	State or federal policy change that fully (or partially) delivers on advocacy priorities	Council monitoring

## 7. Glossary

**Circular economy:** a model of production and consumption that promotes the sustainable and efficient use of resources to achieve social, economic and environmental outcomes. It shifts away from the current 'take, make, waste' linear approach to one where products are designed to be reused, repaired, refurbished and recycled. It aims to create a closed-loop system where materials are continuously circulated and repurposed rather than being discarded as waste.

**Contamination:** any item that is not allowed in the mixed recycling bin, glass recycling bin or food and garden organics bin and/or any item that cannot be recovered at a recycling or composting facility.

**Critical minerals:** are metallic or non-metallic elements found in the earth that are essential for modern technologies, economies, or national security, with a high risk of supply chain disruptions.

**Embodied emissions (embodied carbon):** all greenhouse gas emissions that are released as part of making a product for use. This is also referred to as 'embodied carbon'.

**Environmentally sustainable procurement:** aims to achieve value for money while minimising environmental impacts such as climate change, biodiversity loss, waste, and pollution. This involves selecting goods and services that have the most positive environmental impact throughout their entire lifecycle.

**Environmental footprint (ecological footprint):** measures the impact of human activities on the environment, quantifying the resources consumed and waste generated, often expressed as the amount of land and water needed to support those activities.

**Greenhouse gas emissions:** the release of certain gases, such as carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide, into the atmosphere that trap heat and contribute to the 'greenhouse effect', leading to global warming and climate change. While emissions can result from natural causes, they are primarily the result of human activities.

**Lifecycle assessment (LCA):** is a framework for evaluating the effects that a product has on the environment over the entire period of its life, including raw material extraction and processing, manufacture, distribution, use and end-of-life management.

**Linear economy:** a traditional 'take, make, waste' economic model where resources are extracted, used, made into products, used and then discarded as waste, often leading to resource depletion and environmental harm.

**Product-as-a-Service (PaaS):** is a business model where products are provided on a subscription or usage basis. PaaS is different to renting as it provides additional benefits to customers and as the company retains ownership across the entire product lifecycle, it is in their interest to produce a better product.

**Recycled content:** the proportion of recycled materials (both pre-consumer and post-consumer) used in a product, typically measured as a percentage of the total material used in a product.

**Supply chain:** is the network of all the individuals, companies, facilities, activities and technology involved in the creation, delivery and sale of a product. A supply chain encompasses everything from the supply of raw materials to the manufacturer through to its eventual delivery to the consumer.

**Sustainability:** meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

**Value chain:** the processes and activities involved in bringing a product or service from initial conception through to delivery to the consumer, this includes production, marketing, and the provision of after-sale services.

## 8. Appendix

### Current waste reduction programs

Through the delivery of the previous Waste and Litter Strategy and the Kerbside Waste Reform Project, Council has implemented a range of interventions and programs designed to increase the circularity of certain waste streams or materials through reuse or recycling, these include:

- **Weekly FOGO collection** – all households now have access to the weekly collection of [Food and Garden Organics](#) (FOGO) as part of the standard kerbside service. This will divert more organics from the waste to landfill stream, reducing waste and emissions.
- **Separated glass recycling collection** –all households now have access to monthly kerbside [glass recycling](#) collections or glass drop-off points for glass bottles and jars, as part of the standard kerbside service. This is providing clean glass for recycling and reducing contamination in the mixed recycling stream.
- **Compost Community program** - established in 2016, the [Compost Community](#) program subsidises home composting equipment and online education for successful composting and worm farming.
- **Reusable cloth nappy and period product subsidy** – established in 2022 the subsidy program for [reusable cloth nappies and period products](#) aims to encourage the uptake of reusables and help residents reduce disposable nappy and period product waste in the garbage stream.
- **Recycling Stations** - established in 2015 for the collection of household batteries, mercury-containing lamps, mobile phones and digital cameras, CDs and DVDs and tapes for recycling. [Recycling Stations](#) are available for residents at our 3 customer service centres.
- **Recycle Right program** – an education program established in 2009 to reduce contamination in the recycling and organics streams. The [Recycle Right](#) program provides 'at point of behaviour' information to residents on correct bin use and which items are accepted in each bin.
- **Drinking fountain installation** – as part of the Plastic Wise Policy implementation, 28 drinking fountains were installed at sports club over a 3 year period from 2020/21 to 2022/23.
- **Plastic Free Events** – 24 flagship Council run festivals have been delivered as 'Plastic Free' events since Plastic Wise Policy implementation began in 2019 including 6 major annual events - Sydney Road Street Party, Glenroy Festival, Fawkner Festa, Brunswick Music Festival, Carols by the Lake and Coburg Night Market. Many other smaller events such as park openings, sports open days and smaller ticketed events have also been 'Plastic Free'.
- **Reusable crockery and cutlery trial** – as part of the Plastic Wise Policy implementation, a trial of reusable cutlery and crockery commenced in 2023 at 3 community venues, Merlynston Progress Hall, Brunswick Town Hall and Coburg Town Hall.
- **Reusable coffee cups at Council events** – as part of the Plastic Wise Policy implementation, the use of reusable coffee cups at small community festivals was initiated in 2022 in partnership with [Green My Plate](#).
- **Support to businesses to reduce Single Use Plastics** – through distribution of online and printed resources, Responsible Cafes promotion, and the trial of Plastic Free Places program on Sydney Road.
- **Reusable Party Packs** – in 2023, packs containing reusable crockery and cutlery were made available to staff organising community events through Council's Open Space and Sustainable Communities Units, Oxygen Youth Centre and Glenroy Hub.

- **Garage Sale Trail** - the annual national [Garage Sale Trail](#) sees household and community garage sales over one weekend in November.
- **Eat it, don't bin it challenge** – tools and resources on the [Conversations Merri-bek](#) site to help residents reduce their food waste at home.
- **Waste education program** - free incursions for schools, Early Learning Centres (ELCs), kindergartens and community groups on a range of waste and recycling related topics. Council's [waste education program](#) has also included subsidised participation in the Resource Smart program for ELCs and professional development opportunities on sustainability for educators.
- **Online A-Z guide to waste and recycling** – a [Merri-bek website online guide](#) listing reuse, repair, recycling and disposal options for over 400 household items.

### **Circular economy advocacy asks**

Of the 80,000 households in Merri-bek, 72,000 receive the kerbside waste service from Council. Merri-bek has the ambitious goal of Zero Waste to Landfill by 2030.

We need mandatory national Product Stewardship Schemes to drive meaningful change around product design, manufacture, reuse and recycling, with producers taking responsibility for their products across their entire lifecycle, including collection. The responsibility shouldn't be on councils to collect and dispose of waste created by manufacturers. Ratepayers bear the cost of every additional product or stream added to the kerbside bin system. Adding additional items to the kerbside system increases the risks of confusion and contamination by service users, as well as adding costs to deliver the service.

Mandatory national minimum design and import standards are needed to ensure products are reusable and recyclable at end-of-life. Priority products include packaging, e-waste and batteries, soft plastics, textiles, and household chemicals.

Kerbside collections are a convenient way for end users to recycle or dispose of goods and materials, however adding products to kerbside bins results in additional collection, processing and contamination costs which are borne by council/ratepayers not the manufacturer.

Our specific advocacy asks include:

#### **That the Australian Government:**

- Expand mandatory end-of-life product stewardship schemes to include more products, e.g. packaging, soft plastics and e-waste
- Introduces mandatory national minimum product design and import standards to ensure goods are durable, reusable and recyclable at end-of-life
- Introduces policy measures to incentivise repair, refurbishment and the use of recycled content, for example through a tax on virgin resources
- Implements the labelling of carbon emissions on products.
- Introduces Right to Repair legislation and privileging of product reuse and repair in Extended Producer Responsibility Schemes

#### **That the Victorian Government:**

- Urgently invest waste levy funds to develop financially and environmentally sustainable waste management/resource recovery facilities and circular infrastructure in Victoria
- Urgently reinstate funding for the Detox your Home program, delivered by Sustainability Victoria, to ensure that there is a pathway for the safe disposal of hazardous household products and chemicals

- Introduce circular procurement targets for state government and support councils and businesses to do likewise.
- Introduce further bans for problematic products and materials (e.g. single use plastics, PFAS in compostable and fibre-based packaging)
- Revise the Good Practice Guidelines for Service Rates and Charges to include funding waste reduction/avoidance education, programs and services through the waste charge

## Circular economy frameworks

### The Butterfly Diagram by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation

There are many frameworks that can help to guide the inclusion of circular economy principles into the scope of projects, tenders and procurement. The [Ellen MacArthur Foundation](https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/) are leaders in circular economy thinking and have many resources and examples on their website illustrating how to enact the 3 fundamental principles of circular economy. The most famous of which is their circular economy systems diagram, also known as the butterfly diagram, shown below in Figure 7.

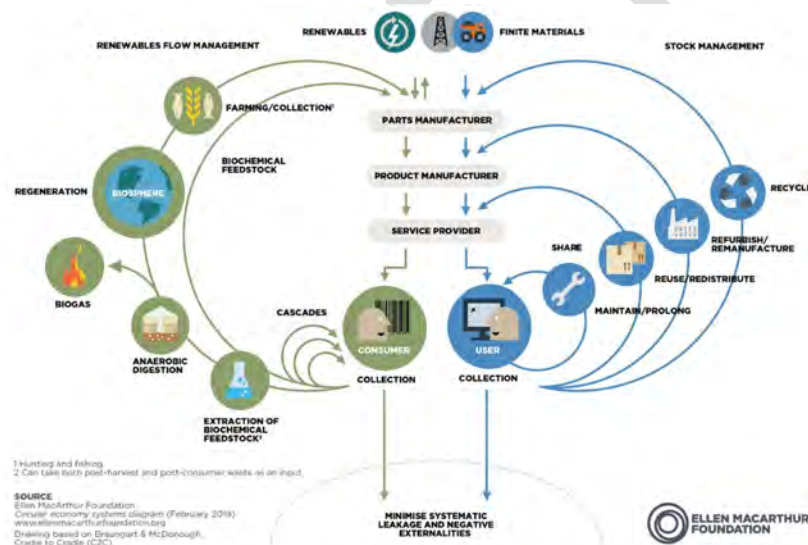


Figure 5: Circular economy systems diagram, Ellen MacArthur Foundation

### Levels of Circularity by Prof. Dr. Jacqueline Cramer

The Levels of Circularity by Prof. Dr. Jacqueline Cramer, provides a helpful guide to understanding how to incorporate circular economy principles across the lifecycle of products and materials. They have been adapted from the original 1970's waste hierarchy which included the 3 R's of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. This extended version includes Refuse, Reduce and Renew at the highest level, which aim to avoid creating waste in the design phase. In the consumption phase Reuse, Repair, Refurbishment, Remanufacture and Repurposing involve using products and materials for longer, ensuring they are kept circulating at their highest value. Recycle and Recover are end-of-life strategies aimed at recovering resources. Both landfill and incineration have no circular outcome as resources are permanently lost from the value chain at this point.



Figure 6: Levels of circularity by Prof. Dr. Jacqueline Cramer<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Source: Prof. Dr. Jacqueline Cramer, 2015, [Levels of Circularity: 10 R's, The Netherlands](#)





# Climate Emergency Action Plan

**Towards a zero carbon, zero waste  
and climate resilient Merri-bek  
2025 – 2030  
DRAFT (V2.0)**



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<inside front cover>

DRAFT

**Acknowledgements:**

Merri-bek City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional custodians of the land and waterways in the area now known as Merri-bek. We recognise their continuing connection to the land and community. We pay our respect to the Wurundjeri people, and to their Elders past, present and future, as well as to all First Nations people who significantly contribute to the life of the area.



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## **Merri-bek Council and community – responding together for a zero carbon, circular and climate resilient future**

We are creating a climate ready Merri-bek to ensure a safe, fair and resilient community. Acting on the climate and circular economy is an opportunity to innovate and create change. To improve our health, prevent pollution and save money for our community.

Climate change is a dangerous threat to earth's people, plants and animals. From the local to the global level, we need to transition away from fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) and transform our economies to conserve natural resources and regenerate nature.

Hotter weather, more extreme heatwaves, flash floods and loss of reliable seasonal rains are some of the climate impacts already hurting our people, economy and wildlife.

We are continuing to scale up our work with our community (including residents, community organisations and businesses), neighbouring councils and other levels of government to ensure an equitable, safe and sustainable future, where everyone can thrive, and no one is left behind.

Merri-bek City Council is proud to continue demonstrating leadership in local government climate action.

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**Over the past 5 years, together with our community, Council has made significant progress towards the community goals and Council targets we set when the first Zero Carbon Merri-bek Climate Emergency Action Plan was adopted in 2019. Visit [zerocarbonmerri-bek.org.au](https://zerocarbonmerri-bek.org.au) to find out what has been achieved so far.**

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Over the next five years we are scaling up our action, including by: dedicating funds to improve **active travel infrastructure around schools** (to complement our Ride & Stride behaviour change program); collaborating to **ensure low-income households are supported to be safe during extreme weather and avoid 'energy poverty'**; **optimising our kerbside waste services** to keep organic waste and other recyclable resources out of landfill; fostering an **increase in tree canopy on private land** to reduce community exposure to urban heat; and evolving our **delivery of city infrastructure to embed circularity principles and climate resilience from the start**.

Council will continue to partner and collaborate, including with the Melbourne 9 (M9) councils, the Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA), CERES Environment Park and others, to bring people together to learn, engage and act.

There is much we can do collectively at a local and regional level to reduce our carbon pollution and increase our ability to cope with the many impacts of a warmer and less stable climate.

Importantly, we can all play a role in demanding State and Federal Governments put in place key policies and programs to enable Merri-bek (and Australia) to undertake a 'fast and fair' transition to be zero carbon, circular (zero waste) and climate resilient.

By joining together to respond to the climate emergency and play our part in transforming our society and economy, we can help ensure our city and our planet is a place we can all enjoy.

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**We are committed to urgent and holistic climate action, with no-one left behind**

In 2018 Merri-bek City Council formally acknowledged that we are in a state of climate emergency that requires urgent action by all levels of government and society. Merri-bek has a long and proud history of leadership action on climate change and environmental sustainability.

As effective global action to limit warming to 1.5 degrees has continued to falter, we acknowledge the need to expand our focus beyond 'zero carbon' targets. Our plan reflects our commitment to cut greenhouse emissions, rethink our resource use and build community resilience to climate impacts. Importantly, we will be enacting our principles to 'facilitate a just and inclusive transition' and 'build cohesive, healthy and sustainable urban systems'.

We will be engaging more deeply to support harder to reach and at-risk community, as well as collaborating in our advocacy to State and Federal Government for urgent and effective policy and legislative reform.

We recognise that effective engagement and mobilisation of civil society and businesses in campaigning to demand emergency-mode action on climate change is critical. It is the foundation for the 'political will' required to prioritise action for a safe climate above the vested interests of the fossil fuel lobby. We aim to play our part in moving beyond an incremental approach to transitioning our society.

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Council is committed to being a local government leader in addressing the climate emergency. Also, Victorian legislation designates certain climate change accountabilities to all local governments. The Local Government Act 2020 S. 9(2)(c) states 'the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted'. Additionally, the Victorian Climate Change Act 2017 explicitly states that climate change decisions should be based on the Act's guiding principles including being evidence-based, integrated and equitable; and, that councils are required to 'have regard to climate change' when preparing a municipal public health and wellbeing plan (MPHWP).

## **Our shared vision for a climate ready Merri-bek**

### **Zero Carbon – Circular (Zero Waste) – Climate Resilient**

The vision statements for Merri-bek draw on our Zero Carbon Merri-bek – 2040 Framework, our subsequent Climate Risk Strategy and our new Circular Economy Strategy. They express what a zero carbon, circular and climate resilient Merri-bek might look like.

#### **Energy Transition - Efficient and 100% renewably powered energy:**

- The buildings we live and work in are highly energy efficient - well insulated and built or retrofitted for comfort
- Homes and businesses are powered only by electricity, following a supported phase-out of gas
- Many households and businesses generate, store and export renewable electricity locally
- The national grid is powered by 100% renewable energy
- Many residents and businesses are proactive and engaged energy users and help to manage demand by smart use of electricity and local storage
- Energy is often generated and traded at a community level, so everyone can access local, renewable energy even if they cannot produce it on their home.

#### **Sustainable Transport - Active and zero emissions transport:**

- Most people choose to walk or cycle to get around locally because its healthy, free, safe and convenient
- Merri-bek is known for its pedestrian and cycle-friendly streetscapes – Streets for People
- Many residents work, play and access services close to home, in neighbourhoods designed to prioritise people
- Renewable-powered buses, trams and trains provide a quick, reliable and affordable way to travel
- Use of electric 'car/ride share' services complement active travel and public transport options, helping to reduce private vehicle ownership
- Low rates of private car ownership have seen car parks converted to green and public open spaces
- Clean and quiet freight trucks (fuelled by hydrogen or electricity generated by renewable sources) complement 'last mile' freight delivery by bikes, electric scooters and vans.

#### **Waste and consumption - Circular economy with zero waste:**

- Households and businesses avoid generating waste (and save money!)
- A 'conscious consumer' mindset is the norm and waste is seen as a resource. Consumption (and therefore waste) is reduced as the community reduces what it purchases, then reuses, repairs, repurposes, recycles, and buys recycled
- Many people enjoy local, seasonal and plant-based diets, while minimising food waste
- Local reuse, repair, exchange, share and recycling groups and services are thriving
- Local businesses prosper by creating or providing sustainable goods and services that enable the circular economy
- Many products are made from recycled materials and are easy to repair, remanufacture or recycle in Australia
- All unavoidable organic waste is composted or processed to create other useful products (such as mulch, compost, biogas, biochar).

**Socially just and climate resilient – No-one left behind:**

- Merri-bek is climate-resilient, leafy and liveable, using water and vegetation in the landscape to combat the urban heat island effect.
- The Merri-bek community is climate-ready and resilient with no one left behind. They are aware of climate-related impacts that may affect them and actions they can take to improve their resilience.
- The Merri-bek community is connected, collaborating, and supporting each other by sharing information and providing mutual support in preparing for, responding to climate-related shocks and emergencies.
- Council works with partners and provides appropriate support to Merri-bek residents and community, especially at-risk groups, to empower them in proactively adapting to climate change and building resilience

**Council as role model – zero carbon, circular and climate resilient**

- Merri-bek City Council is a recognised local government leader in acting on the climate emergency, consistently 'walking the talk' on zero carbon, zero waste (circularity) and climate resilience.
- Council's climate action is adaptive, collaborative and impactful, seeking transformation for a safe and just climate future for all.

### About this Action Plan for 2025-26 – 2029-30

This Action Plan brings together elements of our Zero Carbon Merri-bek 2040 Framework, our draft Circular Economy Strategy (2025) and our Climate Risk Strategy (2022), to act in an integrated way. It will guide our action over the next five years to:

- continue **reducing climate pollution** from Council and our community ('Zero Carbon')
- scale up our action to **foster a more circular economy**, where waste and pollution is designed out, materials keep circulating and nature is regenerated ('Zero Waste/Circular'); and
- **foster climate resilience** within our community and city ('Climate Resilient').

**Merri-bek's biggest direct sources of climate pollution are energy consumption** (coal & gas fired electricity 36% and fossil gas 26%), **transport** (23%) and landfilled organic **waste** (6%) (as estimated by Snapshot for 2022/23). So the Action Plan summarises key activities to influence and reduce community-wide greenhouse gas emissions across Energy, Transport and Waste sectors.

To reflect the vision and principles in our draft Circular Economy Strategy, **the Action Plan includes more explicit focus on tackling the 'embodied carbon' within all the goods and resources imported and used in Merri-bek**. We will strive to foster a 'conscious consumer' mindset through education and behaviour change initiatives and encouraging adoption of circular business models in our local economy. Our biggest potential impact to reduce embodied carbon is likely to be through **a new strategic direction of 'Council as Role Model'**. This recognises the importance of Council using its purchasing power to lead by example. Especially through delivery of our building and infrastructure projects (which can consider renewal instead of demolition and rebuild, and use more recycled, natural and low-carbon materials) to influence our supply chains and inspire our community, local developers and other councils to follow our lead.

Council has made progress in establishing corporate and governance systems to manage climate risk in Merri-bek. We have developed a better understanding of how climate change is already impacting our health and wellbeing and the places we love.

More extreme weather and rising energy costs are leaving many community members more exposed and vulnerable. This is especially evident in low-income households who are disproportionately affected by rising energy prices. Despite some changes in federal and state policies there has been little progress in ensuring that all members of our community are protected from climate impacts and can benefit from the energy transition.

Through this next Action Plan, **we aspire to support the resilience, health, and wellbeing of our diverse community**. We will also work to improve the climate resilience of community spaces, homes and buildings, nature and open spaces, so that we can continue to enjoy the many benefits they provide. The climate resilience actions are reflected under the new strategic directions 'Socially just and climate resilient transition' and 'Council as Role Model'.

## Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 – 2030 – Summary ‘Plan on a Page’

Towards a zero carbon, circular (zero waste) and climate resilient Merri-bek

Strategic directions	Towards a zero carbon, circular (zero waste) and climate resilient Merri-bek			
	Socially just and climate resilient transition: No one left behind	Energy Transition: Efficient and 100% renewably powered energy	Sustainable transport: Active or zero emissions transport	Waste and consumption: Circular economy with zero waste
Key action priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programs and funding to ensure <b>low-income and at-risk residents are not left behind</b></li> <li><b>Communicate, engage, and collaborate with our diverse community</b></li> <li>Collaborate to get <b>more shade trees in backyards, schools, retirement villages</b></li> <li>Progress ‘<b>resilience hubs</b>’ model in at-risk neighbourhood(s)</li> <li>Foster a heat aware community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Promote and facilitate household energy transition</b> (energy efficiency, renewables, storage)</li> <li><b>Energy innovation and partnerships</b> (distributed storage, vehicle to grid)</li> <li>Targeted initiatives to foster <b>energy transition by businesses</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>School active travel</b> (Ride &amp; Stride, Open Streets, infrastructure improvements)</li> <li>Targeted programs and incentives to <b>increase adoption of low and zero emissions travel</b> by our diverse community</li> <li>Facilitating EV charging network</li> <li>Creating a more <b>walking and cycling friendly city</b> through holistic infrastructure and community activation (Streets for People Plan and Moving around Merri-bek Strategy)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Education and behaviour change</b> (reduce waste/plastic, recycle right, rethink consumption)</li> <li>Efficient and <b>high-performance kerbside services</b></li> <li>Tailored services to reduce <b>food and packaging waste from businesses and multi-unit developments</b></li> <li>Foster <b>circular economy opportunities and outcomes</b> for and by businesses, social enterprises and community.</li> </ul>
	<b>Council as role model - creating a zero carbon, circular and climate resilient city</b>			
	<b>Leading by example in our city planning, Council buildings, infrastructure and fleet, operations, services, advocacy and climate governance</b>			



## About our goals for 2030

Recognising the existential threat that climate change and ecological breakdown pose to communities here and across the globe, Council has adopted ambitious goals. These goals reflect our strategic objective 'to strive for maximum protection of people's health, plants and animals through leading the urgent response to the climate emergency and a regeneration of our natural environment' (Council Plan 2021-25).

**Because Council cannot 'control' many of the sources of emissions, waste and pollution within our municipality, we are inviting everyone: individuals, community groups, schools, businesses and not-for-profit organisations, to plan and act – within their sphere of control and influence – to reduce carbon emissions and waste generation and increase their climate readiness.**

Across the five strategic directions in the Action Plan, there are sub-goals for Community and Council to strive to achieve by 2030.

- **Community 2030 goals — we invite everyone to adopt and help achieve these goals** - these reflect desired outcomes from our collective action, including actions by residents, businesses and all levels of government. We invite all individuals and levels of government to adopt the 2030 community goals and play their part in achieving them.
- **Council 2030 goals – we will strive to achieve these goals** - these are tangible outcomes from actions and programs that are within the control of Council. Achievement of these goals will depend on annual resource allocation to deliver planned actions and initiatives. Many of these goals are associated with Council acting as a 'role model' and achieving them will directly contribute towards realising the broader Community goals.

**It is our goal for Merri-bek (municipality) to achieve 75% emissions reduction by 2030** (against 2011/12 baseline), net zero by 2035 and drawdown ('negative emissions') by 2040. While significant progress has been made, based on our latest emissions profile (see Snapshot, 2022/23) we are tracking 'behind target' with emissions down 30% since 2011/12. We need everyone to accelerate the transition towards 'all electric buildings' (powered by renewables), active and zero emissions transport and zero waste.

**We also have the aspiration for Merri-bek to achieve zero waste to landfill.** By 2030, through greater investment in Victoria's waste and recycling sector and 'recycling right' by our community, it's a community goal to increase the diversion rate of kerbside bin waste away from landfill to 80%, without relying on waste to energy.

Council also has a highly ambitious target **to reduce Council's (corporate/operational) greenhouse gas emissions by 80 – 100% by 2030** (precluding offsets, against 2011/12 baseline). Council's electricity use is 100% renewably powered (zero emissions) so action to reduce Council's remaining direct emissions is focused on switching our vehicle fleet to zero emissions technologies and transitioning off gas in our buildings.

We also aim **to ensure that Merri-bek residents have access to relevant and appropriate information and support from Council to take meaningful action to adapt and build resilience to climate change.** Achieving climate adaptation outcomes requires a strong partnership between residents and the Council, where Council provides information and support, while success depends on community participation and action.

To achieve our vision of a zero carbon, circular and climate resilient Merri-bek we need to expand our advocacy and collaboration with others. We must continue building the social movement required to transform our lifestyles, our economy and our politics to recognise and address the climate emergency. State and Federal Governments control many potential policy and funding levers that must be enacted for Merri-bek (and Australia) to achieve our objective of 'maximum protection of people's health, plants and animals'.



## Supporting a socially just and climate resilient transition

### Community 2030 goals - we invite everyone to adopt and help achieve these goals:

- **Our community is informed and resilient** – Our diverse residents are more informed about local environment and climate issues and are supported to take climate action and build their resilience to climate impacts.
- **An inclusive energy transition** - All residents benefit from the energy transition with comfortable and resilient homes and can pay their energy bills.

### Council 2030 goals– we will strive to deliver on these goals:

- **An inclusive energy transition** – tailored support has helped at least 1,000 at-risk households to lower their energy bills and improve the thermal comfort of their homes.

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
1.1	Explore opportunities for partnership on climate and circular economy as part of Merri-bek's Statement of Commitment with the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in Merri-bek.	Our vision as a Council for reconciliation is respectful and inclusive recognition of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Merri-bek. To build stronger relationships we will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate with other councils a coordinated approach and support for WWCHAC to work with Councils on climate.</li> <li>• Resource engagement with WWCHAC and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in Merri-bek on climate and circular economy.</li> <li>• Support Ballerit Mooroop's potential as a showcase of climate resilience.</li> </ul>	Lead: Sustainability & Climate Branch WWCHAC  Other councils on Wurundjeri Country	Engagement within existing operating budgets.
1.2	Advocate for systemic changes to enable a socially just and climate resilient Merri-bek	Strategic and collaborative campaigns and partnerships to influence all levels of government. Key advocacy asks include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in place-based programs and infrastructure upgrades to increase local community resilience to climate impacts.</li> </ul>	Lead: Sustainability and Climate Branch  M9, NAGA, Victorian	Within existing operating budgets.

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support and fund energy upgrades programs and subsidies for at-risk households and partner with local government to deliver targeted local outreach.</li> </ul> <p>Refer to Appendix 1 for high priority 'advocacy asks' of State and Federal Governments.</p>	Greenhouse Alliances, CASBE, MAV, Climate Emergency Australia, VCOSS, ACOSS, Renew Australia for All, 1 Million Homes Alliance.	
1.3	Communicate and engage with our diverse community on the climate emergency and circular economy	<p>Continue with general communications on the climate emergency and circular economy for residents, businesses and community organisations, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing engaging information, showcasing community action and ensuring information reaches at-risk members of the community.</li> <li>Activities such as the Zero Carbon Merri-bek website, monthly e-newsletter, webinars, videos and events and Council communications channels.</li> <li>Profiling and promoting diverse leaders in the community to inspire and influence.</li> </ul>	Lead: Sustainable Communities Unit	Within existing operating budget.
1.4	Evolve and expand responsive and evidence-based programs and initiatives to ensure disadvantaged and/or at-risk residents are not left behind.	<p>Higher energy prices and poor performing homes are creating energy stress and exacerbating risks from extreme weather, particularly for at-risk or disadvantaged households. Many at-risk households do not have the capacity or the funds to support upgrades to their homes. In response, Council will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to deliver and evolve a program of subsidised energy and solar upgrades for low-income households.</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: Sustainable Communities Unit</p> <p>Other Local Governments/ Greenhouse Alliances</p> <p>State and/or federal government and</p>	Within operating project budget (pending confirmation of draft Council Budget 2025-26).

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with potential collaborators on key aspects such as program review, refinement, joint procurement and cross promotion.</li> <li>Explore ways to secure long-term funding for supporting at-risk households in the energy transition.</li> </ul>	associated agencies	
1.5	Undertake place-based community outreach and engagement to meet community interest and needs	<p>Building on the success of the pilot project undertaken in Fawkner, continue with place-based activities and expand to other areas in Merri-bek's north. Activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-design engagement with diverse local groups and residents to meet community interest and needs.</li> <li>Visit active community groups to share Council sustainability programs and services.</li> <li>Recruit and support volunteer working group of local leaders to provide guidance.</li> <li>Conduct events and programs identified through the co-design process.</li> </ul>	Lead: Sustainable Communities Unit	<p>Within existing operating budget to June 2026.</p> <p>Subject to business case / grant funding from July 2026.</p>
1.6	Build the capacity of residents and community groups to take action	<p>Build community capacity and resilience of residents and community groups to act in the community and to inspire and support others. To be achieved with engaging programs such as further roll-out of The Adaptation Game, skills workshops, scholarships and community grants.</p> <p>Explore ways to support partnerships with community groups on local climate and circular economy.</p>	<p>Lead: Sustainable Communities Unit</p> <p>Community groups</p>	Within existing operating budget.
1.7	Investigate and (where viable) implement, methods for creating sustainable funding to build and strengthen the Merri-bek	Council will look at reducing barriers to participation in the journey to 100% renewable energy and supporting community members to improve their climate resilience, with a focus on disadvantaged and at-risk residents. Council will investigate sustainable forms of funding streams (both internally and externally) such as:	Lead: Sustainable Communities Unit	Investigations within existing operating budget.

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
	community's energy and climate resilience, and address energy inequity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long term Council funding;</li> <li>Community funds;</li> <li>Revenue making activities;</li> <li>State and federal funding mechanisms; and</li> <li>Green bonds and/or private investment/ philanthropy.</li> </ul>		
1.8	Reduce impacts of urban heat and increasing heatwaves by collaborating to get more shade trees in places like schools, retirement villages, and backyards.	<p>Planting trees is the most effective way to combat urban heat. We will focus on places used by groups that are at risk from extreme heat such as older people and young children. To do this, Urban Forest and Sustainability teams will work together to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-design the program and identify required resources.</li> <li>Raise awareness of the right trees for right spaces and that risks from trees can be reduced by correct tree selection.</li> <li>Promote custodianship and maintenance of trees for the future.</li> <li>Trial a partnership with a school or retirement village to plant trees and vegetation for cooling, then expand if successful.</li> <li>Explore local partnerships to support shade tree planting in household gardens.</li> </ul>	Lead: Sustainability and Climate on program design and community engagement	<p>Design within existing operating budgets.</p> <p>Implementation subject to business case / grant funding.</p>
1.9	Explore and progress 'Resilient Neighbourhood Hub' model in an at-risk neighbourhood	<p>To support community resilience through strengths-based and place-based approaches, we will design and deliver a Resilient Neighbourhood Hub model in Fawkner. To do this, we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with our Community Development and Social Policy team and others to establish a partnership model with social service providers and community groups in the area.</li> <li>Identify priority buildings for upgrading or retrofitting to be more climate resilient and implement works in partnership with our Capital Works Planning and Delivery teams.</li> </ul>	Lead: Sustainability and Climate Branch	Subject to grant funding

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Support and fund climate resilience programs led by community partners.</li></ul>		

## Energy Transition: Towards efficient and 100% renewably powered energy

### Community 2030 goals - we invite everyone to adopt and help achieve these goals:

- **Community solar capacity** - Combined solar capacity across Merri-bek's residents and businesses has increased to 250MW up from 2024 levels of 77.8MW
- **Community solar penetration** – At least 25% of Merri-bek households (up from 13.5%) and 20% of businesses (up from 11%) have rooftop solar PV.
- **Energy storage** – the amount of energy storage (in batteries) within Merri-bek has risen from 3.1MWh capacity in 2024 to at least 6.2MWh by 2030, helping to maximise the usage of local rooftop solar.
- **Decreased gas use** – With new rules preventing gas connections into new homes, combined with the growing understanding of the benefits of electrification, the Merri-bek community's fossil gas consumption has reduced by 25% from its 2022-23 levels.

### Council 2030 goals – we will strive to deliver on these goals:

- **An energy-efficient and electrified Merri-bek** – Council has assisted at least 3,000 homes and/or businesses in transitioning to energy efficient and all-electric operations in their homes/ premises.

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
2.1	Advocate for systemic changes to accelerate the energy transition	Strategic and collaborative campaigns and partnerships to influence all levels of government. Key advocacy asks include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phasing out of gas appliances from new and existing homes for residents to benefit from the health, safety and bills savings benefits of all electric homes.</li> <li>• Mandatory disclosure of energy performance of residential properties at point of sale and lease.</li> </ul> Refer to Appendix 1 for high priority 'advocacy asks' of State and Federal Governments.	Lead: Sustainability and Climate Branch. M9, NAGA, Victorian Greenhouse Alliances, CASBE, MAV, ALGA, Climate Emergency Australia, VCOSS, ACOS, Renew Australia for All, 1 Million Homes Alliance.	Within existing operating budgets.

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
2.2	Promote and support household 'energy transition' (efficient, all electric, renewable, thermally comfortable and healthy) with targeted programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide residents with information, tools and clear pathways to make their homes energy efficient, electric and powered by renewables. Connect residents with rebates and programs delivered by state and federal governments. Tailored program for different community cohorts such as renters and landlords.</li> <li>• Continue to conduct the evidence-based electrification communications campaigns to support households to transition off gas for heating, cooking and hot water.</li> <li>• Encourage households to shift their energy use (such as appliances) to during the day when energy tariffs are lower and for solar households to maximise energy savings by using their own clean energy.</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: Sustainable Communities Unit</p> <p>SECV, Solar Savers/ other local governments, service providers, Research Institutions.</p>	Within existing operating budgets.
2.3	Investigate and implement innovative approaches that can deliver energy solutions at the community-scale.	<p>With increasing local solar energy generation and battery storage, as well as changes to how electricity is used, there may be significant opportunities to maximise benefits for the broader community, as well as solar and battery owners. Council will investigate and, where viable, enable opportunities that might work for our community, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting and/or piloting viable consumer energy resource interventions (e.g. virtual power plants and electric vehicles as storage solutions) so individuals and groups can actively participate in energy systems and markets.</li> <li>• Residential or commercial demand response programs to incentivise shifts in energy usage patterns.</li> <li>• Distributed energy storage via grant funded community and/or neighbourhood batteries (e.g. Brunswick Community Battery) and projects delivered by partners like electricity distributors.</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: Sustainable Communities Unit</p> <p>Electricity distributors, local service providers, energy businesses and community groups, other local governments and Victorian Greenhouse Alliances</p>	<p>Investigations within existing operating / capital budgets.</p> <p>Implementation may be subject to business case / grant funding.</p>

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
2.4	Continue collaboration to support residents / owners of existing apartments to transition to be energy efficient, electric, powered by renewables and resilient	<p>48% of Merri-bek households live in medium and high-density housing. Building on Council's Unlocking Sustainable Strata project, we'll continue partnering with others to help overcome the extra barriers to energy transition within existing apartments. Activities likely to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host or support events that provide information and peer-to-peer sharing of how apartment residents, owners and managers can make their buildings more sustainable.</li> <li>• Collaborate and seek funding to enable apartment energy upgrade research. Case study strata building communities receive end-to-end support through the full upgrade cycle over multiple years. Experiences generate insights, case studies, support materials, and events which enable other buildings to follow in their footsteps and improve legislation.</li> <li>• Advocate for enabling legislation including changes to the Victorian Owners Corporation Act to make it easier for energy upgrades to occur.</li> </ul>	Lead: Sustainable Communities, in collaboration with other Local Governments with substantial Strata populations, research institutions, state and federal governments, and relevant strata associations	<p>Ad-hoc opportunities within existing operating budgets.</p> <p>Substantive new initiatives would require grant funding.</p>
2.5	Provide information and support to Merri-bek businesses to be energy efficient and renewably powered	<p>Merri-bek's commercial and industrial businesses may require specific responses to assist them in being part of the energy transition, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information and access to energy upgrades advice, programs or incentives for energy efficiency and renewables in existing commercial buildings and businesses.</li> <li>• Opportunities to upskill and evolve their services to align with the energy transition (e.g. plumbers, electricians etc).</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: Economic Development with support from Sustainability &amp; Climate</p> <p>State / Federal Government</p> <p>Industry associations</p>	<p>Ad-hoc opportunities within existing operating budgets.</p> <p>New support programs/ initiatives subject to business case / grant funding.</p>



Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
2.6	Work with strategic partners that can assist in delivering outcomes of emissions reductions and community benefits as part of the energy transition	<p>Recognising that Council cannot deliver on its ambitious goals by itself, Merri-bek will continue to work with existing stakeholders and create new relationships to meaningfully impact Merri-bek's transition to 100% renewable energy. Such opportunities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote and improve existing program/s - both Council initiated and those conducted by external partners, to extend reach and effectiveness of programs.</li> <li>• Collaborate on new initiatives and innovations/ opportunities.</li> <li>• Represent the Merri-bek community on key stakeholder and reference groups.</li> <li>• Investigate and explore ways that external funding (state, federal or private sector) can be unlocked.</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: Sustainability &amp; Climate Branch</p> <p>Electricity distributors, Local, State and federal governments, government agencies, Not for Profits, solution providers and suppliers, local businesses</p>	Within existing operating budget.

## Sustainable Transport: Towards active or zero emissions transport

### Community 2030 goals - we invite everyone to adopt and help achieve these goals:

- **More active & sustainable local trips** – More people of all ages and abilities are moving around Merri-bek actively and sustainably, with less residents relying on private cars for local journeys.
- **Healthy and safe school commutes** – Merri-bek schools engaged in the Ride & Stride program are averaging 80% of school trips by bike, scooter, walking or public transport.
- **Electric Vehicle (EV) charging network** – publicly accessible EV charging infrastructure in Merri-bek has expanded, to achieve a ratio of 17:1 EVs to public charging bays (including Council-owned, privately owned and pole-mounted chargers).
- **Better Public Transport** – responding to priority advocacy asks, the state government has approved delivery of the duplication and extension of the Upfield train line and roll-out of accessible tram stops along Sydney Road.

### Council 2030 goals – we will strive to deliver on these goals:

- **Streets for People network** – Council has delivered holistic upgrades within 10 corridors across the Streets for People network.
- **Ride & Stride infrastructure** – Council has delivered active travel infrastructure improvements for at least half of schools actively engaged in the Ride & Stride behaviour change program, to foster safe and healthy school precincts.

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
3.1	Advocate for systemic changes to support active and zero emissions travel.	Strategic and collaborative campaigns and partnerships to influence all levels of government. Key advocacy asks include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duplication and extension of the Upfield train line to Wallan</li> <li>• Accelerated roll-out of accessible tram stops, with a priority on Sydney Road.</li> </ul> Refer to Appendix 1 for high priority 'advocacy asks' of State and Federal Governments.	Lead: Transport Branch  Northern Councils Alliance Community advocates	Withing existing operating budgets.
3.2	Implement Moving Around Merri-bek Strategy and Action Plan	The Moving around Merri-bek Strategy outlines Council's approach to deliver a transport system in Merri-bek that is Safe, Accessible, Sustainable, Healthy, Liveable and Inclusive.	Lead: Transport Branch	Within existing operating and capital budgets.

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
		<p>Strategic activities required to support achievement of this plan's 2030 goals for sustainable transport include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commence delivery of Streets for People corridors</li> <li>• Deliver infrastructure to support active travel to schools</li> <li>• Invest in strategic improvements to the Pedestrian Network</li> <li>• Expand and improve our Cycling Network</li> <li>• Deliver more bike parking &amp; bike behaviour change programs</li> <li>• Support shared and micro-mobility</li> <li>• Roll out safer speed limits</li> <li>• Support expansion of car share services.</li> </ul>		
3.3	<b>Deliver the Ride &amp; Stride behaviour change program together with priority infrastructure upgrades around schools, to foster safe and active travel to and from school</b>	<p>Build on the Ride &amp; Stride behaviour change program by integrating dedicated funding for capital infrastructure in Merri-bek school zones. Continue to deliver and scale our innovative, holistic and collaborative interventions with engaged Ride &amp; Stride primary schools.</p> <p>Behaviour change offers to schools include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistance with trialling or establishing Open Streets</li> <li>• Education / skills training in bike riding, road safety and bike maintenance</li> <li>• Subsidies or other supports encouraging parents to switch to active transport for school commutes</li> </ul> <p>Priority infrastructure improvements within selected school precincts could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safer school crossings</li> <li>• Designated school zone asphalt treatments</li> <li>• Lower speed limits</li> <li>• Modal filters</li> <li>• Tactical urbanism treatments – e.g. asphalt art, planter boxes, street furniture</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: Sustainability &amp; Climate Branch with Transport Branch</p> <p>Local Primary and High Schools</p> <p>Local community bike shops, organisations and advocacy groups</p> <p>Relevant State departments/agencies</p>	<p>Within existing operating (Sustainable Communities) and capital (Transport) budgets.</p>

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
		Investigate opportunities to integrate the Ride & Stride program with high schools, kindergartens and childcare centres as the program continues to scale.		
3.4	Design and deliver innovative programs and initiatives to support active travel by people with additional barriers (e.g. low-income, CALD, women/gender diverse).	<p>To foster transport equity, continue to design and deliver active travel initiatives for residents facing additional or intersectional transport barriers, including by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wheel Sisters - providing tailored bike skills capacity building for women (especially culturally and linguistically diverse women) in Merri-bek's north.</li> <li>• Expanding free community e-bike libraries with local community centres.</li> <li>• Exploring / trialling subsidies for purchase or loan of e-bikes to overcome upfront cost as barrier to active travel, particularly for those on lower incomes.</li> <li>• Building on the success of bike maintenance classes for women and non-binary folks, with further initiatives to encourage more women in our community to feel safe and confident to ride.</li> <li>• Exploring opportunities to support older people, people with disabilities, or other mobility impaired residents to participate safely in active travel.</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: Sustainability and Climate Branch</p> <p>Local community centres, such as Neighbourhood Houses, Libraries, Leisure centres, etc</p> <p>Local advocacy groups, such as Merri-bek BUG, Walk on Merri-bek, CERES Bike Shed.</p>	Within existing operating budgets.
3.5	Support the expansion of publicly accessible Electric Vehicle (EV) charging network across Merri-bek and beyond	<p>Lack of convenient access to EV charging infrastructure should not be a barrier to purchase of an EV. Council will continue to expand the network of renewably powered public charging stations through a combination of Council-installed charging stations and licencing parking bays to charging operators. Council will also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help facilitate the roll out of on-street EV charging options (e.g. pole-mounted chargers) in denser neighbourhoods, to serve EV owners without off-street parking.</li> <li>• Promote EV charging infrastructure within or adjacent to new private developments through the planning process and advocacy.</li> <li>• Collaborate with 'car share' businesses to accelerate their transition to electric vehicles.</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: Sustainability and Climate Branch</p> <p>Department of Transport, VicRoads, Electricity distributors</p> <p>Car share operators</p> <p>Other councils</p>	Within existing capital and operating budgets.

## Waste and Consumption: Towards a circular economy with zero waste

### Community 2030 goals - we invite everyone to adopt and help achieve these goals:

- **Waste avoidance** – Cut total waste generation (across all 4 kerbside bins) by 15% per capita (against 2021 audit baseline)
- **Organic waste recovery** – Halve the amount of organic material (FOGO) going to landfill (against 2021 audit baseline)
- **Resource recovery** – Increase diversion of kerbside bin waste from landfill to 80%, without reliance on thermal Waste to Energy (WtE). In 2023/24 Merri-bek's landfill diversion rate was 53%, the achievement of 80% diversion will require optimal 'source separation' by residents and business service users, as well as government/waste sector investment in resource recovery (e.g. for soft plastics, compostable packaging etc).
- **Circular economy participation / accessibility** - More community participation (e.g. in buying/selling second-hand, repairing, leasing, borrowing etc) and more local circular initiatives being offered by community groups, businesses and not-for-profits.

### Council 2030 goals – we will strive to deliver on these goals:

- **Optimised kerbside waste and recycling services** – A cost effective service with lower contamination and resource loss in kerbside bins (compared to 2021 audit baseline), achieved through service reforms together with waste education and compliance programs.

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
4.1	Advocating for system change (Circular Economy Strategy Focus Area 1)	<p>Our new Circular Economy Strategy recognises that the transition to a circular economy requires system-wide change to address the economic, environmental and social costs of the linear system of production and consumption. To reflect the principles of a circular economy, these system changes must: design out waste and pollution; keep products and materials circulating at their highest value; and regenerate nature. Council's advocacy to state and federal governments will push for high priority reforms including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robust and mandatory whole-of-life product stewardship schemes for more products</li> <li>• Mandatory national minimum product design and import standards to ensure goods are durable, reusable and recyclable at end-of-life.</li> </ul> <p>Refer to Appendix 1 for high priority 'advocacy asks' of State and Federal Governments.</p>	<p>Lead: Sustainable Communities Unit M9</p> <p>Waste Management &amp; Resource Recovery Association Australia (WMRR)</p>	Within existing operating budgets.

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
4.2	<b>Circular economy programs and support for community (education and behaviour change for waste avoidance)</b> (Circular Economy Strategy Focus Area 2)	<p>Deliver community engagement and behaviour change initiatives to promote and incentivise community adoption of circular economy practices. Priority activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue provision of recycling stations at Customer Service Centres for hard to recycle and/or hazardous waste</li> <li>• Continue providing subsidies for purchase of home composting equipment, reusable cloth nappies and period products, and consider program expansion to include incontinence products and/or buy-back for second-hand nappies.</li> <li>• Continue to support sustainability/waste education within schools and early learning centres</li> <li>• Promote, support, develop programs to increase community use of reusable products instead of single use disposables at Council facilities e.g. crockery, cutlery and coffee cups</li> <li>• Deliver targeted educational workshops, programs and events on key topics/behaviours e.g. cloth nappies (promoted through Maternal and Child Health), zero waste cooking with cultural groups, home composting, clothes mending/repurposing, food waste avoidance</li> <li>• Promote, support and normalise available platforms, programs and initiatives that increase participation in the circular economy e.g. libraries-of-things, repair cafes, garage sales / second-hand markets or shops, swap events</li> <li>• Develop a directory, map or guide to zero-waste living in Merri-bek with information on where to find circular products and services</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: Sustainable Communities Unit</p> <p>CERES</p> <p>Sustainability Victoria</p> <p>Recycling Victoria</p> <p>Community organisations and social enterprises</p>	<p>Within existing operating project budget for 2025/26.</p> <p>Subject to business case / funding from 2026/27 onwards.</p>

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
4.3	Optimised kerbside waste and recycling services, and community education  (Circular Economy Strategy Focus Area 3)	<p>Continue to reform our kerbside waste collection services to maximise recycling and reuse, and to equitably and cost effectively meet the needs of residents and businesses. Priority activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trial fortnightly rubbish collection during 2025/26 and, pending outcomes of trial and Council decision, roll out municipal-wide as the final stage of Kerbside Waste Reform program.</li> <li>• Communications and education to support waste service users (residents and businesses) to 'Recycle Right', with the aim to minimise contamination (and associated service costs) and keep recycling and FOGO out of landfill.</li> <li>• Conduct regular audits of kerbside bins (annually or biannually) to monitor composition and contamination levels.</li> <li>• Develop a contamination management plan that establishes an escalation process for compliance /enforcement action in cases of repeated/ongoing bin misuse.</li> <li>• Investigate tailored kerbside services for businesses and multi-unit developments (i.e. review of Commercial Plus service model): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Potential for tailored (e.g. increased frequency) FOGO collection service for food businesses/manufacturers and other medium-scale organic waste generators</li> <li>◦ Investigate potential to scale 'best practice kerbside in retail precincts' method or alternative (e.g. Foleys Mall)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Explore opportunities to increase resource recovery through the hard waste service, including potential partnership with a nearby transfer station.</li> <li>• Investigate a partnership arrangement with a nearby public access transfer station to provide additional recycling drop-off options for residents.</li> <li>• Consider drop-off days for priority materials and/or hard to access recycling services e.g. e-waste, textiles, household chemicals.</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: Waste Services Unit (with Sustainable Communities support)</p> <p>Recycling/Glass/FOGO receipt and collection contractors</p> <p>M9</p> <p>Collaborate with Economic Development Unit on tailored waste services for business</p>	<p>Within existing budgets (waste charge funded)</p> <p>Implementation of significant service changes requires cost recovery through the waste charge.</p>

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
4.4	Promote and foster waste minimisation and 'circular economy' principles within businesses (including social enterprises) and charities  (Circular Economy Strategy Focus Area 4)	<p>Consistent with our Economic Development Action Plan, Council will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Showcase circular businesses and/or speakers at Council's business learning and networking events to increase awareness of circular economy business models and opportunities.</li> <li>• Promote local circular businesses through stories, case studies etc to consumers and other businesses.</li> <li>• Deliver at least one workshop per year on circular economy and/or environmental sustainability within Council's annual program of business knowledge and skill development seminars and workshops.</li> </ul>	Lead: Economic Development Unit	Within existing operating budgets.
		<p>Investigate collaborative opportunities to help local business take up of circular economy practices and opportunities. Pending resourcing, priority activities would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work regionally with stakeholder groups, including Circular Economy Officers in neighbouring councils, to identify, showcase and where possible support local and emerging circular economy initiatives across Melbourne's North region and beyond.</li> <li>• Trial delivery of a training program that assists businesses, social enterprises and charities to develop a circular business strategy or roadmap for adopting circular economy principles and practices.</li> <li>• Investigate and promote opportunities and/or existing platforms that can enable business-to-business resource reuse, exchange and sharing.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities identified through the Material Flow Analysis to increase the diversion of priority materials in the C&amp;I waste stream i.e. food organics, plastics and cardboard.</li> </ul>	<p>NAGA Melbourne's North Food Group CEBIC ACE Hub Sustainability Victoria (Buy Circular Service) Universities Social enterprises Exchange platforms</p>	<p>Investigations within existing operating budgets.  New programs/initiatives subject to business case / grant funding.</p>



## Council as Role Model: Creating a zero carbon, circular and climate resilient city

### Council 2030 goals – we will strive to deliver on these goals:

- **Planning:** Planning and development is delivering affordable and size-efficient housing to cater for population growth, without compromising measures to ensure long term liveability and amenity (e.g. tree canopy/greening, water, material efficiency, climate resilience etc)
- **Electrifying Council facilities:**
  - Pending external grant funding, a further 2 gas-heated aquatic centres have been electrified, cutting their energy-related emissions to zero. Priority sites for electrification by 2030 include Oak Park Sports & Aquatic Centre and Brunswick Baths.
  - At least 30 of Council's remaining 44 small sites that consume gas will have been electrified through a rolling upgrade program to replace gas heating and appliances with efficient electric alternatives.
- **Coburg Library and piazza:**
  - Coburg Piazza is contributing to the resilience of the local environment through climate positive design, leadership in integrated water management, regenerative landscape and urban biodiversity, and sustainable and durable materials.
  - Deliver the new Coburg Library in a way that embraces sustainability and meets agreed vision and principles.
- **Climate resilient community facilities:** Climate vulnerability improvements (e.g. insulation, flood-proofing, shading) have been completed on at least 5-10 community venues.
- **Public realm infrastructure (roads, bridges, paths, parks, streetscapes, wetlands etc):** Council has a formal policy, design guidance, technical notes and transparent processes being implemented to prioritise, deliver, monitor and verify consideration of zero carbon, circularity and climate resilience in its infrastructure projects.
- **Council light fleet:** Council's annual consumption of fossil fuels by our light passenger vehicles (sedan, hatch) has reduced to zero, and fossil fuels consumed by light commercial vehicles (utes, buses, vans) have reduced by 90%, against a 2024/25 baseline.
- **Council heavy fleet:** Council's annual consumption of diesel by our heavy fleet (primarily waste trucks) has reduced by between 26 to 37%, against a 2024/25 baseline. And at least 10% of Council's heavy fleet to be zero emissions vehicles by 2030.

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
5.1	Advocate for systemic changes to enable a zero carbon, circular	Merri-bek will enhance its influence across all levels of government through strategic and collaborative advocacy campaigns and partnerships by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensuring climate and circular economy in all Council's advocacy</li> </ul>	Lead: Sustainability and Climate Branch	Within existing operating budgets.

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
	and climate resilient city.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>supporting a stronger local government voice and effective advocacy</li> <li>supporting our community and community organisations to be advocates.</li> </ul> <p>Refer to Appendix 1 for high priority 'advocacy asks' of State and Federal Governments.</p>		
5.2	Planning and compliance to achieve zero carbon, climate resilience and circularity in new homes, commercial and industrial developments	<p>Continue to play a leading role in Victorian local government efforts towards more sustainable development through zero carbon buildings, green infrastructure, climate resilience and material circularity (low embodied carbon). Leadership and priority activities will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>promoting the significance of embodied carbon impact in private development</li> <li>promoting smaller, smarter, and more affordable housing, with size-efficient design, through engaging and educating industry</li> <li>supporting planning permit applicants to assess the climate resilience of their developments</li> <li>advocating for strengthened Planning Scheme standards</li> <li>continuing proactive compliance and enforcement programs.</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: Planning &amp; Environment Directorate</p> <p>Council Alliance for the Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE)</p>	Within existing operating budgets.
5.3	Evolve policy and practice to ensure Council buildings are planned, designed and constructed to be 100% renewably powered, low embodied carbon, reflect circular economy principles	<p>Council will continuously improve its approach to delivering building projects, progressively ensuring facilities are zero carbon, low embodied carbon, and more climate resilient throughout their lifecycle. Continuous improvement activities will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply a climate vulnerability assessment framework to prioritize facilities serving at-risk communities and integrate resilience ratings into capital works decisions</li> <li>Deliver climate vulnerability improvements to 5-10 existing community buildings, prioritising buildings used by at-risk groups (e.g. older people, infants and young children),</li> </ul>	Lead: Capital Works Planning and Delivery Branch (in collaboration with Sustainable Built Environment Unit and other teams delivering building projects.	Within project capital budgets

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
	and are climate resilient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement circular economy practices, including whole-of-life assessments, preferencing reuse and refurbishment over rebuilding where feasible, and specification of products and materials that are low embodied carbon, high recycled content and durable.</li> <li>Enhance building thermal performance and outdoor environments using tools like the Green Factor Tool to improve comfort while reducing energy demand.</li> <li>Aim for world's best practice sustainability standards for the new Coburg Library.</li> <li>Electrify Oak Park Sports &amp; Aquatic Centre as well as 30 of Council's remaining small sites that currently use gas.</li> <li>Seek grant funding to enable electrification of Brunswick Baths</li> </ul>		
5.4	Ensure Council infrastructure (being streetscapes, public realm, roads, playgrounds, bridges etc) is designed and constructed to be low carbon, circular and climate resilient	<p>Council will plan, design, build, maintain and upgrade over time to create efficient, net-zero, low embodied carbon infrastructure that is more resilient to climate extremes. Activities to achieve this include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess climate risk for existing and proposed Council owned infrastructure and improve our assets accordingly</li> <li>Develop and deliver a new Sustainable Infrastructure Policy which supports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>increased use of recycled content, low carbon, or 'carbon positive' materials in construction projects (e.g. high recycled content asphalt, use of cross-laminated timber to replace steel etc)</li> <li>the use of durable products with a focus on repairable end-of-life solutions</li> <li>complementary greening and cooling through trees, vegetation, and shade structures</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Cross-Council teams delivering infrastructure projects</p> <p>IPWEA</p> <p>Sustainability Victoria's Buy Circular Service</p>	Within project capital budgets

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and maintain sustainable infrastructure guidelines to define minimum standards and design principles for common public realm projects such as carparks, and to better articulate the provision of shade or irrigation in public gathering spaces.</li> <li>Create a system to track and reduce embodied carbon emissions across construction projects including establishing a baseline.</li> <li>Update technical notes for all Council work areas to provide clear standards and expectations for all and make available to the public for use in complementary projects.</li> </ul>		
5.5	<b>Sustainable Procurement</b>	<p>Maximising our positive impact requires Council to use our 'purchasing power' to foster sustainable practice and innovation along our supply chains. Council will continue to evolve our procurement policy and guideline documents, processes and assessment criteria to stimulate demand in the supplier market for circular products and services. We will also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore 'goods as services' contracts for relevant products (e.g., lighting, heating, ICT hardware)</li> <li>Adapt tender specifications to increase the use of low embodied carbon and recycled content materials; and products that are durable, repairable, reusable and recyclable (ref with Actions 5.3 and 5.4)</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: Finance</p> <p>Northern Councils Alliance</p> <p>Sustainability Victoria</p> <p>Buy Circular Service</p>	Within existing operating and capital budgets
5.6	<b>Continue addressing Council's transport emissions – operational fleet, contractor diesel, staff travel</b>	<p>Significant reduction in Council's transport emissions is critical to meet our corporate emissions target. Activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete the transition of Council's light passenger vehicle fleet to zero emissions vehicles</li> <li>Reduce emissions from Council's heavy and light commercial fleets through application of Council's Fleet Selection Policy (2024), which mandates the switch to zero emissions vehicles where these meet our operational needs</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: City Services Branch</p> <p>State Government</p> <p>Zero Emission Vehicles</p>	<p>Progress within existing operating and capital budgets.</p> <p>Any unfunded opportunities subject to</p>

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase electrical capacity at Hadfield Operations Centre to support the necessary charging infrastructure</li> <li>• Encourage Council's waste collection service providers to move to zero emissions vehicles, in accordance with Council's Fleet Selection Policy</li> <li>• Explore deployment of green hydrogen waste vehicles in Council and waste collection service provider fleets</li> <li>• Progressively optimise the size of Council's fleet</li> <li>• Continue to promote and incentivise sustainable travel and commuting by Council staff.</li> </ul>	<p>manufacturers and importers</p> <p>Heavy vehicle manufactures</p>	business case / grant funding.
5.7	Buy 100% renewable energy	<p>Continue to purchase only electricity backed by renewable energy certificates from the Crowlands Wind Farm to supply Council sites and infrastructure (including leisure centres and public electric vehicle chargers)</p> <p>Encourage and support Council tenants to switch to zero-emissions electricity</p>	Lead: Finance	Within existing operating budgets.
5.8	Continue to upgrade public lighting to be energy efficient and renewably powered	Consistent with our Public Lighting Policy, we will progressively deliver/upgrade public lighting (e.g. sportsfields, public car parks, shared paths, public space etc) to be highly efficient and renewably powered whilst avoiding inadvertent light pollution or negative impacts to wildlife.	<p>Lead: City Infrastructure Directorate</p> <p>Sports clubs</p>	Within existing capital budgets.
5.9	Sustainable operations of Council facilities	<p>Progressively reduce the environmental impacts of Council facilities, staff events, meetings and activities, including actions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce single use packaging, improve bin use compliance and continue roll out of 4-bin system across Council facilities and venues</li> </ul>	Lead: Business Transformation, with support from Sustainability and Climate	Within existing operating budgets.

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish 'sustainability protocols' for corporate gifts, giveaways and rewards</li> <li>Provide guidance (e.g. on order form) to reduce food waste caused by over catering and increase plant-based / healthy food options in Council catering.</li> <li>Develop and implement zero-waste guidelines for staff events (e.g. eliminating single use coffee cups)</li> <li>Increase take-up of reusable crockery at town halls and community venues</li> <li>Mandate use of 100% recycled paper for all out-sourced print jobs</li> <li>Explore recycling and reuse options for ICT hardware</li> </ul>		
5.10	Evolve our festivals and cultural events towards zero carbon, circular and climate resilient	<p>Through program design and delivery, act to progressively reduce the environmental impacts of Council festivals and cultural events across energy/emissions, waste management, water use, food and beverage, and transport. Priority activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evolving Council's festivals program to consider and reduce the risk (and associated cost and environmental impacts) of event cancellation due to extreme weather (e.g. avoid summertime, hold multiple smaller events rather than one major summer festival/event etc).</li> <li>Trial alternatives to reliance on diesel generators at outdoor events and if feasible, invest in roll-out.</li> <li>Trialling and implementing feasible approaches to reduce waste generation (e.g. reusable crockery for food and beverages) and enhanced waste segregation (e.g. recycling and FOGO waste stations) at festivals and cultural events.</li> <li>Supporting vendor compliance with Plastic Wise Policy to minimise single use plastics.</li> </ul>	Lead: Arts & Culture Unit with support from Sustainability and Climate	<p>Within existing operating budgets.</p> <p>Switch from diesel generators to batteries subject to business case / grant funding.</p>

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
5.11	<b>Integrate climate risk into Council processes and systems</b>	Embed climate risk assessment and resilience considerations into all relevant Council strategies, policies, planning instruments, asset management, and operational decision-making, with attention to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk management framework to ensure climate-related risks are identified, assessed, reviewed, and appropriately managed</li> <li>• Governance and decision-making processes, particularly for relevant projects and major programs, policies, and strategies</li> <li>• Financial planning, budgeting, and investment decision-making and continue aligning financial disclosures with climate reporting frameworks</li> <li>• Asset management processes and life cycle planning and management</li> <li>• Service delivery and planning to maintain continuity and equity in service delivery under changing climate conditions</li> </ul>	Lead: Sustainability & Climate Branch	Within existing operating budgets

### Complementary strategies and plans

Over the next 5 years, actions to deliver the Circular Economy Strategy, Climate Risk Strategy, and Zero Carbon Merri-bek 2040 Framework will be driven through this Action Plan. Beyond the actions reflected in this Action Plan, Council is also responding to the climate emergency through other strategies and plans, with key documents and links summarised below.

Strategy / Plan / Policy	Strategic links (in brief)
Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan and 4-year Council Plan (in preparation)	The MHWP is integrated into the four-year Council Plan and is in the process of being developed for 2025 – 2029. One of the key priorities is tackling climate change and its impacts on health.
Municipal Emergency Management Plan	The MEMP guides our work in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies, include those that result from extreme weather such as extreme heat, floods and storms. Actions to build community climate resilience directly contribute to emergency preparedness.
Risk Management Framework	One of Merri-bek's strategic risks is "The impacts of climate change, including physical and transition risks, are not appropriately planned for or responded to". Climate risks are also integrated in operational risks and their management across Council.
Nature Plan (update in preparation)	A theme in the Nature Plan is to protect and enhance natural assets to build biodiversity value and to strengthen resilience to climate change. The Nature Plan's objective to connect people with nature is aligned with the work with the Merri-bek community on climate action.
Integrated Water Management Strategy and Action Plan	The Strategy and action plan outline how to transition to a Water Sensitive City which is crucial to becoming a resilient, climate adapted city. Sensitively managing water in the landscape can help absorb peak flows (reducing floods), recharge groundwater (combatting drought), sequester carbon (in wetlands), increase plant evapotranspiration (cooling the environment), improve local water quality and support local biodiversity.
Open Space Strategy and Action Plan	The Open Space Strategy recognises the potential impacts of climate change on open space and aims to ensure our open space network is adaptive, biodiverse, cooling, healthy, and resilient.
Urban Forest Strategy	The strategy aims to increase vegetation throughout Merri-bek to cool and green the urban environment. This includes planting of 5,000 street and park trees across the municipality each year, providing carbon 'drawdown' (sequestration) of an estimated 984 tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> -e each year and partner to plant trees in private property. This links to Action 1.8.
Food Systems Strategy	The Food Systems Strategy fosters a sustainable, just and vibrant food system within Merri-bek. There are strong links



	to food waste avoidance, organics recycling, healthy plant-rich diets, food security and resilience in a changing climate.
Urban Heat Island Effect Action Plan	There are multiple links to the UHIE AP including Actions 1.8, 5.3, and 5.4. Cooling initiatives will also be integrated as different policies are refreshed, such as the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy and Streets for People Plan.
Human Rights Policy	The Merri-bek Human Rights Policy provides an overarching framework for delivering accessible, equitable and inclusive programs, services and decision-making processes. The impacts of climate breakdown will not be borne equally or fairly, between rich and poor, women and men, and older and younger generations etc. Consequently, there is a growing focus on 'climate justice', which looks at the climate crisis through a human rights lens and on the belief that by working together we can create a better future for present and future generations.
Social Cohesion Plan (update forthcoming)	The Social Cohesion Plan aims to promote social and cultural connection and inclusive places and spaces. Social connection is a key factor in supporting climate resilience. This links with Action 1.8.
Children, Young People, and Families Plan 2021 – 2025 (subsequent plan in preparation)	The current Children, Young People, and Families Plan includes the actions: to empower Merri-bek's young people to take action on climate change (3.1.4) and to engage children and young people in active travel and adopt sustainable transport modes (2.4.3)
Living and Ageing Well Framework and Action Plan	The Living and Ageing Well Framework and Action Plan includes an action to conduct a risk assessment to identify key climate-related risks for older people and priority opportunities to build climate resilience. Implementing the findings of the assessment is expected to be included in the next Living and Ageing Well Action Plan.

## Monitoring and reporting our progress to 2030

Council will monitor progress towards the goals and actions in this action plan through our corporate reporting system (Pulse) on an annual basis (minimum) or quarterly, where relevant. Summary reporting to Council and community will also occur:

- on a quarterly basis as part of formal performance reporting against the Council Plan and annual Council Action Plan
- through news articles in the Community News (print newsletter), Council and ZCM websites and e-newsletters.

The following table outlines preliminary performance indicators for the action plan, noting that supplementary sub-indicators at the action and/or activity level may also be tracked.

Monitoring & evaluation question	Key indicators / issues to consider	Data sources/ method
How are we tracking to our community carbon reduction goal?	<p>Total municipal emissions in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>-e) per annum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes a production/sector-based approach to emissions, consistent with Global Protocol for Community-Scale Greenhouse Gas Inventories (GPC)</li> <li>• Published annually with up to a 2-year lag.</li> <li>• Largely excludes embedded carbon, such as in food, consumer goods and building materials.</li> </ul>	<p>Snapshot Climate <a href="https://snapshotclimate.com.au/locality/municipality/australia/victoria/merri-bek/">snapshotclimate.com.au/locality/municipality/australia/victoria/merri-bek/</a></p> <p>See Snapshot website for methodology report</p>
How are we tracking to our Council (operational) carbon reduction target range?	<p>Total gross corporate emissions in tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>-e per annum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent with the principals of the greenhouse gas protocol – corporate standard</li> <li>• Reflects emissions prior to any purchase of offsets (note: Council continues to explore options to invest in Australian-based offset schemes)</li> <li>• Focuses on direct (scope 1 and 2) emissions from use of fossil gas and petrol/diesel with some indirect (scope 3) emissions.</li> </ul>	<p>Annual greenhouse gas emissions inventory prepared by Council, with external review/ verification.</p>
What impact is our advocacy for system change having?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy /program change at state or federal level</li> <li>• # / topic of written advocacy submissions</li> <li>• # / topic of collaborative advocacy campaigns (leading / active contributor)</li> </ul>	<p>Council data</p> <p>Government announcements</p> <p>Political party policy announcements</p>
How are we tracking to our goals for comms, resilience, and climate justice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach of communications such as eco e-news, visits and engagement on Zero Carbon Merri-bek website, attendance at events, Council communications channels.</li> <li>• Individuals and households participating in resilience programs</li> <li>• Number of trees planted in private property</li> </ul>	<p>Council data</p> <p>Tracking of outreach and engagement</p> <p>Program-level monitoring of outputs and outcomes</p>
How are we tracking to our	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solar capacity installed across Merri-bek (MW)</li> <li>• Energy storage (MWh)</li> </ul>	<p>Combining AEMO DER Register, Electricity distributors/ Snapshot tool</p>

Monitoring & evaluation question	Key indicators / issues to consider	Data sources/ method
community energy transition goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Fossil gas consumption p.a. (% change over time)</li><li>Number of households and businesses supported</li></ul>	data and ProfileID or equivalent, STC/VEEC etc Program-level monitoring of outputs and outcomes
How are we tracking to our community sustainable transport goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Mode share</li><li>EV charging ratios</li></ul>	VISTA Travel Survey EV charging point counts and Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Research Economics datasets
How are we tracking to our community waste and consumption goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Amount of total waste generated (across all 4 bins) per capita</li><li>Amount of organics (food and garden waste) in general rubbish stream</li><li>Amount of waste diverted from landfill (through mixed recycling, glass recycling and FOGO streams)</li><li>Number of people participating in circular activities and/or circular programs and services available in Merri-bek</li></ul>	Kerbside audit data Waste Services data (New) Social research every 4 – 5 years into home composting and circular economy participation)
How are we tracking to our Council as role model goals?	New metric/s required for tracking embodied carbon in buildings / infrastructure projects, with a focus on carbon intensive materials	Council and supplier data

**Appendix 1 – Priority ‘advocacy asks’ across energy transition, sustainable transport, waste /circular economy and climate resilience**

Council's strategic approach to advocacy in response to the climate emergency is maturing via collaboration with other councils and community organisations. The below is a non-exhaustive list of high priority actions Council is seeking from Victorian and Australian governments to support the vision of a zero carbon, zero waste and climate resilient Merri-bek.

**Energy Transition**

That the Australian Government:

- Implement strong, long term, stable energy and climate policy aligned with the climate science and principles of climate justice ('No new coal, oil or gas projects')
- Establish a vertically integrated climate policy framework that enables the three tiers of government to work in partnership around shared objectives
- Fund energy upgrades for public, community, social and First Nations housing.
- Directly invest in deep and accelerated retrofits and the required support for low-income housing to address the inequity in the energy transition
- Reform the energy market so that it can achieve climate targets and embed environmental and socially just objectives.
- Extend and strengthen the Renewable Energy Target to 100% by 2030 ('100% renewable energy generation and exports by 2030').
- Support the orderly and just transition away from coal and gas-fired power ('Funding for a just transition and job creation for all fossil fuel industry workers and communities').
- Introduce an ambitious pathway towards zero carbon buildings through the National Construction Code (NCC).
- Provide financial support to Councils for energy efficiency and electrification upgrades of Council assets.
- Provide financial support and other assistance for businesses to undertake emission reduction actions, particularly to enable landlords to work with tenants.
- Remove regulatory and market barriers to the implementation of consumer energy resources to ensure benefits to consumers.
- Ensure a robust local offset market that maximises co-benefits for First Nations and regional communities and supports compliance schemes (without compromising carbon budgets).

That the Victorian Government:

- Implement recommendations from the Hansen report "Climate Change and Planning in Victoria, including to amend the Planning and Environment Act and the Climate Change Act to explicitly mandate addressing climate change at all levels of the planning process.
- Introduces mandatory disclosure of energy performance of residential properties at point of sale and lease.
- Implement strategies to ensure Victoria's renewable energy target of 95% by 2035 is met.
- Regulate to ensure disclosure of aggregated real time data from electricity distribution businesses.
- Fund a regional / state program to upgrade major road lighting to LEDs and upgrade to smart public lighting.
- Orderly phase-out of gas networks to ensure costs are not borne by consumers.

### **Sustainable Transport**

That the Australian Government:

- Strengthen minimum vehicle emissions standards
- Provide tax incentives for lowest emissions vehicles and remove tax incentives that encourage unnecessary driving and vehicle purchase
- Prioritise and commit funding to significant public transport infrastructure over road infrastructure spending
- Develop an electric and zero emissions vehicle strategy to embed positive social and environmental outcomes
- Increase funding provided to local councils for active transport projects.

That the Victorian Government:

- Continue investment in improved public transport services, in particular:
  - More frequent buses for more hours of the day, particularly in the north of Merri-bek and east-west bus routes, including that buses should run from first train and tram to last train and tram in a 24-hour period.
  - More reliable bus, tram and train services, including ensuring buses and trams don't get held up in traffic as much.
  - More capacity on train and tram services to carry more people, including increased frequency on night time trams and trains.
  - Improved accessibility of all public transport services, for people of all abilities.
  - Better connectivity between different modes of public transport.
- Increase funding provided to local councils for active transport projects
- Revise the Speed Zoning Policy to enable safer speed limits in urban areas.

### **Waste and Circular Economy**

That the Australian Government:

- Expand and make mandatory robust end-of-life product stewardship schemes to include more products, including batteries, packaging, textiles, soft plastics and electronics
- Introduces mandatory national minimum product design and import standards to ensure goods are durable, reusable and recyclable at end-of-life
- Introduces policy measures to incentivise repair, refurbishment and the use of recycled content (e.g. Right to Repair legislation, a tax on virgin resources etc)
- Urgently progress good packaging design guidance (via the National Design Standards Working Group) and a national regulatory scheme for packaging.

That the Victorian Government:

- Urgently invest waste levy funds to develop financially and environmentally sustainable waste management/resource recovery facilities and circular infrastructure in Victoria.
- Urgently reinstate funding for the Detox your Home program, delivered by Sustainability Victoria, to ensure that there is a pathway for the safe disposal of hazardous household products and chemicals.
- Introduce circular procurement targets for Victorian Government and support councils and businesses to do likewise.
- Introduce further bans for problematic products and materials (e.g. further single use plastic items, PFAS ('forever chemicals') in compostable and fibre-based packaging etc.
- Revise the Good Practice Guidelines for Service Rates and Charges to explicitly include funding of community waste education (including waste avoidance) and associated programs and services through local government waste charge revenue.

### **Climate Resilience**

That the Australian Government:

- Ensure multi-level governance to clarify roles, responsibilities, and accountability of each level of government and across agencies, not only in planning adaptation, but in funding, implementing, and reporting on action plans.
- Provide funding for adaptation measures to support local governments, communities, and businesses to be climate resilient, reduce the impact of natural disasters and restore ecosystems.
- Invest in climate data and research to improve understanding of climate hazards, vulnerabilities, and impacts, and support evidence-based decision-making.
- Ensure that climate resilience policies and initiatives prioritise equity, social justice, and the needs of vulnerable populations, including First Nations communities, low-income households, and regional areas.

That the Victorian Government:

- Implement and fund the Victorian Climate Change Strategy, seven Adaptation Action Plans across Built Environment, Education and Training, Health and Human Services, Natural Environment, Primary Production, Transport, and Water Cycle and Regional Adaptation Strategies.
- Ensure State planning and housing targets do not have negative impacts on surface permeability and increased flood risk, and increase risk of urban heat.
- Enhance regulatory frameworks to integrate climate resilience considerations into planning, development approvals, and infrastructure standards, ensuring that new investments are resilient to future climate risks.
- Increase to minimum energy efficiency standards and compliance for rental homes, ensuring insulation, heating/cooling, and appliances converted to electric.
- Promote community –based adaptation approaches by fostering community engagement and capacity-building initiatives to raise awareness of climate risks, empower local communities to take action, and facilitate bottom-up approaches to adaptation planning.



**Merri-bek**  
City Council

# Zero Carbon Merri-bek Action Plan

**2020-25 Outcomes**







## Council and community – responding together for a safe climate

To ensure a safe, fair and resilient community we are moving to a Zero Carbon Merri-bek. Climate action is an opportunity to innovate and create change. To improve health, prevent pollution and save money for our community.

Climate change is a dangerous threat to earth's people, plants and animals. More extreme heatwaves, flash floods and loss of reliable seasonal rains are some of the impacts we are already facing.

By joining together to respond to the climate emergency we can transform our society and economy to a safe climate. Making our city and our planet a place we can all enjoy.

### Action plan snapshot

Community 2025 goals

Achieved 5

Partially achieved/ongoing 4

Council 2025 targets

Achieved 5

Partially achieved/ongoing 7



### Council and Community taking action together

It is Council's goal for Merri-bek to achieve 75% emissions reduction in the community by 2030, net zero by 2035, and drawdown ('negative emissions') by 2040, all compared with a 2011-12 baseline. By 2022-23, community emissions had reduced by 30%.

#### Community Skills for Climate Action

Run in collaboration with the cities of Darebin and Yarra, our Community Skills for Climate Action program inspired 28 community-led events focused on local climate action.

Keen volunteers contributed 1,444 hours of their time, engaging 1,853 people in the wide variety of events. A huge 79% of participants said that they made new partnerships.

**"The program has greatly supported me in clarifying my role in the climate action movement and within the local community. It also provided me with tools to transform ideas into actions."**

- Merri-bek participant.

#### The Adaptation Game – A Merri-bek Climate Drill

We developed **The Adaptation Game** with researchers and creatives as an inclusive story-telling experience. It scales climate change and disaster preparedness down from overwhelming global fears to local risks. Diverse groups of locals have played the game at council halls, neighbourhood houses, and pubs across Merri-bek, and it's now being played in 17 councils across Australia – and counting.

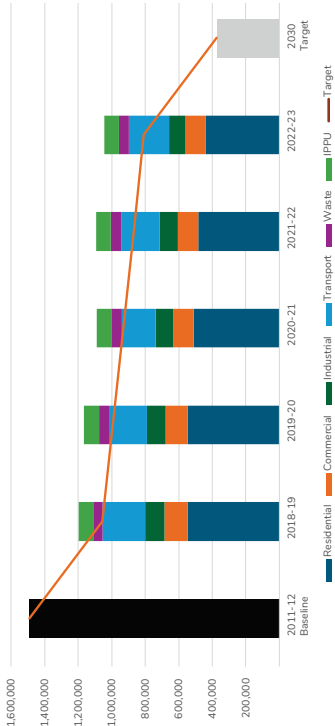
**"I feel empowered on a local level to help protect my community. Before, I just felt overwhelmed by the inadequate measures being taken on a global scale."**

– Merri-bek resident and Adaptation Game player

#### Sustainability in Early Learning Centres

We subsidised 23 Merri-bek early learning centres to become ResourceSmart. The ResourceSmart for Early Years program helps centres to embed sustainability practices. Actions include minimising waste, saving water and energy, promoting biodiversity and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We also provided subsidised waste education incursions to 61 early learning centres to help children connect with nature and learn how to care for it.

Merri-bek Community Emissions Profile over time - by source tCO2-e



- Things to note**
- Most reduction due to more renewables (and less coal) in electricity grid
  - Most electricity and gas use are used in homes
  - Transport emissions are increasing
  - IPPU – Industrial Process and Product Use such as gas leaks in refrigeration and air-conditioning equipment.

## Energy transition

**We are supporting our households, businesses and community groups to become energy-efficient and powered by 100% renewable energy.**

**The major sources of our community's carbon emissions are electricity (36%) and gas (26%).**

### Solar target

#### Installed

**77MW**

#### Target

**44MW**



### Energy upgrades subsidy program

We have helped over 385 low-income households to save money on their energy bills and stay safe during climate extremes. Through the subsidised home insulation or rooftop solar, these households are collectively saving around \$216,000 a year on their energy bills and lifetime savings of \$3.7 million.

**“The difference it has made it is much more comfortable, especially in summer...Just have it done.”**

– Maria, Pascoe Vale resident.



### Solar households and businesses

As a community we have already far exceeded our goal to double the amount of rooftop solar PV across Merri-bek to 44MW by 2025. By December 2024, there was already 51.1MW of solar across 10,300 homes, plus 26.6MW of solar across 606 non-residential properties. The total is an enormous 77.57MW, which is around 220,000 solar panels.

Seven local businesses got Council help to access Environmental Upgrade Finance. This enabled them to install a total of 432kW of solar and is saving them \$2.1 million in energy bills.

**“Solar is where the world is heading. You can get a low interest loan and if you know you’re going to be around 5+ years, it’s a no brainer.”**

– Terra Madre co-owner Ryan O'Connor installed a 139kW solar system with Environmental Upgrade Finance.



### Electrify Merri-bek

Established an evidence-based ‘Electrify Everything’ communications campaign to promote the health, safety and environmental benefits of switching appliances to electric.

Through outdoor and online advertising showcasing Merri-bek residents, events and Go Electric Planner have reached over 4600 people over 3 years.







### Ride & Stride

Our Ride & Stride behaviour-change program got more kids walking, riding and scooting to school. Sixteen local primary schools have joined Ride & Stride, offering their school communities gamification technology for kids to TagOn when they walk or ride to school, e-cargo bike subsidies, bike education and bike repairs.

As part of Ride & Stride, we pioneered the idea of Open Streets. During drop off and pick up times, we open the street outside the school gates to pedestrians and cyclists, without cars. So far, we've held over 30 Open Streets days at 11 schools.

**"It's been a joy volunteering to make Open Streets happen each month at my kids' school, being outdoors with happy children in a playful, quiet street. Seeing children riding, scooting and enjoying the Open Street makes volunteering more than worth it!"**

– Parent at Coburg North Primary School.

**69%**

average active travel rate on Open Street days

**18%**

average increase in active travel rate

**93%**

of parents and residents want Open Streets more often

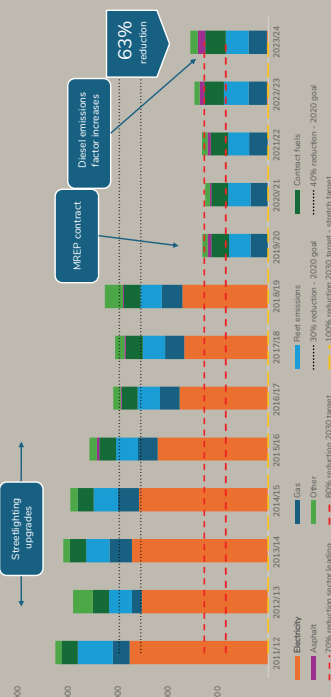
## Reducing Council's emissions

**At Merri-bek Council, we have an ambitious goal to reduce our own corporate operational emissions by between 80% and 100% by 2030, against our 2011-12 baseline and not including carbon offsets. We have already reduced our emissions by 63%.**

Each year since 2012, we have been certified as 'carbon neutral' (or 'net zero') under the Australian Government's Climate Active scheme, in which we purchase carbon offsets for all our remaining emissions.



## Merri-bek City Council - Corporate Emissions Profile over time - by sector tCO<sub>2</sub>-e

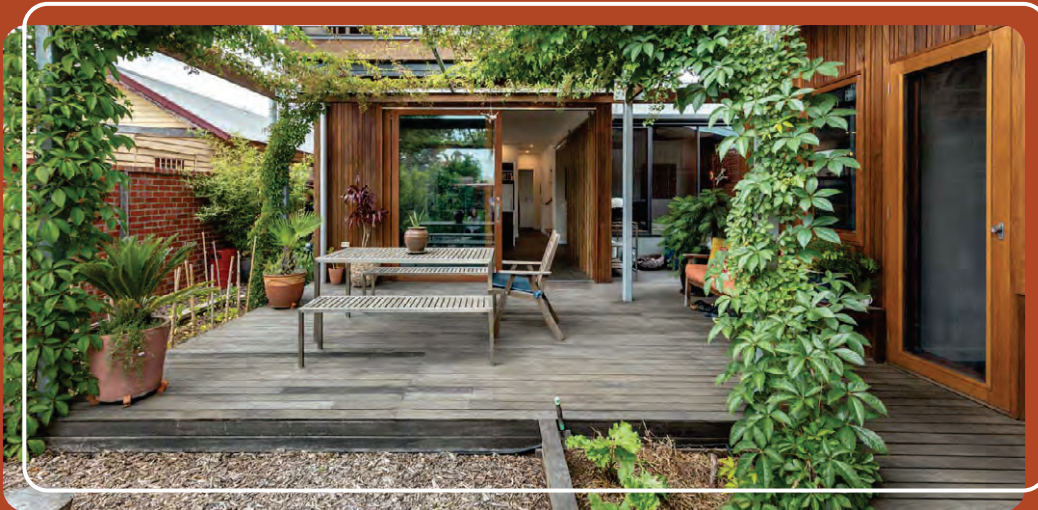


### Things to note

- At Merri-bek Council, we have an ambitious goal to reduce our operational emissions by between 80% and 1,00% by 2030, not including carbon offsets. We have already reduced our emissions by 63%.
- Each year since 2012, we have been certified as 'carbon neutral' (or 'net zero') under the Australian Government's Climate Active scheme. In which we purchase carbon offsets for all our remaining emissions. Increases in emissions in 21/22-23/24 due to:
- COVID artificially lowering emissions across 19/20-21/22 due to facility closures
  - Diesel 'emissions factor' increased in recent years – actual diesel use is unchanged
  - Some additions to emissions coverage over time (Scope 3 – asphalt, IT, arborist)
- Most remaining emissions are fossil gas (predominantly used in aquatic centres) and diesel (mostly used by Council and contractor waste trucks)

## Leadership and advocacy

**We are continually advocating to the state and federal governments for the policy changes we need to achieve a Zero Carbon Merri-bek, and to ensure the transition is fast, fair and affordable.**



### Advocacy to improve new homes

In 2022, federal and state Building Ministers agreed to increase the minimum energy rating for new homes from 6 to 7 Stars. This will ensure new homes are more comfortable, liveable, accessible and energy-efficient. It was the most significant upgrade to required energy standards for Australian homes in 12 years. We led local government advocacy for these reforms, in partnership with 36 other councils around the country, through Climate Emergency Australia.



### Striving for zero carbon in the planning scheme

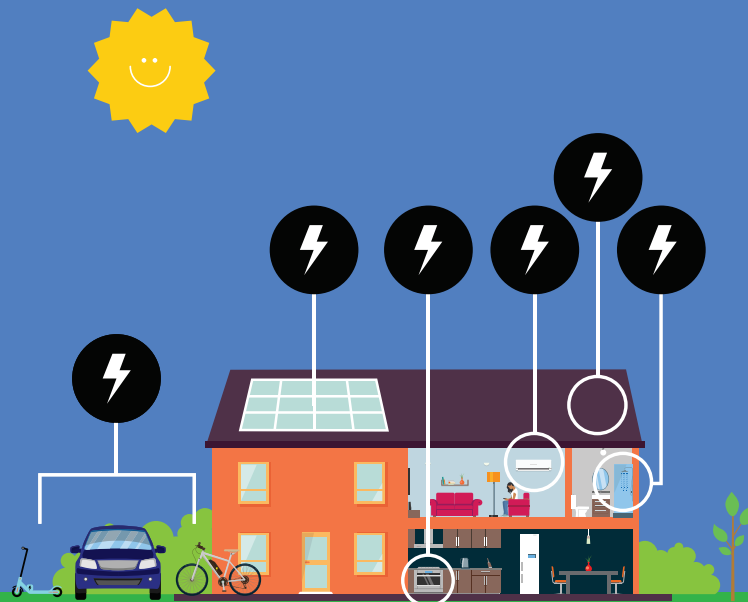
In July 2022, Merri-bek was one of 24 councils (representing half the Victorian population) that lodged the Elevating ESD Targets Planning Amendment with the Victorian government. The aim of the amendment is to introduce planning policy that raises sustainability standards for new buildings and encourages a move towards net zero carbon development



### **Electrify Everything Community of Practice**

We established and host an Electrify Everything Community of Practice that involves officers from 95 regional and urban councils across Australia. The group shares resources and information to promote the electrification of homes.

In 2023, participating councils collaborated to develop and deliver an Electrify Everything campaign that reached over 677,000 Australians.



**“The support of this Community of Practice has enabled regional councils to leverage the collective wisdom and experience to deliver targeted, high-quality communications – this would not have been possible otherwise.”**

- Victorian council officer

**Our Zero Carbon Merri-bek mural in Coburg by artists Hayden Dewar. The mural celebrates our local environment and the opportunity for positive change of a zero carbon Merri-bek. The mural is part of Merri-bek's RenuWall program to beautify our public spaces, engage our arts community in meaningful public artwork and address graffiti hotspots in Merri-bek.**



## Awards

Total number 16 including

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Winner</b><br/>Institute of Transport Engineer's Awards<br/>Ride &amp; Stride program</p>             | <p><b>Winner</b><br/>Planning Institute Awards 2022<br/>Climate Change &amp; Planning in Victoria</p>           |
| <p><b>Winner</b><br/>Australasian Fleet Management<br/>Association Awards 2020<br/>Merri-bek Fleet</p>      | <p><b>Winner</b><br/>National Resilient Australia Awards 2024<br/>The Adaptation Game</p>                       |
| <p><b>Winner</b><br/>Cycling Luminaries Awards 2023<br/>Open Streets program</p>                            | <p><b>Finalist</b><br/>Cities Power Partnership Awards 2023<br/>Electrify Everything Community of Practice</p>  |
| <p><b>Winner</b><br/>Waste Innovation &amp; Recycling Awards 2023<br/>Merri-bek's Kerbside Waste Reform</p> | <p><b>Finalist</b><br/>Victorian Premier's Sustainability Awards<br/>2023<br/>Unlocking Sustainable Strata</p>  |
| <p><b>Winner</b><br/>Master Builders Victoria Awards 2022<br/>Glenroy Community Hub</p>                     | <p><b>Highly commended</b><br/>Cities Power Partnership Awards 2023<br/>Solar &amp; Thermal Subsidy program</p> |

## Contact Us

Merri-bek City Council  
Woi-wurrung Country, 90 Bell Street  
Coburg Vic. 3058 Australia

[zerocarbonmerri-bek.org.au](https://zerocarbonmerri-bek.org.au)



## **7.5 COMMUNITY GRANT PROGRAM ANNUAL ROUND RECOMMENDATIONS 2025**

**Director Community, Eamonn Fennessy**

### **Community Wellbeing**

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#### **Officer Recommendation**

That Council:

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

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

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

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

- a) 5th Brunswick Scout Group (auspiced by Scouts Victoria) \$24,078
  - b) Bioquisitive LTD \$30,816
  - c) Ceres Earth Limited (t/a CERES Inc) \$40,000
  - d) Parish of St Vasilios Brunswick - Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia \$40,000
  - e) Hadfield Tennis Club \$32,620
  - f) Kevin Heinze Grow \$22,013
  - g) Northern Schools Early Years Cluster Inc. (Glenroy Central Kindergarten) \$25,125
  - h) Pascoe Vale Sports Club Inc \$39,300
  - i) Sussex Neighbourhood House \$40,000
4. Notes Facility Improvement Grants second round for smaller projects up to \$10,000 per project. Recommendations to value of \$46,122 were endorsed by Director Community for projects delivered in 2024/25:
- a) Newlands and East Coburg Community Houses Inc. (NECCHi) \$9,122
  - b) Pascoe Vale Sports Club Inc \$10,000
  - c) Schoolhouse Studios \$7,000
  - d) St Matthews Anglican Church Glenroy Hadfield with St Linus Merlynston \$10,000
  - e) Sussex Neighbourhood House \$10,000
5. Notes the updated Community Grants Guidelines for 2025-2026.

## REPORT

### Executive Summary

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

This round of applications opened for a period of over 9 weeks from 1 January for groups to apply for funding to support the delivery of projects between 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026 and support of new organisational between 1 July 2025 – 30 June 2028. Applications for this round, support one-off project implementation, the development and delivery of facility improvements, and new organisations that benefit and engages the Merri-bek community through community led initiatives.

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

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

For the 2025 annual program:

- Nineteen (19) applications, to the value of \$121,408.50 were received under the Community Strengthening Grant category. Fourteen (14) projects to the value of \$89,366 are recommended for funding.
- Five (5) applications to the value of \$50,000 per year were received under the Organisational Support Grant category. Four (4) applications to the value of \$40,000 per year totally in \$120,000 over 3 years are recommended for funding.
- Sixteen (16) applications requesting \$385,506 were received for the Facility Improvement Grant funding program. Fifteen (15) projects to the value of \$353,724.00 are recommended for funding.

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

## **Previous Council Decisions**

### **Community Grant Program Annual Round Recommendation 2024 – 8 May 2024**

*That Council:*

1. *Thanks applicants of the Community Grants Program for their time and contribution to Merri-bek's community life.*
2. *Allocates Community Strengthening Grants to the value of \$118,000 for projects delivered in 2024/25*
  - a) *AGAPI Care Inc \$7,000*
  - b) *Alevi Community Council of Australia \$7,000*
  - c) *Arts Pie Australia Inc \$7,000*
  - d) *Australian GLBTIQ Multicultural Multifaith Council \$7,000*
  - e) *Australian Skateboarding Federation \$6,600*
  - f) *Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria \$7,000*
  - g) *Ethnic Community Broadcasting Association of Victoria (3ZZZFM) \$7,000*
  - h) *Fawkner Food Bowls \$7,000*
  - i) *Federation of Nepalese Community Associations of Victoria Inc \$7,000*
  - j) *For Change Co. \$6,400*
  - k) *Help Himalayan Youth Foundation Inc \$7,000*
  - l) *Moomba Park Tennis Club Inc \$7,000*
  - m) *Mulberry Community Garden Glenroy \$7,000*
  - n) *Open Table \$7,000*
  - o) *Schoolhouse Studios Inc \$7,000*
  - p) *The Bike Recycle Shed Inc*
  - q) *Victorian Skateboard Association \$7,000*
3. *Allocates Organisational Establishment Grants to the value of \$39,800 per year for 3 years; 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27.*
  - a) *CALD Community Voices Australia Inc \$10,000*
  - b) *Merri-bek Netball Association \$10,000*
  - c) *Nourishing Neighbours \$10,000*
  - d) *Plus Sport Victoria Inc \$9,800*

4. *Allocates a total of Facility Improvement Grants to the value of \$273,818 for projects delivered in 2024/25; the two types recommended under this category are:*  
*Smaller Facility Improvement Grants (up to \$10,000 per project) and*
  - a) *East Coburg Tennis Club Inc \$10,000*
  - b) *Fawkner Netball Club \$10,000*
  - c) *Gardening Mob Incorporated \$8,313*
  - d) *Harm Reduction Victoria \$9,719*
  - e) *Lefkadian Brotherhood \$9,930*
  - f) *North Coburg Rebels Baseball Club \$7,472*
  - g) *Northern Schools Early Years Cluster (Will Will Rook Preschool) \$10,000*
  - h) *Northern Schools Early Years Cluster (Lorne Street Kindergarten) \$8,346*
  - i) *Transgender Victoria \$6,432**Larger Improvement Grants (up to \$40,000 per project).*
  - a) *Brentwood Kindergarten \$18,606*
  - b) *Coburg Basketball Association \$40,000*
  - c) *Coburg Table Tennis Club \$15,000*
  - d) *Federazione Lucana Inc \$40,000*
  - e) *Hadfield Tennis Club Inc \$40,000*
  - f) *Turkish Islamic Society of Victoria \$40,000*
5. *Notes the unallocated funds in the Facility Improvement Grants and opens a second round for smaller facility improvement projects for up to \$10,000 per project, where applications to open from June to mid-July 2024. Recommendations from an assessment panel to be made to the Director Community for endorsement. The funded projects to be noted in the Community Grants report to Council in May 2025.*
6. *Notes the updated Community Grants Guidelines for 2024-2025.*

## **1. Policy Context**

This report is consistent with the Merri-bek Community Grants Policy (DSD1-CL) and the Council Plan 2021-2025.

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

Council adopted the 2021-2025 Council Plan in 2021 which has integrated the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan. The Community Grant Program is aligned with Theme 3 of the Council Plan 2021-2025:

Theme 3: A healthy Caring Merri-bek aims to support Merri-bek to become a more inclusive, connected, healthy and caring community through providing equitable access to community facilities and services, facilitating local partnerships and programs, mitigating the effects of climate change and supporting the community to adapt and build climate resilience.

## **2. Background**

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

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

This Annual Grant round was open to receive submissions over a period of 8 weeks from 1 January to 28 February 2025.

The 2024-2025 budget includes the following allocations for the Community Grants Program:

- \$547,709 for the Community Grants Program
- \$377,000 in the CAPEX as Partnership Grants that is allocated to Facility Improvement Grants

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

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

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

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

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

### **Assessment**

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

Council engaged Inner North Community Foundation (The Foundation) to facilitate the assessment part of this round of annual grants. The Foundation has a Community Advisory Panel (CAP) of local people who volunteer to assess grants, and for this round eight community members participated in this process.

Submissions were assessed against the following criteria:

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

### **Grant compliance**

Not all applications provided the required information in the initial application. To enable a fair and comprehensive assessment to occur, applicants whose submissions did not initially comply with policy requirements were given opportunities and were offered additional assistance to submit the mandatory information and documentation.

Some applicants were advised to directly address issues, provide specific documentation, consult with a Council officer or provide the specific number of quotes and costings to substantiate their budget. These were direct outcomes from the eligibility check conducted by Council officers. This advice was to assist the group to comply with the category objectives and to align their application to specifically address the assessment criteria.

Non-compliant applications were minimal due to Council's online Grants Management program parameters. The online program does not allow submission of an application where mandatory fields are left blank, or an attachment is not supplied. This resulted in minimal follow up requests.

## **3. Issues**

### **Community impact**

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

### **Community Strengthening Grant**

Community Strengthening Grants are designed to support one-off community projects that benefit the Merri-bek Community and aim to address areas such social inclusion and community participation, environmental sustainability, healthy and active living and creating vibrant spaces as well as strengthen community and organisational capacity.

This category can fund up to \$7,000 per project. Projects must be delivered between 1 July 2025 - 30 June 2026.

Nineteen (19) applications were received under this category requesting funding to the value of \$121,408.50. Fifteen (15) projects to the value of \$96,908.50 were assessed and fourteen (14) projects to the value of \$89,366 are recommended for funding. One application has not been recommended for funding with encouragement to submit an application for consideration under the Merri-bek Flourish Art Grants.

The total value of the projects recommended is \$249,766. This amount represents the calculated value that includes Council funding; significant cash, in-kind and volunteer contributions by the Applicant; collaborative partnerships and other contributors to these projects.

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

There were four applications that were not assessed for the following reasons: One application was withdrawn; one application did not meet the eligibility criteria as they did not submit mandatory information to proceed for assessment; both applicants will be supported and encouraged to submit an application to the Participation Grant category. One organisation requested funds to support a project identified as contributing to core business outcomes. One application requested funding to support members activities this applicant is already receiving funding under the membership activity category.

### **Organisational Support Grant**

Organisational Establishment Grants are designed to support newly established organisations with funding up to \$10,000 each year for 3 years to grow and become independent. Community groups must be based within the Merri-bek municipality and be no more than three years old to be eligible for consideration. Funding will support the organisation between 1 July 2025 - 30 June 2028.

Five applications were received under this category requesting funding to the value of \$50,000. Four were forwarded for assessment. All four are recommended for funding to the value of \$40,000 per year for the next 3 financial years; 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28, this equates to \$120,000 over 3 years.

There was one application that was not assessed for the following reason: The application was transferred to the Community Strengthening Grant category to support pop-up events and to assist the group to build an identity in Merri-bek.

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

### **Facility Improvement Grant**

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

Projects must be delivered between 1 July 2025 - 30 June 2026. Two types of grants are available under this category.

#### Smaller Projects

This category can fund up to \$10,000 per project. Six (6) applications were received under this category; all were eligible for consideration and have been recommended to the value of \$59,790.

The total value of these projects is \$77,917 this amount represents the total project value that includes Council funding; significant cash, in-kind and volunteer contributions by the Applicant; collaborative partnerships and other contributors to these projects.

#### Larger Projects



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

Twenty-one (21) expressions of interest were received seeking \$797,303.60 of funding. Of the twenty-one submissions, seventeen (17) eligible applications were invited to submit a full application.

Ten (10) full applications were received and nine (9) were forwarded for consideration all assessed submissions and have been recommended to the value of \$293,952.

One applicant withdrew indicating their intention to apply in a future round.

The total value of these projects is \$607,044 this amount represents the total project value that includes Council funding; significant cash, in-kind and volunteer contributions by the Applicant; collaborative partnerships and other contributors to these projects.

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

It is worth noting, the combined recommendations for Facility Improvement Grants is \$353,742 this represents \$23,258 unallocated. It is proposed the unallocated amount is declared as savings.

### **Facility Improvement Grant Smaller Projects Round 2, 2024-2025**

Five (5) projects to the value of \$46,122 were endorsed by Director Community on 28/08/2024. These projects are to be delivered during FY 2024/25.

The total value of these projects is \$65,430 this amount represents the total project value that includes Council funding; significant cash, in-kind and volunteer contributions by the Applicant; collaborative partnerships and other contributors to these projects. The detailed listing of approved applications is listed in **Attachment 2**.

### **Community Grant Guidelines for 2025-2026**

The revised Community Grant Guidelines for 2025-2026 has been attached for noting with minor changes that includes timing for grants in 2026-2026. **Attachment 3**.

Community Grant Program Guidelines may change to reflect the new Council Plan when endorsed later this year and the program priority groups may change to reflect the Human Rights Plan when reviewed.

### **Diversity of Applicants**

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

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

### **Human Rights Consideration**

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

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

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

The community grant program was well advertised within the community. The program was distributed through the following various publications, media, social media between August 2024 and March 2025:

- Facebook channels (MCC and libraries) – reaching over 34,100 accounts
- Instagram channels (MCC and libraries) – reaching over 14,600 accounts
- Business e-news - 5,837 subscribers
- Library e-news - 7,116 subscribers
- My Merri-bek - 32,198 subscribers
- Sustainable e-news 5,256 subscribers
- Arts Merri-bek - 2,850 subscribers
- Article in summer 2025 Merri-bek Community News
- Merri-bek Council website, Active Merri-bek's websites Instagram and Twitter accounts.

The program is also advertised to community networks, the community grant and other relevant mailing lists, printed post cards were distributed to Oxygen Youth Space, neighbourhood houses, libraries, customer service centres as well as electronic advertising at Council's leisure centres.

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

Information sessions for community members were held regularly, from September 2024 to February 2025, 8 sessions were held (4 in-person and 4 online), with 57 community members registered to attend.

There were a number of direct emails sent to community providing information and funding opportunities available through the Merri-bek's community grants program. The community grants emailing list has 640 registered recipients to receive news about community grants. In addition, using our grants management program (SmartyGrants) previous applicants to the Community Grant Program were sent notification informing of the grant round and upcoming funding opportunities. There were also targeted reminder emails to unsubmitted applicant to each category including EOI's of closing dates and application requirements.

#### **5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

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

#### **6. Financial and Resources Implications**

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




The 2024-25 Council budget includes \$547,709 to the Community Grants Program; this incorporates an allocation towards Community Strengthening Grants and Organisational Establishment Grants; unallocated amounts in this annual round will be available for allocation under the all-year-round grant categories. There is \$377,000 in the CAPEX budget labelled as Partnership Grants that is allocated to Facility (Structural) Improvement Grants.

The recommendation for Facility Improvement Grants is \$353,742; this represents \$23,258 unallocated. It is proposed the unallocated amount is declared as savings for this FY.

## **7. Implementation**

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

### **Attachment/s**

- |          |  |            |
|----------|--|------------|
| <b>1</b> | <a href="#"></a> Merri-bek Community Grant Program - Grant Recommendations 2025             | D25/264470 |
| <b>2</b> | <a href="#"></a> Facility Improvement Grant Smaller Projects - Round 2 2024-2025 - endorsed | D25/255047 |
| <b>3</b> | <a href="#"></a> Community Grant Program Guidelines 2025-26                                 | D25/255099 |



# Merri-bek Community Grants Program

## 2025 Grant Recommendations

*The Inner North Community Foundation acknowledges the custodians of the land where we work, live, study and volunteer, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and give thanks to other First Nations people in our community, especially Elders.*

19 May 2025

### Background

1. Merri-bek City Council and the Inner North Community Foundation have partnered since 2022 to deliver the assessment phase of Council's annual Community Grants Program. As with previous years, the Foundation convened a Community Advisory Panel (CAP) of people who are residents and/or hold strong links to Merri-bek. A public recruitment process invited applications, and eight people volunteered in the CAP to assess and recommend grant applications across multiple streams. This process is a form of participatory grantmaking, which has been well received by local volunteers and the Foundation over the years.
2. There were 3 grants categories for assessment by CAP:
  - Community Strengthening Grant
  - Organisational Establishment Grants
  - Capital Works Budget:
    - Facility Improvement Grant (Small)
    - Facility Improvement Grant (Large)

### Process

3. Of the 34 eligible applications were received in the 2025 Community Grants Round. The total amount requested of all applications for assessment by CAP was \$492,302, \$18,910 less than 2024. The number of applications received was 'under prescribed' in comparison to the funds available.
4. The CAP consisted of residents and people with personal links to Merri-bek LGA and representatives of the Foundation, who brought diverse voices to the process through their life and work experiences in the Merri-bek Community.
5. During the grants program, the Foundation and Council supported CAP members in training and preparation. Council Officers and Foundation Staff gave an overview of the approach to assessing grants applications, and how different people approach the task. The CAP gained an understanding of the various grant's streams and details of the Merri-bek Council Grants Guidelines. They also received training on how to use the SmartyGrants grants management software.  
The CAP then reviewed and assessed 34 grants applications, ranking each according to identified priorities and the Grant Guidelines. Panel discussions were held to deliberate on the assessment data, and the team drafted granting recommendations. These panel discussions were framed in ensuring that recommended grants met the grants guidelines and created value for public funds. Overall, this process enabled the CAP to effectively evaluate and recommend grants that aligned with the Council's priorities and objectives.

The Foundation is grateful for the partnership with Council that elevates the voice of local people in decisions of how local funds are used. Local volunteers approached the assessment in a considered and thoughtful manner, and they reflected their own satisfaction about learning about local community groups.

## Recommendation: Community Strengthening Grants

**Grant Category Aim:** To support projects that enhance the Merri-bek Community and aim to address areas such as social inclusion and community participation, environmental sustainability, healthy and active living and creating vibrant spaces.

**Recommendation amount:** \$ 89,366

That the Merri-bek City Council approves 14 grants for which total \$89,366 as follows:

•	\$89,366 to 14 organisations for single year funding grants of up to \$7,000 per organisation.
a)	Australia Nepal Public Link Inc
b)	Celebrating & Conserving Cultures
c)	Culture, Arts & Language Academy
d)	Estrela do Mar Incorporated
e)	KindSugi Upcycling
f)	Merri Community Shed
g)	Merri Creek Management Committee
h)	Multi Art and Culture Association Incorporated
i)	Nepalese Association of Victoria
j)	Northern and Inner North Multiple Birth Association Inc
k)	Pink Ember Studio Co-operative Ltd
l)	Rain Moth Community Nursery
m)	U3A MERRI-BEK INCORPORATED
n)	Women's Housing LTD
	*Additional panel comments and conditions for funding below

The table below outlines the final recommendations by the Community Assessment Panel for Council's consideration.

Organisation	Project Name	Project Description	Funding Priority Groups	Amount Recommended	Additional Comment/Conditions of funding
Australia Nepal Public Link Inc	Suicide Prevention Training for Nepali speaking community in Meri-bek City Council	A suicide prevention program delivered for the Nepali-speaking community and one for the CALD community in Meri-bek City Council. The suicide prevention program is running a Mental Health First Aid Conversations About Suicide program.	Migrant and refugee communities,	\$3,911	<b>Feedback to applicant:</b> Suggests to work closely with Council Officer in forming strategic partnerships, if not done so already of existing local/national support agencies such as; Mensline, Suicide Callback Service, In touch, Vic Gov Suicide Prevention and Response Office, and Switch (support LGBTQIA+)
Celebrating & Conserving Cultures	CCC I-nvironment Community Resilience Program	I-nvironment aims to encourage community participation in environmental sustainability through a community resilience lens. This involves a mix of awareness, conservation, and adaptability. Starting from a community resilience focus and from what is important to the women involved (health, food, cost of living, etc.). The program fosters a sense of responsibility and involvement to create a more sustainable and environmentally conscious community. Other benefits of the program are social inclusion by becoming part of this leadership group and healthy living through healthier choices and a healthier environment.	Environmental, Multicultural, Women	\$7,000	<b>Feedback to applicant:</b> Suggests to work closely with Council Officer in forming strategic partnerships and evaluation support.

Organisation	Project Name	Project Description	Funding Priority Groups	Amount Recommended	Additional Comment/Conditions of funding
Culture, Arts & Language Academy	Empowering Local Communities through Education, Arts, Language, Culture, and Leadership	We seek funding to strengthen and empower Bhutanese and Nepali community in Melbourne through leadership training, social inclusion programs, music, arts, recreations, educational support, and mental health awareness initiatives. This project aims to address cultural disorientation, language barriers, and family challenges while fostering community engagement, personal growth, resilience and preserving cultural identity.	Children, Migrant and refugee, Youth and Education	\$7,000	
East Coburg Eco-Makers	The Gateway to the Merri Project	The Gateway to the Merri Project is a series of 5 immersive workshops that invite local community to connect with each other, the community house, and the local Merri Creek through diverse art making and conversations.	Arts, Environmental, Multicultural	<b>Not Recommended for Funding Feedback:</b> A creative project with clear passion from the three artists. It shows potential, especially with a session rate of \$1000, respecting for time and expertise. Connection to the target audiences could be strengthened—clarifying how communities such as First Nations and LGBTQIA+ have been consulted and how they will directly benefit would add better alignment with this grant stream. Audience projections are ambitious, and sharing an outreach strategy would support feasibility. Please include in-kind contributions in the budget to help demonstrate volunteer investment. Worth developing further – and consider applying via the Council's Arts Program grant rounds.	
Estrela do Mar Incorporated	South American Winter Celebration	In collaboration with Samba Cine Club, brings the South American Winter Celebration, making its debut in Merri-bek. This vibrant event will bring together expatriates and the local community for a free immersive cultural celebration. The festivities will begin with traditional South American games, including a fishery-style challenge and a piñata. As the day unfolds, attendees will enjoy authentic cuisine and live music. The stage will feature a forró	Arts, Multicultural	\$5,100.00	



Organisation	Project Name	Project Description	Funding Priority Groups	Amount Recommended	Additional Comment/Conditions of funding
		band from Brazil and a cumbia band from Colombia—two high-energy musical styles deeply rooted in their respective cultures. The highlight of the night will be the quadrilha, a South American interpretation of the 18th and 19th-century European quadrille, performed in a lively circular dance.			
KindSugi Upcycling	KindSugi Upcycling Crafting Groups	KindSugi Upcycling Crafting Groups situated in Brunswick, the project involves collaborating with local op-shops to collect items such as books that are in excess of what they can sell or redistribute, and to engage Merri-bek residents in 2 x 5-week programs (1.5 hour workshop / week) plus a show-case event at the end of each term, where people experiencing hardship can work on individual or group projects to make useful and decorative upcycled items.	Environmental, People with disabilities, Seniors	\$7,000	
Merri Community Shed	Merri Community Shed Community Market Program	As a result of this pilot program the Merri Community Shed are continuing the Community Market during FY25-26 to enable financial sustainability. The market provides MerriCS members with an opportunity to sell items made at the shed, benefiting between 200 and 250 people.	Multicultural, Social Activities, Other: Community	\$7,000	
Merri Creek Management Committee	Strengthening post-COVID community connections in Merri-bek: Linking natural Merri-bek places and values with local people	Re-invest in community awareness of and connection to indigenous biodiversity values in relation to Wurundjeri Country. Offering 4 gatherings after interactions with communities in their places of connection/gathering to connect to Country Creekside (e.g. for weeding, focus on frogs, Swamp wallaby habitat related planting) as guided walks which may include arts-based learning such as our Catchment staff's integrated & proven community engagement techniques such as botanic drawing, skin art and printing with indigenous plants.	Environmental	\$7,000	

Organisation	Project Name	Project Description	Funding Priority Groups	Amount Recommended	Additional Comment/Conditions of funding
Multi Art and Culture Association Inc	Artistic Bridges a series of interactive workshops and collaborative exhibitions	A series of interactive workshops and collaborative exhibitions designed to connect diverse communities in Merri-bek. This initiative seeks to empower emerging artists by providing them with the tools, space, and opportunities to explore and express their artistic visions. Through "Artistic Bridges" local engagement and enhanced support for cultural diversity, and promote creative collaboration, enriching Merri-bek's cultural landscape.	Arts, Multicultural, Women	\$7,000	<b>Condition:</b> To work closely with Arts department of Merri-bek, to support the success of their proposed project.
Nepalese Association of Victoria	Capacity Building for a Second Generation Nepalese Youths in the Merri-Bek City Council	Enhancing the Nepalese Youth Forum, supporting young Nepalese people in Merri-Bek. This initiative aims to build leadership, networking, and career development opportunities for recently arrived young Nepalese Australians who lack Australian work experience and struggle with community integration. Through mentorship, workshops, and skill-building activities, the project will empower youth with leadership training, community engagement, and professional development support.	Migrant and refugee, Multicultural, Youth and Education	\$7,000	<b>Feedback:</b> suggest council officers work with the groups to <b>engage other</b> stakeholders that will meet the program objectives.
Northern and Inner Multiple Birth Association Inc	Supporting families of multiples in Merri-bek	Northern and Inner Multiple Birth Association (NIMBA) will address fluctuating attendance rates due to many barriers faced by families of multiples. Diversifying the offerings of the playgroup will include and invite new membership engagement in Merri-bek. The program will invite guest performers or instructors to act as a draw card to increase attendance, as well as providing practical resources and help to encourage attendance.	Children, Family, Social Activities	\$7,000	<b>Feedback:</b> Application could be strengthened with clearer articulation of benefit and ability to increase membership.

Organisation	Project Name	Project Description	Funding Priority Groups	Amount Recommended	Additional Comment/Conditions of funding
Pink Ember Studio Co-operative Ltd	Community Arts Workshops for Queer CALD migrants	The program will resource materials, venue, facilitators and participant support (including essential supplies such as paper, ink-based markers, candles, essential oils, and seating arrangements). This program supports young LGBTQIA+ CALD members of Merri-bek to network and strengthen wellbeing.	LGBTQIA+, Migrant and refugee, Social Activities	\$6,500	<b>Feedback:</b> Link with Arts department of Merri-bek to support strengthened relationships within the arts sector, especially those with relationships with Council.
Rain Moth Community Nursery	Establish a community nursery in Newlands	Using a distributed nursery model, Rain Moth Community Nursery will supply low-to-no cost indigenous and edible plants and seeds to the community in and around Newlands. Hosting working bees to clean pots and propagate plants. The group of volunteers will be supported to care for the plants until they are ready for sale	Environmental, Food access and security	\$6,678	
U3A Merri-bek Incorporated	The Adaptation Game (TAG) delivered by trained facilitators from U3A and other community groups to the broader community	U3A is seeking funding to build a cohort of TAG facilitators from U3A and other community organisations able to engage community members to play TAG and to discuss climate adaptation and preparedness.	Environmental, Seniors	\$6,077	
Women's Housing LTD	Tenancy Meetings accompanying Arts and Crafts Workshops	Providing an opportunity for residents to connect and foster wellbeing and cohesive communities. The program will deliver arts and craft classes with the primary objective to provide inclusive and safe spaces for residents to socialise with each other, become familiar with arts events in the Neighborhood Houses, and develop strong relationships with the community	Women, Other: Housing	\$5,100	
<b>Total grant recommendation:</b>				<b>\$89,366</b>	

## Recommendation: Organisational Establishment Grants

**Grant Category Aim:** *To support newly established organisations or groups over three years to grow and become independent.*

**Recommendation amount:** \$40,000

*That the Merri-bek City Council approves 4 grants which totals \$40,000 as follows:*

- *\$40,000 to 4 organisations for funding up to \$10,000 per year for 3 years; 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28.*
  - 1) Merri Community Shed
  - 2) Oddany Inc.
  - 3) Styling Station Melbourne LTD
  - 4) Vixen, Victoria's Peer Sex Worker Organisation
- *The total recommended amount \$120,000 represents the full amount requested by applicants over three financial years. This equates a total of \$120,000 over 3 years.*

The table below outlines the final recommendations by the Community Assessment Panel for Council's consideration.

Organisation	Organisation description	Funding Priority Groups	Amount Recommended
Merri Community Shed	<p>Commencing operations in April 2023, Merri Community Shed (MerriCS) is a not-for-profit community space supporting health, well-being, and social connection in Coburg, Pascoe Vale, and surrounding areas of the City of Merri-Bek, Victoria. Designed to be inclusive and accessible, the shed welcomes people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities, offering a place to learn, create, and connect.</p> <p>MerriCS provides hands-on workshops, skill-building programs, and social activities, fostering lifelong learning and community engagement. Whether participants are experienced makers or beginners, the shed offers tools, space, and support to explore new skills while building social connections and resilience.</p>	Arts, Environmental, Health and Safety, Men, Seniors, Social Activities, Women, Other: Community	<p>\$10,000 per year</p> <p>\$30,000 over 3 years</p>
Oddany Inc.	<p>Oddany is an Artist run initiative located in the heart of the Merri-bek council area on Sydney Road in Brunswick. The initiative opens its doors as an exhibition space, a studio hub for local artists to operate and produce work in, and a performing arts venue for a variety of musicals, drawing and other creative events, workshops and informal social and creative exchanges between community members.</p> <p>Welcoming and supporting artists by offering subsidised studio rates to BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ youth to foster more accessible creative spaces within the community of Merri-Bek. Oddany provides free access to the space for all First Nations youth.</p>	Arts, Social Activities, CALD, LGBTQIA+, First Nations and young people	<p>\$10,000 per year</p> <p>\$30,000 over 3 years</p>
Styling Station Melbourne LTD	<p>Styling Station Melbourne, located in Brunswick, offers personalised styling sessions using clothing diverted from fashion waste to empowering women to feel confident and express their unique style. We operate on a pay-it-forward model, where funds from paying clients go towards providing free styling services to women from our partner community organisations. This model ensures that women facing financial or social barriers can access clothing at no cost. Committed to inclusion and equity, we create a welcoming and accessible environment where every woman can feel well-dressed, confident, and supported while fostering a more sustainable, inclusive community in Merri-bek.</p>	Women	<p>\$10,000 per year</p> <p>\$30,000 over 3 years</p>

Organisation	Organisation description	Funding Priority Groups	Amount Recommended
Vixen, Peer-Led Health and Support Network (Auspiced by Scarlet Alliance) \$10,000	<p>Vixen is Victoria's peer-led health and advocacy organisation supporting people in the adult services sector. Led by current and former industry workers, Vixen provides culturally safe peer education, health promotion, outreach, referrals, harm reduction resources, and community advocacy across Merri-bek and Victoria.</p> <p>With a strong focus on improving access to essential services, safety, and wellbeing, Vixen supports people from diverse cultural backgrounds, gender identities, and language groups including migrant, trans and gender-diverse, female, male, and street-based workers.</p> <p>Through a human rights lens and grounded in lived experience, Vixen builds community connection, champions representation, and promotes health equity for those working in adult services across the state.</p>	Health and Safety, Migrant and refugee, Multicultural, Social Activities, Women	<p>\$10,000 per year</p> <p>\$30,000 over 3 years</p>
Total Recommended for funding			\$40,000 per year \$120,000 over three years

## Recommendation: Facility Improvement Grant

**Grant Category Aim (Small)** :To support minor improvements to facilities that will help local people participate more in community life.

**Grant Category Aim (Large)**: To support larger improvements to facilities that will help local people participate more in community life.

That the Merri-bek City Council approves 15 grants for which total \$353,742 as follows:

- \$59,790 to 6 organisations for funding up to \$10,000 per project for **smaller facility improvements**
  - Coburg Primary School
  - Cretan Brotherhood of Melbourne and Victoria
  - Moomba Park Tennis Club, Inc
  - Newlands and East Coburg Community Houses Inc. (NECCHi)
  - Norm Warehouse
  - Transgender Victoria
  
- \$293,952 to 9 organisations for funding up to \$40,000 per project for **larger facility improvements**
  - 5th Brunswick Scout Group (Scouts Victoria)
  - Bioquisitive Ltd
  - CERES
  - Hadfield Tennis Club
  - Kevin Heinze Grow
  - Northern Schools Early Years Cluster Inc.
  - Parish of Saint Vasilios Brunswick
  - Pascoe Vale Sports Club Inc
  - Sussex Neighbourhood House



The table below outlines the final recommendations by the Community Assessment Panel for the Council's consideration for Facility Improvement – Small.

Organisation Name	Project Name	Project Description	Funding Priority Groups	Amount Recommended	Additional Comment
Coburg Primary School	Power Up the Playground: Installing Power Points for Seamless Assemblies and Fruity Farmers Markets	Install external power points within the Coburg Primary School senior campus on behalf of both the Coburg Primary School and Victorian Famers Market Association (VFMA). These would be then used as access points by the school community for school-based activities such as weekly assemblies, public focused events such as the Art Show (biannual), weekly farmer's markets and other creative endeavours by the students.	Arts, Children, Family, Food access and security, Health and Safety, Social Activities, Sports or Recreation, Youth and Education	\$10,000	<b>Feedback to applicant:</b> Application would benefit from mentioning the works would prevent injuries.
Cretan Brotherhood of Melbourne and Victoria	Bathroom and Toilet Upgrade for improved access and safety	Improve the accessibility of the premises with a bathroom/toilet upgrade in the community facility. Includes replacement of the existing old toilets, vanities, tapware and installation of handrails, non-slip tiles and easy to use door controls in order to significantly improve the access, mobility, safety and hygiene standards for all community user groups.	Migrant and refugee, Multicultural, Seniors, Social Activities	\$10,000	<b>Feedback to applicant:</b> Upgrade is to meet new safety standards. Denying the grant could result in negative health impacts on users of space. Typo in timelines. Working on the assumption that installation is intended to be from 1/7/25 to 21/7/25. The application would have benefited from steering away from the non-existent classification of "unisex toilet" and focus on it being an accessible toilet upgrade.
Moomba Park Tennis Club, Inc	Proposed Protection from Wind	Upgrading shelters for spectators and players.	Sports or Recreation	\$9,790	<b>Feedback to applicant:</b> Great benefit to community. Application can be strengthened by putting a reasonable number of people benefiting from the shade sails. There was an oversight by the applicant in suggesting over 9,000 people will benefit from the upgrade.

Organisation Name	Project Name	Project Description	Funding Priority Groups	Amount Recommended	Additional Comment
Newlands and East Coburg Community Houses Inc. (NECCHI)	East Coburg Neighbourhood House - Garden Improvements	Upgrade of back garden at East Coburg including the installation of new wicking beds with seating included in design, the creation of a new garden space. The new space will require materials, indigenous plants, mulched beds, and paving stones to support community groups and programs.	Arts, Children, Disability, Environmental, Family, LGBTQIA+, Migrant and refugee, Multicultural, People with disabilities, Seniors, Social Activities, Other: Community Centre - Neighbourhood House	\$10,000	
Norm Warehouse	Welding fume extraction upgrades	This proposal is for the installation of a fume extraction system to remove hazardous substances from welding areas and communal workspaces. The project will replace an existing extraction system which does not meet the new WorkSafe standards.	Arts, Other: Makers	\$10,000	<b>Feedback to Applicant:</b> Whilst this application is recommended for funding please note that the application would have benefited from clarity as to number of beneficiaries and the distinction between members and participants in relaying this.
Transgender Victoria	Expanded Affirmation	Upgrade of infrastructure of the newly acquired venue that meets the demand and access for services provided. The new venue is also on Lygon street and is double the size which will enable Transgender Victoria to accommodate larger groups at their activities and increase impact. The upgrade will include sensory friendly upgrades to support new-diverse members.	LGBTQIA+, People with disabilities, Social Activities	\$10,000	
Total				\$59,790	

The table below outlines the final recommendations by the Community Assessment Panel for Council's consideration for Facility Improvement – Large.

Organisation Name	Project Name	Project Description	Funding priority groups	Amount Recommended	Additional Comment
5th Brunswick Scout Group (Scouts Victoria)	Scout Hall for All	They are proposing acoustic treatment for the south hall of our Scout Hall. This will reduce noise levels and improve the space for our scouting and community groups, allowing for more diverse activities and gatherings.	Children and youth (age 0-17); Gender diverse people; People with disabilities > People with hearing impairments; Economically disadvantaged people	\$24,078	
Bioquisitive Ltd	STEM Skills for Tomorrow: Equipping Merri-bek's Future Innovators	The Phoenix School Program, an initiative of BioQuisitive, will reestablish the program within BioQuisitive's framework, focusing on fitting out two laboratory spaces at Brudi. These spaces will facilitate school incursions, professional development for STEM teachers, and small laboratory projects. By providing hands-on experiences and skill-sharing opportunities, we aim to extend established school-based STEM programs, empowering educators and students alike. The mission is to create a stimulating, supportive learning environment that bridges the gap between professional scientific practices and classroom education.	Children and youth (age 0-17); Primary school students; Secondary school students; Tertiary education students; Place-based people or groups;	\$30,816	
CERES	CERES Joes Market Garden - Growing our Community Connections	With increased community program delivery, our visitation has grown considerably in recent years. We are seeking to improve basic infrastructure such as seating and pathways for greater safety, accessibility and comfort, and to support an increase in engagement opportunities for our visiting community members	Children and youth (age 0-17); Adults (people aged 18+); Place-based people or groups; Natural environment.	\$40,000	
Hadfield Tennis Club	Upgrade to LED lighting and installation of a water fountain at the Club	The existing 1000 W metal halide lights on Courts 1 and 2 at Hadfield Tennis Club are proposed to be updated to LED lighting due to the ageing lights and also high energy consumption of the lights. The tennis courts are used for night competition	Children and youth (age 0-17); Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) people; Gender	\$32,620	

Organisation Name	Project Name	Project Description	Funding priority groups	Amount Recommended	Additional Comment
		tennis and other social night tennis activities. Current lights are not compatible with the Tennis Victoria Book A Court system. Water fountain is proposed to be installed as facility users only have a garden tap / cleaners sink that they can access water from.	diverse people; Women; Men;		
Kevin Heinze Grow	Shade Sails for Ilma Lever Gardens	KHG supports people of all abilities using the principles of therapeutic horticulture so we're outside in all but the most inclement weather. Providing multiple large, shaded areas in an otherwise concrete and unshaded space for our participants staff and volunteers is critical for maximising the use of the site and ensuring the health and wellbeing of all.	People with disabilities; People with mental and behavioural disorders.	\$22,013	
Northern Schools Early Years Cluster Inc.	New shade sail for Glenroy Central Kindergarten	To build a new freestanding shade sail at Glenroy Central Kindergarten in Glenroy, to improve the functionality and use of the outdoor play space.	Children and youth (age 0-17) > Children (people aged 3-9); Preschool students; Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) people.	\$25,125	<b>Feedback to Applicant:</b> The application could be strengthened by including and valuing the in-kind volunteer hours in their budget in future.
Parish of Saint Vasilios Brunswick	Accessible lift for Parish of St Vasilios Community Hall	The installation of an accessible lift for the community hall enabling access for people with mobility constraints.	People with disabilities; People with physical disabilities; People with vision impairments; Chronically ill people; Pregnant people.	\$40,000	<b>Feedback to Applicant:</b> The Community Advisory Panel that assessed the grants note that the costs associated for yearly maintenance and insurance is great and will need to be budget/fundraised for continuing benefit.
Pascoe Vale Sports Club Inc	Pascoe Vale Sports Club - Ex Bocce	Renovate ex-bocce room to be able to host the club and external functions.	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) people; Children	\$39,300	

Organisation Name	Project Name	Project Description	Funding priority groups	Amount Recommended	Additional Comment
	room - Raeburn Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Works to include Renewing / adding Female (unisex) toilets at rear of room as current facilities are considered insufficient at Raeburn Reserve .</li> <li>Removed outdated and non-compliant kitchen</li> <li>Provide Door to open up room to Raeburn oval side of room.</li> </ul>	and youth (age 0-17); Adults; Families; LGBTIQ+ people;		
Sussex Neighbourhood House	Upgrade of Community Kitchen	A kitchen upgrade to provide a welcoming, functional space for existing community group activities and attract new groups, enhancing the pool hall's appeal and utility. The work includes fit out of bench space, storage and a dishwasher.	Children (people aged 3-18); Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) people; People with intellectual disabilities; Christians	\$40,000	
Total				\$293,952	

**Facility Improvement Grant Smaller Projects Round 2 2024-2025**

➤ Funding submissions endorsed by Director Community 28/08/2024. Five (5) projects to the value of \$46,122.

Organisation	Project Title	Comments	Amount Approved
Newlands and East Coburg Community Hubs Inc. 20 Murray Rd, Coburg North	Brewlands and Wayi Garden Climate Adaptation Works Installation of a retractable shade awning above the Brewlands Café Serving Window and upgrade 2 of the existing raised garden beds to Wicking Beds.	Panel Recommends funding support. Benefits priority groups: Children, LGBTIQA+ community, Seniors, Women, Girls and Gender Diverse Communities	\$9,122
Pascoe Vale Sports Club 42 Landells Rd, Pascoe Vale	Removal of gas heating / cooling and replacement Removal of gas heating unit and install split heating and cooling systems. Reduces carbon footprint by conversion to renewable energy.	Panel Recommends funding support. Club to consider split systems units as per Council preferred. Work with Recreation & ESD to determine best units for the space. Benefits priority groups: Children, Women, Girls and Gender Diverse Communities, Youth.	\$10,000
Schoolhouse Studios 28 Victoria St, Coburg	Updating Accessible Toilet Door Installation of an automated toilet door for one of our accessible toilets	Panel Recommends funding support. Benefits priority groups: People with disability	\$7,000
Sussex Neighbourhood House 7 Prospect St, Pascoe Vale	AV installation for enhanced offerings to local community at Pascoe Vale Pool Hall. To install a large audiovisual monitor and sound system for use and benefit to hirers of the community hall.	Panel Recommends funding support on the condition: AV is installed and configured with alignment to Merri-bek City Council community facilities. Benefits priority groups: Children, Migrant and refugee communities, People with disability, Seniors, Women, Girls and Gender Diverse Communities	\$10,000
The Anglican Parish of St. Matthews and St. Linus' 30 Widford St Glenroy	Inclusive Access/Acoustic Improvement Improved wheelchair and ambulatory access between Church and Hall for community groups, funerals, wakes etc. Acoustic panels to walls and ceiling of Hall	Panel Recommends funding support. Benefits priority groups: Children, People with disability, Seniors;	\$10,000



# Community Grant Guidelines 2025-26

Improving the quality of life for all people in Merri-bek

May 2025 – Revision 5





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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

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

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## What you need to know – Key dates

<b>All year-round grants</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Community Participation Grant (for groups and individuals)</li> <li>➤ Membership Activity Grant</li> </ul>	
Applications open	Open all year (until funds are exhausted)
Applications submitted	At least 4 weeks prior to activity starting
Notification	2-4 weeks after application submitted
<b>Annual Grants</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Community Strengthening Grant</li> <li>➤ Facility Improvement Grant - Small Capital Projects</li> <li>➤ Organisational Establishment Grant</li> </ul>	
Applications open 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2026	Applications close: 28 <sup>th</sup> February 2026
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start of the day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End of the day 11.59pm</li> </ul>
Applications assessed	March – April 2026
Outcome Notification	May/June 2026
➤ Facility Improvement Grant - Large Capital Project	
EOI open: 1 August	EOI submissions close 14 October 2025:
EOI Notification and Interviews conducted	October – November 2025
Eligible full applications due (Stage 2)	1 January – 28 February 2026
Stage 2 – Full Applications assessed	March – April 2026
Outcome Notification	May 2026

### Community Information Sessions

All Dates and locations of sessions will be advertised on Council's website. Duration of session is approximately 1 hour.

<https://www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/my-council/grants-and-awards/community-grants-program/current-community-grants/>

Enquiries please E-mail: [communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au](mailto:communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au)

## About our Community Grant Program

### Introduction

This Community Grants Program aims to work in partnership with community groups and individuals to create a sustainable, active, healthy, inclusive and empowered Merri-bek. The Program is based on Council's Community Grants Policy and provides support for new and innovative initiatives that respond to emerging community needs.

It is a competitive process and limited by the amount of funds available. Applicants are not guaranteed funding, nor the full amount requested. Projects funded previously cannot be guaranteed funding in future years. This needs to be considered when developing an application.

### Community Grants Objectives\*

The objectives of this program are aligned with the themes in the Council Plan 2021-2025 that has been shaped by the voice of the community:

**An environmentally proactive Merri-bek:** To strive for maximum protection of people, plants and animals through leading an urgent response to the climate emergency and a regeneration of our natural environment.

**Moving and living safely in Merri-bek:** To contribute to the health, safety, and security of everyone living in our diverse community and to increase safe, accessible, physically active and enjoyable ways to get around Merri-bek, especially via walking, cycling and public transport.

**A healthy and caring Merri-bek:** To support Merri-bek to become a more inclusive, connected, healthy and caring community through providing equitable access to community facilities and services and facilitating local partnerships and programs

**Vibrant spaces and places in Merri-bek:** To create welcoming, unique spaces and places across Merri-bek that attract and connect everyone, improving access to community facilities and affordable housing and encouraging vibrant artistic, social and economic activity.

**An empowered and collaborative Merri-bek:** To build community trust through encouraging participation, evidence-based decision making, stewardship of resources and being accessible and responsive.

➤ Read the Council Plan 2021-2025 [here](#)

### Funding Priorities\*

Applications that meet one or more of the Funding Priorities, will score higher in the assessment process:

- The project / activities support Council's priority communities including:
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities,
  - Migrant and refugee communities,
  - People with disability,
  - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual plus, Transgender and gender diverse, Intersex, Queer, Asexual and Aromantic communities (LGBTIQA+),
  - Women,
  - Youth,
  - Seniors,
  - Children.
- The project / activities are planned and will be delivered by community groups and organisations that work together,
- The project / activity considers its environmental impact and tries to minimise it where possible.

**\*Subject to change after new Council Plan is endorsed and Human Rights Policy is reviewed.**

## Program Principles

**Inclusion:** Providing opportunities for individuals and groups to meaningfully take part in community life.

**Equity:** Consciously addressing the barriers faced by disadvantaged groups and individuals.

**Impact:** Taking a purposeful and strategic approach to funding projects that deliver meaningful social impact.

**Capacity building:** Supporting individuals and groups to develop practices, skills and resilience to shape their own futures.

**Collaboration:** Encouraging networks and partnerships to deliver exceptional strategic outcomes together.

**Transparency:** Delivering a funding program that is transparent and accountable in all processes and decisions.

## Eligibility Criteria

### Who Can Apply

Applicants must meet the following eligibility requirements. Ineligible applications will not be assessed.

Eligible Applicants:

#### Organisations, groups and clubs

- Be a Not-for-Profit community group, organisation or club,
- Be incorporated or [auspiced](#) by another incorporated organisation,
- Have adequate public liability insurance,
- Have acquitted previous Council grants and have no outstanding debts to Council,
- Be able to supply financial statements and requested supporting documentation,
- Ensure the proposed activity is consistent with Local, State and Federal laws.

#### Individuals

- Must be a resident of Merri-bek,
- Show that they have been invited to participate in an activity by an organisation or group,
- Show that there are financial barriers to participating in the activity,
- Individuals may only apply under the [Community Participation Grant \(for individuals\)](#) category.

### How many grants can I apply for?

Organisations may receive funding for up to two grants per financial year. Where two applications are made, each grant must have different stakeholders in the community that benefit from the grant and different community outcomes.

\*Individuals will only be funded for one grant per year.

Unincorporated not-for-profit community groups can have their applications auspiced by an eligible incorporated organisation or a Neighbourhood House.

See sections: 'What does it mean to be incorporated?' & 'What is auspicing?' read more pages 20-21

## What we won't fund

To make sure Community Grant funding lines up with Council's values and vision, there are some things we don't fund. Please refer to the following list to ensure that your activities meet the criteria before you apply.

What's not funded	Explanation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Projects that do not align with the <a href="#">Community Grant Program Principles</a> and <a href="#">Community Grants Objectives</a></li> </ul>	<p>The aims and priorities for our Community Grants are outlined in the sections:</p> <p>Please read this and consider whether or not your project meets these aims/priorities.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applications that don't meet the requirements of the grant category</li> </ul>	<p>Each grant has unique eligibility requirements. If you don't meet the eligibility requirements listed for the grant type you seek, you can't be considered.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legal fees or debts</li> </ul>	<p>Funding is focused toward community activities that benefit Merri-bek.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fundraising activities and projects that are for general fundraising and fundraising events, competitions, trophies, prizes or awards, gifts or honorariums, vouchers / gift cards or donations.</li> </ul>	<p>We are not saying that your group can't fundraise, have competitions or award prizes, but because we are granting public funds, we can't financially support fundraising activities.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Permanent public art installations.</li> </ul>	<p>Funding is focused on community building activities and projects, rather than any arts infrastructure. Contact: <a href="mailto:arts@merri-bek.vic.gov.au">arts@merri-bek.vic.gov.au</a>.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Projects / activities that have already started or have been completed or requests for retrospective funding.</li> </ul>	<p>If you've already completed or started a project or activities (beyond initial planning/ scoping), you won't be eligible for a Community Grant for that project/activity. Funding cannot reimburse costs paid before approval.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activities that are part of an organisation's regular program or that duplicate an existing program (except for applications to the Membership Activity Grant)</li> <li>Items that are part of an organisation's core business or normal operating expenses e.g. salaries, stipends, insurances, utilities, rental of business premises. (except for the Organisational Establishment Grant category)</li> <li>Activities and works that are considered as routine, cyclical maintenance, resurfacing or equipment replacement.</li> </ul>	<p>Our Community Grants are designed to support our community members. With limited pools of funds available, our grants are not available to fund and supplement existing employees and wages, operating costs and other core business program and expenses.</p> <p>e.g. general painting, replacement of end of life including minor equipment, fixtures, spouting, roofing, doors, flooring, playing surfaces etc.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Projects that are the funding responsibility of other levels of government</li> <li>State-wide activities that do not directly benefit the Merri-bek community</li> </ul>	<p>Funding is focused towards community-led local activities that benefit people in Merri-bek. We can't financially support these initiatives.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Privately-owned, for-profit businesses and entities</li> </ul>	<p>This funding program is focused towards not-for-profit community-led groups.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Canvassing or lobbying of councillors, employees of the Merri-bek City Council or assessment panel members in relation to any grant, subsidy and sponsorship applications is prohibited.</li> </ul>	

## Which Grant should I apply for?

### Categories and key dates

Category	Maximum Amount	Open Dates	Who Should apply?	Read more:
Community Participation Grant	\$750	Open all year	<b>For individuals:</b> Supports individuals selected to attend development opportunities.	<a href="#">14</a>
	\$3,000	Open all year	<b>For community groups:</b> Community groups and organisations needing support with funding for programs and activities designed to build participation in the community includes projects that fall outside of the annual grant timeframes.	<a href="#">14</a>
Membership Activity Grant	\$3,000 per annum	Open all year	To assist with ongoing costs for member activities of community groups that meet regularly to support health and wellbeing of its members.	<a href="#">15</a>
Community Strengthening Grant	\$7,000	1 January – 28 February	To support community groups to deliver projects that enhance the Merri-bek Community and aim to address areas such as social inclusion and community participation, environmental sustainability, healthy and active living and creating vibrant spaces.	<a href="#">16</a>
Organisational Establishment Grant	\$10,000 per annum	1 January – 28 February	To support newly established community organisations or groups to develop over three years to grow and become independent.	<a href="#">17</a>
Facility Improvement Grant	\$10,000	1 January – 28 February 2026	To support community groups to deliver smaller improvements to facilities that will help local people participate more in community life.	<a href="#">18</a>
	\$40,000	EOI's open August - October	To support community groups to deliver larger improvements to facilities that will help local people participate more in community life.	<a href="#">19</a>



Need to speak to a Council Officer about your grant?

Call us on 9240 1111 or e-mail [communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au](mailto:communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au).

Please ensure you allow ample time to prepare and submit your application.

## Support

### Talk with a Council Officer

**Test your idea:** Speak to one of our staff about your application. They can help to develop your ideas and provide guidance on Council's priorities.

**Language Link:** is a telephone service that provides recorded information in nine common community languages: Arabic, Cantonese, Greek, Hindi, Italian, Mandarin, Punjabi, Turkish and Vietnamese.

It also provides trained interpreters to help residents and staff talk to each other in any language.

The Victorian Interpreting and Translating Service (VITS) runs the Language Link service for Merri-bek Council.

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

**National Relay Service** - If you are deaf or have difficulty with hearing or speech, you can use the National Relay Service to contact Council.

National Relay Service 1300 555 727. Ask for 9240 1111. Read more on their website [here](#).

### Guidelines and forms in other formats

- Other languages: We can offer the application form and guidelines in other languages, as well as translation services. Contact us to receive an application form in another language.
- Other formats: We offer printed paper-based applications for those that need them.
- Technical difficulties? If you have any technical challenges with your online application, contact us for assistance.

### To find out more:

You **must** speak with a Council Officer prior to submitting your application to assist with developing your idea and guidance on Council's priorities.

- More Help Sheets available at [Councils website](#).

### Other people that can help with support

- ✓ Council suggests speaking with your closest Neighbourhood House that can provide additional support to groups that work with migrant and refugee groups. View more information [here](#).
- ✓ Information sessions and workshops: We offer information sessions and workshops. [Click here for session dates and bookings](#).
- ✓ Auspice organisations: can provide support and help to unincorporated organisations applying to this program. Click [here](#) to read more about auspicing for your group.
- ✓ FAQs: Click [here](#) for more information and frequently asked questions.

### Free online training

We have three courses available that will help you in your volunteer role. We offer free training to volunteer-led Merri-bek community groups. The aim of the training is to educate and support groups to become sustainable.

- ✓ **Win More Grants** – How to find and apply for grants
- ✓ **WTF - Where's the Funding?** – How to put more sustainable fundraising strategies in place
- ✓ **Step In, Step Up:** Everything a New Community Board Member Needs to Know – How to make the best contribution you can to your community board and committee

Visit [the Our Community - Merri-bek page](#) to register and get started with these free Compact Courses. Read more [here](#).



Visit our website:

[www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au](http://www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au)



General Grants Enquiries

[communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au](mailto:communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au)



Call us

9240 1111

## Application Process

### How Do I apply

What I need to do:	
1. Read these Community Grants Guidelines.	
2. Check eligibility against the Eligibility Criteria.	
3. Discuss your application with Council Staff, if relevant.	
4. Identify all costings needed for your proposal. See help Sheet - budgeting	
5. Link with other groups and provide letters of support	
6. View the application form online at <a href="https://merri-bek.smartygrants.com.au/">https://merri-bek.smartygrants.com.au/</a>	
7. Fill out the application form with all information requested	
8. Provide all supporting documentation to attach electronically to your submission, including photographs, quotes, financial statements and insurance	
9. Submit your application online by the closing date. - You will receive an email instantly confirming the application has been submitted	

### What documentation do I need?

Documentation needed:	
<b>Collaborations and partnerships</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Collect written support from other community organisations clearly indicating their contribution and how they will support the project</li> </ul>	
<b>Costing and budget</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Quotes or pricing for ALL budget items - see the Costs and Budget Fact Sheet</li> <li>✓ Other supporting documentation you wish to include</li> <li>✓ Strategic or marketing plan (if requested)</li> </ul>	
<b>Financial and Legal Requirements</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Collect your organisations ABN and tax status</li> <li>✓ Certificate of Incorporation (not-for-profit incorporated groups) <a href="http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au">www.consumer.vic.gov.au</a></li> <li>✓ Certificate of Public Liability Insurances Certificate</li> <li>✓ Letter confirming Auspice (if not incorporated) - see the <a href="#">Auspice Fact Sheet</a></li> <li>✓ Collect latest endorsed Financial Statements of organisation, as presented at most recent AGM.</li> </ul>	



Do you need to ask a question? Speak to a Council Officer about your grant?  
 Call us on 9240 1111 or email [communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au](mailto:communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au).  
 Please leave plenty of time to prepare and submit complete application.

### Completing your online application

When you are ready to submit your grant application, you'll use an online program called SmartyGrants. SmartyGrants lets you complete sections of your application in stages, save your progress and return to it later (you don't need to do it all at once). Your application will be stored online, so there's no need to save it to your computer.

Important notes on using the SmartyGrants online form:

SmartyGrants is user friendly, but please keep the following in mind.

- It's helpful to read the [SmartyGrants Help Guide for Applicants](#) before you start the application form,
- Allow plenty of time to complete your online application, so that if you run into difficulties, you can seek help,
- Fields marked with an asterisk must be completed.
- As part of completing the form, you need to upload supporting documents. Files must be no greater than 25mb but are best kept under 5mb each,
- If you aren't familiar with uploading files, please see if someone in your group knows how,
- Please ensure the supporting documents you upload are the appropriate documents required for your application,
- See [What documentation do I need](#) for information on the documents you need to supply
- To avoid losing your work, remember to regularly save your progress in SmartyGrants every 10-15 minutes, as the form logs you out after 30 minutes of inactivity. you can receive support from a Community Grants team member (9240 1111 or e-mail [communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au](mailto:communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au)) before the closing date.
- Review your responses, and then submit your application.
- You will receive an email instantly confirming the application has been submitted
- The link to submit an application is: <https://merri-bek.smartygrants.com.au/>



Speak with us if you need to submit your application in another format.

Example: hand written form or in another language.

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Speak with the Community Grants Team on 9240 1111 or email [communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au](mailto:communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au).

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Check our website [www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au](http://www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au) and view our Help Sheets

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## What happens after I submit an application

### How we assess grants

We assess eligible applications using the criteria listed below and funding is awarded based on merit and information submitted in the application.

% of Score	Criteria	How we assess applications
40%	Supports Community Grants Objectives and Funding Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does the application meet one or more of the <a href="#">Community Grants Objectives</a>?</li> <li>To what extent does the project address the <a href="#">Funding Priorities</a>?</li> </ul>
35%	Demonstrates community need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why is the project needed?</li> <li>How many local people will benefit from the project?</li> <li>What benefits will the project have for the community?</li> <li>Has the applicant asked local people or groups if this project is needed?</li> <li>Is there anything else like this project in Merri-bek?</li> </ul>
25%	Has capacity to implement the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the project well planned and achievable within the timeframes?</li> <li>Does the organisation have the resources and experience to manage the program?</li> <li>Does the budget reflect value for money?</li> <li>Is there evidence of in-kind contribution?</li> </ul>

### Assessment Process

The Assessment Process involves several stages, which is why it takes a little time before you find out the outcome of your application.

- The Community Grants team conducts eligibility checks based on the Community Grants Policy and Guidelines. Applications that meet the eligibility criteria continue to the next assessment stage. (Eligibility checks relate to the information in the Who can apply and What we won't fund sections.)
- Eligible applications are then assessed by an Assessment Panel, who will come up with a list of applications recommended for funding.
- Applications requiring an EOI for a Structural Improvement Grant will undergo a preliminary assessment process, including an interview and site visit where necessary, and be short-listed. Shortlisted applicants will then be asked to submit Part 2 of the application form, along with any additional supporting information, which will be further assessed by the Assessment Panel.

### Approval of Applications

- Annual Grants: Recommendations made by the Assessment Panel are presented to Council for approval at a Council Meeting.
- All-year-round applications will be assessed by the Assessment Panel and approved by Council staff, in line with the level of authority as outlined in the Merri-bek Procurement Policy.
- All applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application in writing and offered the opportunity to discuss the application process. Unsuccessful applicants can seek feedback from Council in relation to funding outcomes and assessment panel decisions.

## My application is successful

If you are successful, a funding agreement outlining the conditions of your grant will be sent to you (or your auspice organisation). You will be required to sign and return a copy of the funding agreement and provide a copy of your organisation's bank statement showing the account number, BSB number and name that matches the applicant or auspice ABN details. All payments will be made by electronic transfer.


Facility Improvement Grants (capital improvement) are paid by instalment.

### Your responsibilities

If you receive a grant from Council, you'll be expected to:

- ✓ Spend the money for the purpose outlined in your application and Funding Agreement.
- ✓ If your plans change (timing / budget / project), you need to submit a variation request to Council, and have it approved, before you make any changes to your project.
- ✓ If you spend the grant differently than your application / Funding Agreement without approval, Council will ask for all grant monies to be returned.
- ✓ Submit an Acquittal/Accountability Report that shows how the grant money was used, as set out in the Funding Agreement.
- ✓ Return any unspent funds to Council.
- ✓ Acknowledge Council's support in any advertisements, flyers or other activities used to promote the project.
- ✓ Tell people about the funded activity or project. Please note, evidence of promotion will be required in your acquittal.
- ✓ Support Council's campaign to encourage the community to support local businesses by buying local goods and services.

As part of the Community Grant accountability process, we reserve the right to audit any and all Community Grant recipients for compliance with the grant conditions and expenditure of grant monies received.



Talk to us if you encounter issues or problems with delivery of your project.

Community Grants Guidelines

### Promoting your project

Please ensure you acknowledge the Community Grant funding contribution on all publications and advertising for your funded activity.

Please use the grants logo to acknowledge support, the grants team can provide support and approval for your advertising and promotions of the funded activity.

Don't forget to provide opportunity for a Council representative to speak and attend the launch or opening of the project.

Example of logo is below: [E-mail](#) us for more logos and help with promotion.



### Project changes or variations

Any change to the project will require a formal variation request. This request is assessed and approval by the assessment panel. Written approval can only be issued by Councils Grants Team. Do not make changes to your project without receiving approval. You will be notified of the outcome.

A variation to a project may change how, when or the expenditure of a component of a funded project, while maintaining the outcomes of the project. Changes to the funded activity must be submitted via a Funding Variation Request form on SmartyGrants. Please request a variation form to be added to your submission. Discuss any proposed changes with the Grants Officer via [e-mail](#) or phone.

Significant variation proposals that change the scope and impacts the outcomes approved by Council, may be viewed as a new project and a variation may not be supported.

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### Problems with your project

Talk to us in the grants team if you encounter issues or problems with delivery of your project.

The earlier a problem is identified the easier it can be dealt with so any impacts on the project are minimised.

If you encounter a really significant issue, you will need to speak with us as we will assess the problem and arrange relevant discussions or meetings with relevant Council officers and the grants team, especially if it will affect your organisation's ability to meet deadlines or complete the project.

Council officers will respond positively to honest, and timely contact with organisations should major problems be encountered.

E-mail: [communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au](mailto:communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au)



### Acquittal Evaluation

Each grant recipient is required to submit an Acquittal Form within one month of completion of the project. The acquittal includes questions about how many people participated in the event/program, what adjustments were made to the project as it unfolded, and whether the aims and objectives outlined in the application were met. The acquittal also includes a financial report, which shows how the funding was spent. You are required to keep accurate and up-to-date records including itemised receipts issued when funding is spent.

The required acquittal form is attached to each successful application. Links to the acquittal forms are listed under each application in the "My submissions" area of SmartyGrants. To access an acquittal form, please log onto <https://merri-bek.smartygrants.com.au/>, click on the "My Submissions" tab and scroll down to the specific grant. You can then complete and submit the acquittal.

- ✓ Please keep receipts for all expenditure items to upload into your online acquittal.

Facility Improvement Grants are required to submit completions certificates and evidence of occupancy when the project is complete to receive the final payment of funding.

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**Do you have a question we haven't covered? Check our website [www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au](http://www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au)**

**Help sheets or contact the Community Grants Officer on 9240 1111 or e-mail [communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au](mailto:communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au)**

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## Categories

### Community Participation Grant

This funding aims to support initiatives that help residents participate in community life and improve personal outcomes. Two types of grants are available under this category.

Open for applications all year. Applications must be submitted at least 4 weeks prior to the activity or event. Please note: We aim to process these as quick as possible, however times may vary.

#### Funding for community groups

##### Amount:

Up to \$3,000

##### Timing:

Applications are accepted throughout the year until funds are exhausted.

##### Requirements:

reference will be given to projects that:

- Address [Community Grants Objectives](#) and [Funding Priorities](#)
- Meet the needs of the community
- Preference will be given to projects that meet the [Funding Priorities](#) outlined on page 4.
- Applicants must be representing a not-for-profit community group and will also score higher against the [assessment criteria](#) where the project is planned and delivered by

community groups and organisations that work together.

- Evaluation and Acquittal report due: within 1 month of funded project end

##### What funding can cover

Activities or projects that support communities listed above to be healthier and participate in community life, including:

- Community events
- Leadership and development activities
- Sports programs
- Community projects
- Relevant equipment that has long term relevance to the organisation/community.

Refer to page 16 for more on what can be funded.

#### Funding for individuals

##### Amount:

Up to \$750

##### Timing:

Applications are accepted throughout the year until funds are exhausted, Evaluation and Acquittal report due: within 1 month of funded project end

##### Requirements:

Funding is provided to individuals who are residents of Merri-bek that have been selected to pursue an achievement and / or development activity in their chosen area of expertise.

Applicant must:

- be a resident of Merri-bek
- show that they have been selected to participate in an activity by an organisation or group, by providing information about the selection process and any advertisements
- show that there are financial barriers to participating in the activity

- Demonstrate a strong commitment to their area of endeavour
- Show the benefit of your activity to the Merri-bek community

##### What funding can cover

Access to programs and activities such as:

- Helping an individual to participate in an event or activity such as, artist/cultural events, sporting competitions
- Opportunities to participate in State, National and international forums that will bring new skills and knowledge to the Merri-bek community
- Leadership and professional development opportunities that will help build leadership capacity of the Merri-bek community

Note: Support is provided for non-ongoing activities (school, tertiary and TAFE studies are excluded). Coaches and support staff are not considered to be participants.

## Membership Activity Grant

### About

This funding aims to help with ongoing costs for community groups that meet regularly to support the health and wellbeing of its members.

### Funding Amount:

Up to \$3,000 each year for 3 years (max. \$9,000)  
Amounts groups can receive:

- \$2,000 for groups with up to 20 members (\$1,500 if receiving other Council support)
- \$2,500 for groups with 21 to 60 members (\$2,000 if receiving other Council support)
- \$3,000 for groups with over 60 members (\$2,500 if receiving other Council support).

### Application Timing

- Open for applications all year round.
- Applicants will be notified of outcome in 4-6 weeks after application is submitted.

### Requirements:

Community groups must:

- Meet regularly in Merri-bek
- Address [Community Grants Objectives](#) and [Funding Priorities](#)
- Provide activities to members that support health and wellbeing, such as social or active programs
- Provide evidence of membership and that it meets in the Merri-bek Municipality.
- Must complete an acquittal every year to show how the organisation is operating.
- Funding must be spread evenly across the costs listed in "What funding can cover". Costs must support the delivery of activities for the members when they meet.

### Funded Period:

3 years

### Evaluation and Acquittal reporting

Within 1 month from approved date each year of funding.

Please note - Annual approved amount is not reviewed each year of agreement.

### Funds Payment

Payment is annually - up to \$3,000 is paid each financial year, a total of \$9,000 over 3 years.

\*Payments for year 2 and 3 is paid after an annual acquittal and evaluation is submitted in accordance with the funding agreement.

### What can funding cover

Member activities, such as:

- Guest speakers, classes, workshops
- Social outings (e.g. bus hire)
- Consumables and supplies (e.g. tea & coffee, food, equipment)
- Special events (e.g., social lunches, end of year celebrations)
- administration
- group activity insurance
- advertising
- Volunteer expenses
- Small equipment that is useful long term to the group
- Communications, media, advertising and marketing.

### Funding may not be used for:

- The hire of Council venues.
- **Restaurant bills**
- Purchasing alcohol
- Outings to gambling venues
- **Personal expenses (i.e. petrol, utility bills, phone bills that aren't in the group's name)**

Examples of eligible groups:  
community garden, seniors' group, playgroup, youth group, etc.

## Community Strengthening Grant

This funding supports community projects that benefit and enhance Merri-bek Community and aim to address areas such as:

- ✓ social inclusion and community participation
- ✓ environmental sustainability
- ✓ healthy and active living
- ✓ creating vibrant spaces.

### Amount:

Up to \$7,000

### Timing:

Open for applications: 1 January - 28 February 2025.

### Notification:

Applicants will be notified of outcomes in May 2025.

### Funded Period:

- 12 months
- Project to occur: 1 July 2025 - 30 June 2026

### Evaluation and Acquittal reporting

Within 1 month of funded project end

### Requirements:

Preference will be given to projects that:

- Address [Community Grants Objectives](#) and [Funding Priorities](#)
- Meet the needs of the community
- Preference will be given to projects that meet the [Funding Priorities](#) outlined on page 4.
- Applicants must be representing a not-for-profit community group and will also score higher against the [assessment criteria](#) where the project is planned and delivered by community groups and organisations that work together.

Examples of eligible groups:

community garden,  
seniors, playgroup,  
youth, support, 'friends'  
of, recreational, active  
etc.

### What funding can cover

- Temporary staff costs to implement the project (e.g. project worker, instructor etc.)
- Printing, advertising, translation, promotional activities
- Equipment or community venue/meeting room hire (up to \$500)
- Costs to encourage participation (e.g. Transport, disability support, interpreters)
- Catering and refreshments (up to \$300)
- Volunteer expenses
- Small equipment that is useful long term to the community and is needed for the project and aligns with the Community Grants Objectives (Up to \$500)
- Communications, media, advertising and marketing.

Community events/festivals,  
projects (e.g. sustainability,  
social inclusion, health  
promotion, participation etc)  
Training and capacity  
building.

## Organisational Establishment Grant

### About

This funding aims to support newly established organisations or groups over three years to grow and become independent.

### Funding Amount:

Up to \$10,000 each year for 3 years  
(total \$30,000 over 3 years)

### Application Timing

- Open for applications 1 January – 28 February 2025.
- Applicants will be notified of outcome in May 2025.

### Requirements:

Community groups must:

- Be based in Merri-bek municipality,
- Address [Community Grants Objectives](#) and [Funding Priorities](#).
- Groups must have been established less than three years before applying for a grant
- Must complete an acquittal every year to show how the organisation is operating.

### Funding Timeline:

Funding: 1 July 2025 - 30 June 2028.

### Evaluation and Acquittal reporting

Within 1 month from 30 June of each funded year

### Funds Payment

Payment annually - up to \$10,000 is paid each financial year, a total of \$30,000 over 3 years.

\* Payments for year 2 and 3 is paid after an annual acquittal and evaluation is submitted in accordance with the funding agreement.

### What can funding cover

- Administration and running costs
- Small equipment that is of significant need to the organisation and supports the Community Grants Objectives
- Incorporation fees
- Insurance
- Governance training
- Volunteer training and capacity building
- Strategy development
- Rent.

### Funding may not be used for:

- The hire of Council venues.
- Purchasing alcohol
- Outings to gambling venues
- Personal expenses (i.e. petrol, utility bills, phone bills that aren't in the group's name or aren't incurred by the group)



## Facility (Structural) Improvement Grant

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

Two types of grants are available under this category.

### Funding for smaller capital projects

#### Amount:

Up to \$10,000

#### Timing:

Annual round 2026/27 - Open for applications: 1 January – 28 February 2026.

#### Notification:

Annual round 2026/27 - Applicants will be notified of outcomes in May or June 2026.

#### Funded Period:

- 12 months or as per below
- Annual round 2026/27 - Project to occur 1 July 2026 - 30 June 2027.

#### Evaluation and Acquitall reporting

Within 1 month of funded project end.

#### Requirements:

Preference will be given to projects that:

- Encourage greater participation in community life
- Address Community Grants Objectives and Funding Priorities
- Meet the needs of the community
- Show how organisations partner together
- Plan for long term sustainability.
- Plans, permits or site audits may be required, depending on the project.
- Read the [Facility Improvement Grant – Information Manual](#) for more guidance on this category.

#### What funding can cover

General facility improvements that encourage greater community access, equity and participation.

- Multipurpose community facilities
- Facility improvements to support people with disability accessing the venue.
- Energy efficiency upgrades - improves a buildings' environmental performance. i.e. conversion of items to renewable energy and/or water and energy efficiency.

#### Funding may not be used for:

Read what we won't fund page 6 and next page what can and won't be funded under both Facility Improvement categories.

#### Minor upgrade works examples:

- Community gardens
- Unisex accessible change facilities
- Outdoor shading
- Multi-use meeting and training spaces
- Environmental upgrades, such as LED lighting, conversion to renewable energy or water tanks.
- Kitchen upgrades



### Funding for larger capital projects

#### Amount:

Up to \$40,000

#### Timing:

Expression of interest (EOI):

- Are open August to mid-October each year for the next funding round
- An interview will be required for all EOI applications and are conducted within the EOI period.

A full application will need include all information including quotes, plans, permits, approvals and site audits.

- Full application due: 1 January – 28 February 2025
- Notification of Outcome: May 2025
- Project Delivery: 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025 – June 2026

#### Requirements:

Applicant must contribute 25% of project value. In addition to requirements set out in smaller capital projects:

Applicants are required to:

- show how community groups collaborate to encourage greater use of the facilities by a range of community members
- contribute at least 25% to the cost of the project
- complete a two-part application process:

1. Submit an EOI

2. Applications that require an EOI will undergo a preliminary assessment process, including an interview and site visit where necessary, the EOI process will determine if the applicant is eligible and ready to submit a full application form in the next funding round, including plans, permits and site audits, depending on the project.

Preference will be given to projects that:

- Address Community Grants Objectives and Funding Priorities
- Meet the needs of the community
- Plan for long term sustainability.

#### What funding can cover

General facility improvements that encourage greater community access, equity and participation

- Environmental initiatives - Energy efficiency upgrades that improves a buildings' environmental performance.
- Multipurpose community facilities
- Facility improvements to support people with disability accessing the venue

#### Funding may not be used for:

- Facilities where there is little or no public access,
- Purchase of land,
- Regular maintenance work (e.g. general painting, replacement of fixtures and /or equipment, drainage, roofing),
- Purchase of minor equipment not part of wider facility upgrade,
- Wages or salaries for project management unless an external person is appointed to manage the project.
- Upgrades to privately owned facilities.

Read the [Facility Improvement Grant – Information Manual](#) for more guidance on this category.

- Community gardens
- Upgrade to sports surfaces
- Unisex accessible change facilities
- Outdoor shading
- Multi-use meeting and training spaces
- Environmental upgrades, such as LED lighting or water tanks.
- Kitchen upgrades to meet food safety standards.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What does mean to be incorporated

Incorporation gives your group its own legal identity (the group becomes a 'separate legal entity' separate from its members). The incorporated group can enter into contracts, sign a lease, employ people, and sue and be sued.

Activities occur in the group's name, rather than in the names of individual members. Incorporated groups follow a particular structure, with group rules (or constitution), members, and a governing body (often called a board or committee).

Many grants are unavailable to unincorporated groups, and this is why auspicing is suggested in these situations.

For more information on incorporation, refer to the following helpful guides:

- Justice Connect's Not-for-profit-Law website: [Starting a not-for-profit organisation](#)
- Consumer Affairs Victoria's guide for clubs and community groups: [Should your club incorporate?](#)

### Volunteer expenses

Volunteering - the definition of volunteering is that there is no financial payment; in other words, volunteering is an unpaid activity. Expenses to support volunteering may include: travel, special clothing or PPE equipment and meals.

### Does my group need an ABN

Your group may need to supply an ABN as part of your application. An ABN refers to an Australian Business Number issued by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). If your organisation has an ABN, it must be included in your application.

Payment of GST may only apply to Facility Improvement Grants if the applicant is registered for GST. All other categories do not have GST implications.

### What is Auspicing?

The 'auspice organisation' takes responsibility (legal and financial) of the grant on your group's behalf. They will sign your grant agreement, receive and distribute grant funds under the grant agreement, ensure activities or events are completed, and submit accountability and evaluation reports with you and on your behalf.

Your group/organisation will still be known as the 'grant recipient'.

### Important information on auspice organisations:

- The auspice organisation you choose must be incorporated and have an ABN.
- The auspice organisation accepts legal and financial responsibility for the grant and will need to meet all eligibility criteria and provide public liability insurance coverage for the project(s).
- Grant money will be paid to the auspice organisation, not the applicant.

Auspiced applicants will need to provide the auspice organisation's contact details, ABN, their most recent financial report, and evidence outlining your agreement with them.

Eligibility and auspicing: categories that are targeted for groups; this grant program cannot fund auspiced ineligible entities or individuals for projects to get around the eligibility criteria. Examples of entities that are ineligible, Australian Public Company, Limited by Shares, sole trader, trust, Public Company Pty Ltd, Partnership or other for profit structures for projects.

### Who could auspice me?

You can approach a larger organisation to partner with your community group/organisation to fund a grant.

- Local neighbourhood house
- A community organisation you have worked or partnered with
- Peak body or governing association of your field
- Organisations with a similar mission and purpose

You may apply through an auspice organisation if your group does not wish to purchase insurance.

Or you may be covered under Liability insurance of the venue you are holding your project if your activity is entirely held at that venue.

### What is "In Kind"?

In Kind means any contribution you (or others) make for free, that you would otherwise have to pay for. e.g. volunteer hours, free venues, free advertising etc. Including your In Kind amount in your budget shows us the full scale of your activity, and how much you're contributing.

### **Why do you need public liability insurance coverage**

Understandably Public Liability Insurance (PLI) may cost a significant amount to a group, however the risks of not having PLI could cost a group much more.

Community groups/organisations will most likely interact with the public as part of running its activities or projects. PLI protects an group/organisation against the liability to pay damages for a bodily injury, death, or for property damage that may occur as a result of an activity by the organisation. Because of the enormous potential costs your group could face if something went wrong and you didn't have PLI, we only fund groups who manage the risk by having PLI.

#### Important note on Public Liability Insurance:

PLI doesn't cover everything you may expect it to. You may need separate insurance when required, such as volunteers insurance to cover volunteers in the event of an injury claim, or building and contents insurance, to cover damage to a property in your organisation's control (if you're renting a space).

A group may be auspiced for insurance coverage. Provide a letter and evidence of coverage from the auspicating organisation that confirms coverage.

### **Child Safe Standards**

Victorian organisations that provide services or facilities for children (anyone under 18 years old) are required by law to implement Child Safe Standards to protect children from harm. Therefore, if you project/program will engage children as either participants or audience members you will be required to demonstrate that you are complying with the Child Safe Standards by uploading a copy of your organisation's Child Safe Policy or Statement of Commitment to Child Safety. For further information on the Child Safe Standards see: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/resources/>

### **What is an annual financial statement?**

All those applying as an organisation must upload a copy of the organisation's (or auspicating organisation's) most recent annual financial

statement to their grant application. For most applicants, this will be the previous year's Financial Statements. The financial statements of an incorporated association must give a true and fair view of its financial performance and position during and at the end of the year.

Requirements of Financial Statements is set out by Consumer Affairs and outlined below:

Financial statements must contain

- Income and expenditure (Income Statement)
- Assets and liabilities (Balance Sheet)
- Notes to the accounts, that includes:
  - information required by the accounting standards
  - information necessary to give a true and fair view
  - information required by the provisions of the Act and its regulations.

More information is available at:

<https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/clubs-and-fundraising/incorporated-associations/running-an-incorporated-association/annual-statement/financial-statements-and-auditing>

You can see an example as part of a Board's financial report here [www.ourcommunity.com.au](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au)

If your organisation is a registered Not-For-Profit with ACNC, you are required to submit your Annual Statement. <https://www.acnc.gov.au/for-charities>.

### **Temporary staff or contractor costs**

Generally, community grants funding intended for projects should not be used to directly engage and pay directors, members and volunteers as temporary contractors or staff. The engagement of temporary staff and professional services should be an external organisation and / or contractor.

Using community grant funds to pay directors and / or members as temporary staff or contractors could create a conflict of interest, as it could be perceived to benefit individuals from an organisation who are involved in a project's delivery and management.

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**Do you have a question we haven't covered? Check our website [www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au](http://www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au)**

**Community Grants Officer on 9240 1111 or e-mail [communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au](mailto:communitygrants@merri-bek.vic.gov.au).**

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## 7.6 CARBON OFFSETS POLICY UPDATE

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade

Sustainability and Climate

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### Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Endorses the updated Carbon Offsets Purchase Policy (Attachment 1), with minor updates.
2. Notes that officers will continue to investigate reporting and offsetting solutions, working with neighbouring councils and the Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) to develop possible alternatives, and monitoring market developments for improved options over time.
3. Receives a further report in the financial year 2026-27 at a briefing or similar.

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

In 2008, Council set its ambition to be carbon neutral as an organisation by 2012. This was achieved and Council certified as carbon neutral in 2012 by the Federal Government's Climate Active Program (previously NCOS), the third Local Government Area (LGA) in Australia to do so and the second in Victoria.

Under the Climate Active Standard, in order to be certified as carbon neutral organisations must measure their greenhouse gas emissions, reduce these where possible, offset their remaining emissions and prepare a publicly available report on their emissions trajectory.

Merri-bek City Council first adopted its Carbon Offsets Policy (Policy) in 2015, and this Policy was last updated and endorsed by Council 12 August 2020 (Attachment 2). The Policy is supported by Merri-bek Zero Carbon – 2040 Framework, Climate Emergency Action Plan 2020-21 – 2024-25 and the current draft Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025-26 – 2030-31.

Council has adopted an ambitious corporate carbon target, of 80-100 per cent reduction by 2030, against a 2011-12 baseline. This excludes offsets.

The Policy outlines Council's approach to, and criteria for, the purchase of carbon offsets.

The process of purchasing is therefore guided by the Policy using:

- 1) mandatory criteria (offsets from Standards approved by Climate Active (e.g., Gold Standard, Australian Carbon Credit Units, Verified Carbon Standard); and
- 2) desirable criteria (co-benefits including location, reliability, affordability).

Indicative of the strong interest in local and affordable offsets, the Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) is currently leading a project to explore whether a consortium of councils could develop a local carbon offsets project. Merri-bek will continue to monitor progress, however any outcome from this work will likely be several years away.

During FY 2025-26 council officers will explore alternatives to Climate Active certification, developing reporting tools and templates, and building consensus among interested Victorian councils.

## Previous Council Decisions

### Updated Carbon Offsets Policy 2020 - 2024 – For Adoption - August 2020

*That Council:*

1. *Adopts the updated Carbon Offset Policy 2020/21-2024/25*
2. *Notes that Council offsets currently cover scope 1,2 and 3 emissions across a broad range of environmental aspects and that the details of this are available on Council's website under the annual National Carbon Offset Standard public disclosure.*
3. *Notes the desire to procure domestic offsets and brings forward a range of options (both domestic and international offset procurement) to Council for decision on a biennial basis. The ZCM Action Plan also currently recommends Gold Standard.*

## 1. Policy Context

Council was certified as carbon neutral in 2012 by the Federal Government's Climate Active Program (previously NCOS), the third Local Government Area (LGA) in Australia to do so and the second in Victoria. Of the 79 Victorian Local Government Areas (LGAs), ten are certified to Climate Active<sup>1</sup>.

Certification allows Council to be publicly recognised for its achievements, helping the community recognise that Council is carbon neutral, and that this has been achieved in a credible and transparent way. There are other approaches for carbon reporting to be transparent and externally validated, and we will continue to explore these alternatives.

The Policy is supported by Merri-bek Zero Carbon – 2040 Framework, Climate Emergency Action Plan 2020-21 – 2024-25 and the current draft Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025-26 – 2030-31.

Council has adopted an ambitious corporate carbon target, of 80-100 per cent reduction by 2030, against a 2011-12 baseline. This excludes offsets.

Merri-bek City Council first adopted its Carbon Offsets Policy in 2015, and this Policy was last updated and endorsed by Council 12 August 2020.

The Policy outlines Council's approach to, and criteria for, the purchase of carbon offsets.

Under the Climate Active Standard, in order to be certified as carbon neutral organisations must measure their greenhouse gas emissions, reduce these where possible, offset their remaining emissions and prepare a publicly available report on their emissions trajectory.

## 2. Background

Since 2019, we have changed all our electricity use in Council buildings to come from 100 per cent clean renewable energy. This is because of our involvement in the group purchasing project the Melbourne Renewable Energy Project (MREP), this facilitated the construction of a purpose-built 39 turbine, 80 MW windfarm. The MREP group includes Melbourne local governments, universities, cultural organisations and corporations. The turbine and wind farm are at Crowlands, which is near Ararat in north-west Victoria.

Through a range of initiatives including MREP, purchase of electric vehicles, electrification of heating and energy efficiency (a Council program operating since 2011), Council has reduced its operational emissions by 63 per cent since the 2011/12 FY.

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<sup>1</sup> City of Melbourne, City of Merri-bek, City of Yarra, Bayside City Council, City of Darebin, Maroondah City Council, Moonee Valley City Council, Surf Coast Shire, Whitehorse City Council, Wyndham City Council

Council spent \$65,000 on offsets (on 6,600 offset units) in 2024. If we had not reduced our emissions so significantly, we would have needed to spend significantly more on offsets to achieve our certified carbon neutral status.

All Council's annual carbon reports are publicly available from the Climate Active website (<https://www.climateactive.org.au/buy-climate-active/certified-members/merri-bek-city-council>).

### 3. Issues

#### Updates

Changes to the Policy have been minimal, since it continues to effectively guide our purchasing decisions. However, a number of minor updates have been made:

- Provided further examples of desirable criteria for buying offsets;
- Language nuanced to reflect the changing views of Climate Active certification since the last update. Refer to discussion part of this paper;
- New sub-heading and some reordering of content to provide context to above changes;
- Addition to the list of 'definitions' to ensure clarity of language;
- Deleted '*Bring forward a range of options (both domestic and international offset procurement) to Council for decision on biennial basis*' from section 5: Roles and Responsibilities table. The selection criteria clearly outlines methodology, and cost often prohibits procurement of domestic offsets;
- Alignment with industry and emerging trends; and
- Editorial changes.

#### Carbon Offset Pricing Variation

The price of carbon offset units has increased over time, albeit with fluctuations. When new projects are launched, supply increases and price drops. In recent years several large corporations have offset their emissions, reducing supply and increasing price.

Once an organisation chooses to certify under Climate Active, they are committed to the purchase of carbon offset units from specific approved standards. The more stringent the carbon offset standard and the greater the co-benefits (for example biodiversity, social benefits), the more expensive the offsets are.

Offset schemes which are based in countries with relatively high cost of living such as Australia (e.g., offsets from savannah burning), will generally be more expensive.

#### Carbon Offset Selection Criteria and Standards

The ideal carbon offset project would be based in Australia, have offsets at an affordable price (less than \$15/tonne greenhouse gases), store carbon rather than avoid the release of carbon (e.g., revegetation rather than renewable energy project), and be certified against a well-recognised and stringent standard. This type of offset project does not currently exist.

The process of purchasing is therefore guided by the Policy using:

- 1) mandatory criteria (offsets from Standards approved by Climate Active (e.g., Gold Standard, Australian Carbon Credit Units, Verified Carbon Standard); and
- 2) desirable criteria (co-benefits including location, reliability, affordability).

Three key offset standards recognised by Climate Active:

- Gold Standard (GS) is considered to be the most reliable certification scheme for international offsets, with a high degree of transparency and stringent checks. There have not been any concerns raised in the media regarding GS projects, many of which are based around renewable energy projects in low and lower-middle-income countries. Due to the accessible price of its offsets and high reliability of the methodology, Council has tended to purchase Gold Standard offsets in recent years.
- Verified Carbon Standard (VCS or Verra) is used for certain international projects, particularly those relating to revegetation. The price is more affordable, however there have been significant concerns raised in the media about VCS methodologies
- Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCU) are expensive (\$25-\$45/tonne) in comparison to overseas VCS or GS. Most offsets relate to savannah burning, where controlled burns are carried out to reduce the risk of larger fires. While ideal from several respects, the price is currently unaffordable. Even City of Melbourne does not purchase ACCUs.

	Australian Carbon Credit Unit (ACCU)	Verra (VCS)	Gold Standard (GS)	Local offset scheme
Local to Australia	✓	×	×	✓
Reliable	✓	×	✓	?
Affordable (\$/tCO <sub>2</sub> e)	×	✓	✓	?
	c.\$25-45	c.\$5/t	c.\$7/t	
Currently recognised by Climate Active	✓	✓	✓	×

### Local industry and future direction

The Federal Government's Climate Active Program has over the past decade been the most well-established and well-recognised certification scheme for carbon neutrality in Australia. However, within Australia in the past year or two, there has been growing concern that Climate Active certification is no longer providing good value for money and regarding the integrity of some offset projects.<sup>2</sup>

There is also concern that the Climate Active methodology does not encourage reporting that is sufficiently ambitious and thorough, particularly in relation to expanding reporting boundary to include Scope 3 emissions.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The Age, Feb 7 2025, 'One hundred 'carbon neutral' corporates quit government scheme over integrity concerns and [Is Australia's "carbon neutral" scheme being abandoned? | RenewEconomy](#)

<sup>3</sup> Under the GHG Protocol, corporate emission are categorized as Scope 1, 2 and 3:  
 Scope 1 is (direct emissions with direct control e.g., gas consumed in Council buildings, diesel consumed by fleet);  
 Scope 2 (indirect emissions resulting from purchase of electricity, steam, heat or cooling by the organisation); and  
 Scope 3 (emissions that occur in an organisation's value chain but are not directly owned or controlled by the organization – e.g., embodied emissions in purchased asphalt, emissions from employee commuting).



Many councils in Victoria are in a similar position to Merri-bek, where they wish to be publicly certified as carbon neutral using local offsets, but find the resource and financial costs of Climate Active and Australian-based carbon offsets to be high. This remains a challenge.

Indicative of the strong interest in local and affordable offsets, Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) is currently leading a project to explore whether a consortium of councils could develop a local carbon offsets project. Merri-bek will continue to monitor progress, however any outcome from this work will be several years away.

The purchase of carbon offsets is constantly evolving, and council officers will continue working to develop more optimal reporting and offsetting solutions, work with neighbouring councils to develop possible alternatives, and will watch the market closely for changes which may trigger us to reconsider our current position.

Specifically, during FY2025-26 council officers will explore alternatives to Climate Active certification, developing reporting tools and templates, and building consensus among interested Victorian councils. Officers will also work with Climate Active to explore other alternatives and or improve their certification process.

### **Community impact**

There is not expected to be any impact to the community resulting from the review of the Carbon Offsets Policy.

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

The Carbon Offset Policy directly addresses climate action through supporting Council's decision to be certified as carbon neutral and to reduce its carbon emissions (in turn reducing number of offsets required).

### **Economic sustainability implications**

Council spent \$65,000 on offsets (on 6,600 offset units) in 2024. In seeking to meet its carbon reduction target of 80 – 100 per cent by 2030, Council has reduced its operational emissions by 63 per cent. If we had not reduced our emissions so significantly, we would have needed to spend significantly more on offsets to achieve our certified carbon neutral status.

### **Legal and risk considerations**

The policy helps officers select high quality offsets that achieve carbon savings as well as social co-benefits. Climate Active certification involves third party checks of the offset registries, and Council's annual report includes links to the available offset project documentation, thus ensuring verification and transparency.

### **Human Rights Consideration**

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

The Council Plan 2021-2025 notes that:

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

## 4. Community consultation and engagement

No community consultation was undertaken for the update of this Policy as it is administrative in nature.

### 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

No communications plan has been developed for the update of this Policy as it is administrative in nature. The promotion of Council's current and any future policy communication opportunities will be promoted through a range of channels including newsletters and social media as the opportunity or need arises.

## 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 of \$70,000 to action this resolution are budgeted for within existing budgets.

We are not requesting any additional funds to implement the outcomes of this review and Policy update.

Using the criteria outlined in the Policy, the expected funding required to implement this policy will remain around \$70,000 per year plus CPI increases (under the Offset Policy Implementation budget (6435031). Climate Active Certification costs \$8,000 per year and \$6500 for verification every three years. The remainder of the funds are used to purchase carbon offsets.

Council spent \$58,000 on Gold Standard (international) carbon offsets in 2023, \$68,000 in 2024 and \$65,000 in 2025. When the price is high (\$10/tonne in 2023, purchasing 6,000 offsets) we spend less, and when the price is lower \$7/tonne in 2024, purchasing 9500 offsets) we spend more and bank offsets for use in future years.

Local carbon offsets (ACCUs) are currently roughly five times more expensive than Gold Standard international offsets. If Council were to purchase entirely ACCUs, this would cost approximately \$165,000. In 2025 Council purchased 481 ACCUs (7% of the total), at a cost of \$24,000.

Quotes will continue to be sought for Gold Standard (international) and ACCU (local) carbon offsets each year to ascertain availability and prices.

## 7. Implementation

Council officers will execute the Carbon Offsets Policy as part of the annual Climate Active Carbon Neutral Certification.

Officers to continue working to investigate more optimal reporting and offsetting solutions, to work with neighbouring councils and the Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) to develop possible alternatives and will watch the market closely for changes which may trigger us to reconsider our current position.

Officers will provide an update to Councillors in 2026-27 on this work.

## Attachment/s

1	Carbon Offsets Purchase Policy updated - April 2025	D25/214863
2	NCOS - Carbon Offsets Purchase Policy 2020-2024 August 2020 Council Endorsed	D20/360228



Policy ID no: tbc

## Carbon Offsets Policy 2024/25-2029/30

**Date Authorised by Council:**

**Commencement Date:**

**Review Date (10 years from authorised date):**

2030 (5 years from authorised date)

**Responsible Department**

Place and Environment

This policy has been authorised.

Cathy Henderson  
**Chief Executive Officer**

<Insert Date signed here>

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Merri-bek City Council achieved carbon neutral status as accredited by the Federal Government's National Carbon Offset Standard at the time (NCOS) in 2012 (became Climate Active). Council received wide praise for doing so, particularly given its commitment to simultaneously maintain an aggressive energy efficiency program to reduce energy consumption and reliance on fossil fuels across its corporate operations.

Merri-bek continues to lead the way in climate leadership. Reporting carbon emissions in a complete, transparent and externally validated manner is one way that Council demonstrates climate leadership. This helps Council tackle the threat of climate change and respond to the Climate Emergency, and act as a role model for other government entities, businesses and the community.

In order to meet Climate Active certification requirements, Council calculates its greenhouse gas emissions, works to reduce these emissions, and purchases carbon offsets to offset the remaining emissions.

This policy outlines Council's approach to, and criteria for, the purchase of carbon offsets.

## 2 CONTEXT

### 2.1 Policy Background

Council set an organisational target in 2008 to achieve zero net emissions by 2012, which it achieved.

The Merri-bek Zero Carbon – 2040 Framework (adopted November 2019), includes targets, which were revised and adopted by Council in 2021 to be more ambitious than the original adopted targets, including 80 – 100 per cent emissions reduction by 2030 (excluding offsets, against 2011/12 baseline).

## 3 OBJECTIVES

This policy establishes a framework for purchasing carbon offsets, which includes the procurement process and criteria for offset selection. The Policy's objectives are to:

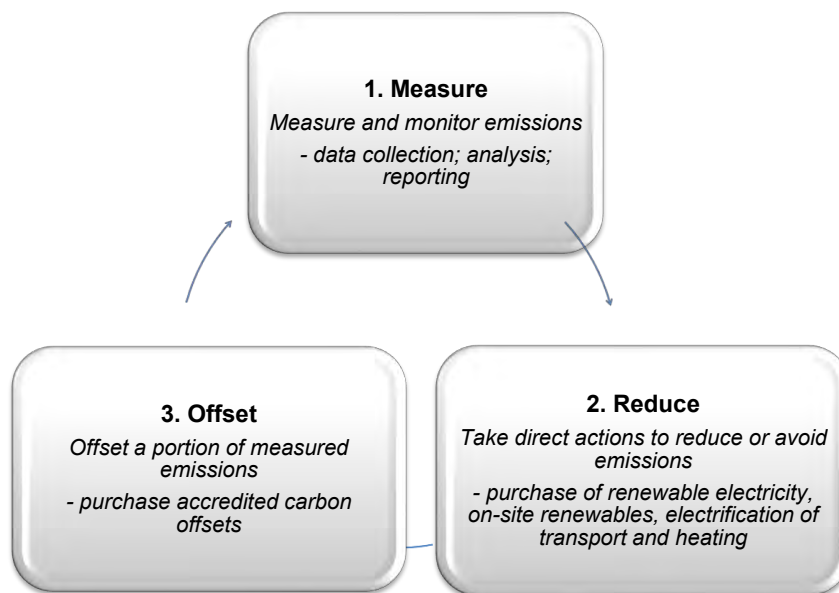
- Guide Council's own decision-making in purchasing carbon offsets; and
- Demonstrate leadership in Council's own decision making in responding to climate change on a corporate level and continue to lead the community towards net zero.

## 4 POLICY DETAILS

### 4.1 Strategic approach to Council investment

To manage its commitment to reducing emissions, Council will continue to take a strategic approach to investment in reducing emissions across its operations.

To reduce carbon emissions in a credible way while expanding our carbon reporting boundary, Council uses the following framework:



#### 4.2 Procurement

Council will always seek to maximise its action under step 2 (reduce) to minimise its action under step 3 (offset).

When selecting carbon offsets, Council will use the following criteria to guide purchasing decisions:

**Mandatory criteria:**

- Offsets from Standards approved by Climate Active (e.g., Gold Standard, Australian Carbon Credit Units, Verified Carbon Standard)

**Desirable criteria:**

- Offsets obtained via a project delivered in Australia  
Preference for projects with social and/or environmental co-benefits (beyond greenhouse gas mitigation)<sup>1</sup>
- Offsets obtained from projects delivered in the last five years<sup>2</sup>
- Consideration of cost per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>e offset

<sup>1</sup> Examples include 1) Agriculture activities (e.g. soil carbon), 2) Vegetation activities (e.g. avoided deforestation), 3) savannah burning, 4) support for local schools in low-to-middle income countries, 5) biodiversity benefits or 6) support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

<sup>2</sup> Noting that eligible offsets under Climate Active must be from projects delivered after 2012

## 5 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Party/parties	Roles and responsibilities	Timelines
Sustainable Built Environment Unit	1. To undertake emissions inventory for Council operations, based on the GHG Protocol, and publish externally validated annual carbon reports 2. To engage with accredited offset suppliers, and to procure offsets on a yearly basis as required in line with the Policy 3. Verify the validity of offsets purchased and ensure certification of their retirement	Yearly, for the duration of the Policy
Various Units across the organisation	Collecting/reporting data and taking reduction action	Yearly and for the duration of the Policy

## 6 MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

The Policy will be reviewed in 2029.

## 7 DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Offset	A carbon offset broadly refers to a reduction in GHG emissions – or an increase in carbon storage (e.g., through land restoration or the planting of trees) – that is used to compensate for GHG emissions that occur elsewhere.
Portion of offsets	While Council is certified carbon neutral against Climate Active, offsets will be purchased for all recorded emissions. These currently include Scope 1, 2 and a small number of Scope 3 emissions. In future, when Council is not certified to Climate Active, offsets will only be purchased to cover scope 1 and 2 emissions. This will allow Council to expand our reporting boundary to fully consider embodied carbon.
Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions	DEFINITION
Reporting boundary	
Climate Active	

## 8 ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

None



Policy ID no: D20/360228

## Carbon Offset Policy 2020-2024

<b>Date Authorised by Council:</b>	12 August 2020
<b>Commencement Date:</b>	12 August 2020
<b>Review Date (10 years from authorised date):</b>	2024
<b>Responsible Department</b>	City Futures

This policy has been authorised.

Cathy Henderson  
**Chief Executive Officer**

<Insert Date signed here>

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Council achieved carbon neutral status as accredited by the National Carbon Offset Standard (NCOS) in 2012. Moreland City Council was the second Council in Victoria (and one of four nationally) to become carbon neutral for its corporate operations.

Since 2012, Moreland has maintained its carbon neutral status each year and is now one of three Councils in Victoria that have carbon neutral status.

Continuing accreditation requires the purchase of verified carbon offsets. This policy outlines Council's approach and criteria to the purchase of carbon offsets.

## **2 CONTEXT**

### **2.1 Alignment**

Moreland City Council has always been a leader in environmental initiatives, including the pursuit of addressing climate change. Council's two previous strategies in this area: Carbon Management Strategy (CMS) and Corporate Carbon Reduction Strategy, 2015 (CCRP) were combined into the Zero Carbon Moreland – Climate Emergency 2040 Framework (the "Framework"), adopted in 2019 to provide a pathway for Moreland City Council to maintain its commitment of carbon neutrality for Council's corporate operations and reach for a zero-carbon municipality by 2040.

In December 2008, the incoming Mayor's speech stated that Council would achieve zero net emissions by 2012 as part of demonstrating leadership to its community. Council delivered on its promise of zero net emissions by 2012 by achieving carbon neutral certification under the National Carbon Offset Standard (NCOS).

It is important for Council to continue to show leadership to its community and broader region on tackling the threat of climate change and responding to the Climate Emergency. Council will continue to showcase the important role of demonstrating leadership and in turn providing inspiration to staff and the community to take action in their personal lives.

### **2.2 Organisational Context**

The Framework analyses Council's corporate carbon footprint, presents energy costs and forecasts and determines the most cost-effective approach to achieve our net-zero corporate emissions target. While the primary focus of Council's efforts is to continually reduce emissions, it has agreed to purchase carbon offsets for the difference to achieve carbon neutrality.

In July 2010, the Federal Government introduced the National Carbon Offset Standard (NCOS) to provide national consistency and consumer confidence in the voluntary carbon market. Council will continue to work within the guidelines of NCOS (Now - Climate Active Carbon Neutral Certification) to meet its carbon neutral target. Since 2012 Council has met the requirements of the NCOS which uses the reporting protocols developed under National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting (NGER) Act, 2007. This covers scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions across a broad range of environmental aspects and the details of this are available on our website under the annual Climate Active Carbon Neutral Certification public disclosure summary.

Council is now a part of the Melbourne Renewable Energy Project (MREP); a partnership with Moreland City Council and 13 other organisations, who together pooled their corporate carbon emissions to tender the construction of a new Victorian renewable energy project to offset their collective electricity emissions. This resulted in the construction of the Crowlands Wind Farm in north west Victoria (near Ararat), which includes 39 new wind turbines and a combined electricity generation capacity of 80MW. As of 1 January 2019, Moreland began purchasing all its electricity for Council operations from this wind farm.



As a result, all electricity for corporate operations is purchased from the Crowlands Wind Farm under a ten-year power purchasing agreement, Councils exposure to the costs of carbon offsets has been reduced by 45% as all electricity is now carbon neutral from the source and does not require further offsets.

Combining the reduction in energy consumption from the energy efficiency program operating since 2011 and the MREP contract, Councils corporate emissions are now 70% below the 2011 baseline which has significant flow on effects in reducing the amount and cost of carbon offsets that need to be purchased to maintain carbon neutral certification.

### 2.3 Research and other drivers

To meet Climate Active Carbon Neutral Certification requirements Council is obliged to purchase 'qualifying' offsets. If Council chose not to purchase these offsets it could not become certified under the program and would not meet its commitments under the Zero Carbon Moreland 2040 Framework.

## 3 OBJECTIVES

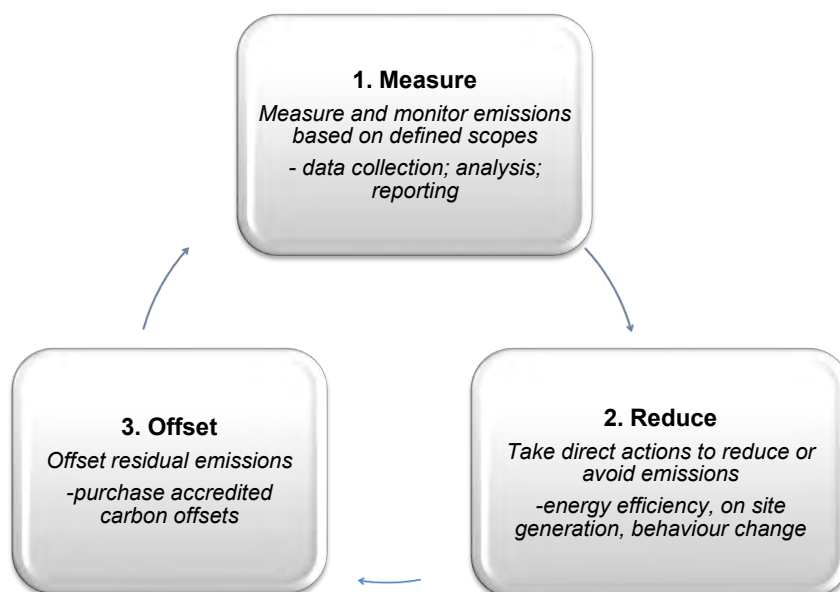
This policy establishes a framework for purchasing carbon offsets, which includes the procurement process and criteria for offset selection. The policy's objectives are to:

- Guide Council's own decision making in maintain carbon neutral certification; and
- Demonstrate leadership in Council's own decision making in responding to climate change on a corporate level and continue to lead the community towards carbon neutrality.

## 4 POLICY DETAILS

### 4.1 Strategic approach to Council investment

To manage its commitment to reducing emissions and maintaining carbon neutrality, Council will continue to take a strategic approach to investment. To achieve carbon neutrality in a credible way, Council utilises the following framework:



## 4.2 Procurement

Council will always seek to maximise its action under step 2 (reduce) to minimise its action under step 3 (offset). When selecting carbon offsets, Council will use the following criteria to guide purchasing decisions:

### Mandatory criteria:

- Must be Climate Active (formerly NCOS) accredited offsets, suitable for the purpose of maintaining Council's carbon neutrality certification

### Desirable criteria:

- Offsets obtained via a project delivered in Australia;
- Preference for projects with social and/or environmental co-benefits (beyond greenhouse gas mitigation), including verification processes for example:
  - Agriculture activities (e.g. soil carbon)
  - Vegetation activities (e.g. revegetation, avoided deforestation)
  - Savannah burning<sup>1</sup>
- Cost per tonne CO2e

## 5 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Party/parties	Roles and responsibilities	Timelines
Sustainable Built Environment Unit	1. To undertake emissions inventory for Council operations using the Climate Active Carbon Neutral Standard and maintain certification  2. To engage with accredited offset suppliers in line with the policy, and to procure offsets on a yearly basis as required in line with the policy.  3. Verify the validity of offsets purchased and ensure certification of their retirement.  4. Brings forward a range of options (both domestic and international offset procurement) to Council for decision on a biennial basis.	Yearly, for the duration of the policy          Every two years, for the duration of the policy

## 6 MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

The policy will be reviewed in 2024.

## 7 DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
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<sup>1</sup> Savanna burning is a carbon emissions reduction initiative. savanna fire management projects aim to reduce the frequency and extent of late dry season fires in savannas, resulting in fewer greenhouse gas emissions and more carbon being sequestered in dead organic matter.

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Offset	Refers to a carbon offset – a reduction in emissions of carbon dioxide or greenhouse gases made in order to compensate for or to offset an emission made elsewhere.
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## **8 ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS**

None

## 7.7 PROCUREMENT POLICY

Director Business Transformation, Sue Vujcevic

Finance and Procurement

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### Officer Recommendation

That Council adopts the revised Procurement policy, at Attachment 1 of this report.

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

The purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement of a revised Procurement Policy (Policy), shown at Attachment 1. The current policy was approved by Council in June 2021 and has been amended by Council a number of times since.

In accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council must review its Procurement Policy at least once during each year term of Council. The current policy is due for review by 30 June 2025. The purpose of the policy is to:

- Provide a procurement framework for Council to achieve value for money in the procurement of goods and services, including for carrying out works;
- Assist in advancing the Council's sustainability and social objectives;
- Ensure continuous improvement in the provision of services for the community; and
- Ensure that Council resources are used efficiently and effectively for the benefit of the community.

The proposed revised policy includes the below key changes:

- A succinct and more user-friendly policy that removes repetition, which works better for our potential suppliers as well as internal officers;
- A new exemption to support spending with local businesses;
- Increases to the procurement threshold, including a \$350,000 (including GST) public tendering threshold to align with the cost escalation impacts on procuring goods and services;
- Setting a minimum weighting of pricing as 50 per cent;
- Revisions to ensure compliance requirements are clearer and not open to misinterpretation from both council officers and potential suppliers.

### Previous Council Decisions

**Notice of Motion - Amend procurement policy to include consultancy engagement – 11 September 2024**

*That Council receives a report that considers the amendment of its Procurement Policy to include a section on Consultancy Engagement and Definition as set out below:*

#### *Consultancy Engagement*

*The engagement of Consultancy service involves additional approvals and procurement reporting.*

*Council staff will follow standard procurement practices identified in this Policy for the engagement of Consultancy services.*

*In addition, prior to engaging a supplier to perform a Consultancy service, Council will consider and document:*

- the reasons why the service is required to be performed by a Consultant.*
- whether the skills required for the Consultancy project exist internally; and*
- if the skills required do exist internally, whether Council Staff have the capacity to undertake the Consultancy service and, if not, whether the Consultancy service can be delayed until such time that internal capacity is available.*

*Despite any other delegation to the contrary, where it is considered that the skills required for a Consultancy service do exist internally, the decision to engage a Consultant must be approved by the CEO in advance.*

*All Consultancy engagements greater than \$10,000 must also be listed in a Consultancy Register. As a minimum the Register will record the following information,*

- description of the Consultancy service*
- name of the firm*
- contract value and end cost; and*
- start and completion dates.*

*A list of completed and current consultancy engagements for the periods ending 30 June and 31 December every year must be reported to Council biannually.*

#### *Definition*

*A service that facilitates decision making through:*

- provision of expert analysis and advice; or*
- development of a written report or other intellectual outputs.*

*For clarity, Consultancy does NOT include:*

- building and works design, construction and related services including fit out.*
- research or project management where recommendations are not provided.*
- routine accounting, audit and taxation services that provide advice on day-to-day issues; and*
- routine legal services (conveyancing, document drafting and litigation services).*

### **Procurement policy, community flag schedule and national general assembly of Local Government Matters – 13 March 2024**

*That Council:*

- 1. Amends the Procurement Policy in relation to future contracts and purchases by adopting Option A: "Council is committed to ensuring Council purchases goods and services from suppliers not engaged in manufacturing, supplying, distribution, benefitting and/or associated with nuclear weapons, chemical weapons, biological weapons, landmines, cluster munitions and other weapons used in war and to harm civilians."*

...

### **Revised Procurement Policy 2021-2025 – 10 May 2023**

*That Council adopts the revised Procurement Policy 2021-2025, at Attachment 1 to this report.*

## **Revised Procurement Policy - Responses to Indigenous Procurement Targets - 10 November 2021**

*That Council:*

1. *Notes that the Merri-bek Council Plan 2021 - 2025 includes a Strategic Indicator to increase Merri-bek Council's active partnerships with First Nations Business.*
2. *Endorses proposed changes to the current Merri-bek Procurement Policy 2021 – 2025; the proposed changes were:*
  - a) *Inclusion of a target to increase First Nations Procurement to 1 per cent by 30 June 2025; and*
  - b) *Inclusion of a Council Procurement Exemption to allow for the direct appointment of suitable First Nations businesses where the value of the expenditure does not exceed \$300,000 (excluding GST) and is considered low risk.*

### **Procurement Policy 2021-2025 – 24 June 2021**

*That Council resolves to adopt the draft Procurement Policy 2021-2025 with effect from 1 July 2021.*

## **1. Policy Context**

The Procurement Policy is made under Section 108 of the *Local Government Act 2020*. The Act requires each council to:

- Prepare and adopt a procurement policy which specifies the principles, processes and procedures applying in respect of the purchase of goods and services and carrying out of works by the Council.
- Review its Procurement Policy at least once during each 4-year term of the Council.

The current procurement policy has a review date of 30 June 2025.

## **2. Background**

Under the *Local Government Act 2020* (2020 Act) Council is required to prepare and adopt a Procurement Policy:

- Which specifies the principles, processes and procedures applying in respect of the purchase of goods and services by Council, including for the carrying out of works (section 108); and
- That Council must review every four years.

Council's Procurement Policy must include the following:

- The contract value for which Council must invite a public tender or seek an expression of interest;
- Description of the criteria used by Council to evaluate whether a proposed contract provides value for money;
- Description of how Council will seek collaboration with other Councils and public bodies;
- Conditions under which Council may procure without inviting tenders or expressions of interest;
- Description of public tender process; and
- Any other matters prescribed by the regulations (note the regulations relating to procurement have not been set and are not anticipated to have any impact at this stage).

### 3. Issues

#### Standalone policy and simplified approach

The current policy was a policy that was developed and shared between the Northern Councils Alliance (NCA), which includes common aspects including the same public tender thresholds. However, the appendices of the policy included, for each Council, Council specific contents that were unique for each of the Northern Councils, including Merri-bek. A key driver for the collaborative policy was to facilitate future smooth collaborative procurement processes.

The NCA procurement leads have had several workshops to review the existing policy. A key driver for Council officers proposing a standalone policy Merri-bek policy, is to streamline the policy, creating a much more user-friendly policy that works better for our potential suppliers as well as internal officers, including removing large volumes of repetitive content. The proposed policy aims to create an easy to read and interpret policy for both Council officers as well as potential suppliers. The proposed policy ensures that collaborative procurement both with NCA and other Councils and public bodies is still able to be facilitated smoothly.

One of the key drivers for a standalone policy Merri-bek policy is also to drive an increase in local business spend via a new exemption within the policy. This is detailed below.

#### Supporting local businesses

The proposed policy includes an exemption within the procurement policy for local businesses.

The proposed policy change would allow for a direct appointment of local businesses where the value of the spend does not exceed \$50,000 (including GST). Rather than needing to seek two quotes for works below \$50,000 (including GST) this would encourage officers to seek local businesses first, both streamlining the process as well supporting local businesses. Officers report internally on local spend; last financial year (2023-24), Council procured goods and/or services from 205 suppliers totalling \$26.9 million, in comparison to this year (as at April) 270 local suppliers have been used, totalling \$12.6 million. The comparative data can be skewed by a small number of contracts being awarded to local suppliers. The aim of this proposed exemption is to continue to grow the number of suppliers used within Merri-bek as well as the dollar spend.

The current policy had a similar exemption for First Nation businesses (at a higher threshold), which has resulted in year-on-year increased spending with first nation businesses (originally \$124K in 2020-21 and most recently \$1.0 million in 2023-24). This data shows that an exemption of a similar nature for local businesses could really increase support for our local economy and have a tangible and important impact.

#### Procurement thresholds

The proposed policy includes increased procurement thresholds. The proposed procurement thresholds have allowed for consumer price index (CPI) increases that have occurred over the past four years, as well as balancing the risk associated with higher thresholds.

The increased public tender threshold is \$350,000 which is less than the current threshold if you accounted for annual inflation costs.

	Current	Proposed
<b>One verbal quote</b>	<\$1,000	<\$1,000
<b>1 quote</b>	\$1,001 - \$10,000	\$1,001 - \$15,000
<b>2 quotes</b>	\$10,001 - \$30,000	\$15,001 - \$50,000
<b>3 quotes</b>	\$30,001 - \$300,000	\$50,001 - \$350,000
<b>Public tender</b>	\$300,000+	\$350,000 +

## **Weighting of pricing criteria**

The current policy does not set the minimum pricing criteria, however internal framework documents had set the minimum pricing at 40%. The proposed policy has set the minimum pricing criteria to 50% and states that any pricing lower or higher than this requires approval. A key requirement under the Act is for the criteria used by Council to evaluate a proposed contract to demonstrate value for money. Based on this, officers are recommending including the minimum pricing criteria within the policy.

Should a requirement for the weighting be lower (or higher) than 50 per cent, this change is required to be approved by both procurement and the relevant director approving the Procurement and Probity Plan.

## **Compliance requirements**

The previous policy had several compliance requirements throughout the document, and the proposed revisions include putting key compliance requirements in one section to improve useability.

Suppliers also had difficulty understanding the compliance requirements within the tender submission documents. There were instances where a supplier interpreted the compliance requirements differently to officers, resulting in time being wasted by the supplier who submitted a tender that they were deemed non-compliant. Officers also had difficulty interpreting the wording and applying this to suppliers.

Section 4.17 of the policy now includes all compliance requirements in this section of the policy, this includes both legislative requirements such as child safety and wellbeing and other compliance items. The proposed policy now states *Our procurement approach excludes procuring with companies whose main business is or specialises in:*

- *Gambling industry;*
- *Coal mining, including the development of coal mines;*
- *Onshore or offshore detention of refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia;*
- *Weapons used in war and to harm civilians.*

Following the endorsement of the revised policy, tender submission documents will be amended to the above wording. This change to the policy is required to ensure the clear interpretation by both suppliers and internal staff. The proposed wording does not alter Council's approach to seeking to maximise positive social, environmental, and economic outcomes through procurement; the proposed wording continues Council's action and commitment in these areas. What the proposed change does do is ensure that suppliers do not waste time putting in submissions that are not compliant with Council's policy positions.

## **Consultancy engagement**

On 11 September 2024 Council resolved to receive a report that considers amending the procurement policy to include a section on a consultancy engagement and definition.

Officers have considered this when preparing the revised procurement policy and are not recommending including requirements in the policy which would have included:

- A register of all consultancies engaged at a value greater than \$10,000;
- A list of completed and current consultancy engagement biannually;
- CEO approval if a decision is made to engage a consultant where the skills required are available internally.



Officers have considered the requirements of this versus the value for money for ratepayers. If these additional reporting and approval requirements were required, an additional full-time staff member would be required to coordinate this (not budgeted for.) Officers have also reached out to the Victorian local government which have had this proposed wording in their procurement policy and it was confirmed that this has not resulted in any change or reduction in the consultancy spend.

As a part of the annual 4-year budget development, officers and the executive team review in extensive detail the proposed consultancy budget. For the 2025-2026 budget the consultant budget is less than 2% of the overall operating budget. This includes both one off/temporary expenditure for a project such as the elevate program (endorsed by Council in March 2025) as well as ongoing expenditure such as consultants that undertake asset and property valuations.

Council also reports publicly on contracts awarded above the public tender threshold on the website, as well as contracts awarded under officer delegation as a part of the monthly financial report.

When officers considered the above as well as key elements governing the procurement policy already as listed below, the recommendation to not include this change to the policy is being made.

- Section 4.8 of the policy includes the procurement methodology and the thresholds requirements for all services and works, which includes the engagement of consultants. This section of the policy stipulates the number of quotes required, as well as when a formal request for quote of public tender process is required.
- Section 4.1 of the policy includes the procurement principles which sets out the fundamental best practice principles to procurement, irrespective of the type of work, value and complexity.

### **Community impact**

Council's Community Engagement Policy 2020 states that for policy matters related to Council's internal organisational operations Council will not engage the community. Therefore, as this revised policy has a negligible impact on the community more broadly, nor can the policy be influenced significantly by the community; Council has not carried out any community engagement.

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

The policy implications in relation to the climate emergency and environmental sustainability are included throughout the policy. This includes but not limited to a minimum weighting criteria of 10 per cent for sustainability for all public tender procurement activities. This is not a change from the current policy and the minimum weighting remains the same. Should a requirement for the weighting be lower than 10 per cent, this change is required to be approved by both procurement and the relevant director approving the Procurement and Probity Plan.

### **Economic sustainability implications**

The policy implications include in relation to economic sustainability are embedded throughout. This includes a key principle of the policy being value for money as well as section 4.15 which talks through what value for money means and the consideration of financial and non-financial costs when demonstrating value for money.

### **Legal and risk considerations**

The policy has been developed in alignment with the *Local Government Act 2020*.

### **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 Community Engagement Policy 2020 states that for policy matters related to Council's internal organisational operations Council will not engage the community. Therefore, as this Procurement Policy applies only to Council's internal operations, no community engagement process is required as set out in the issues section of this report.

In developing the updated policy, consultation was undertaken with key stakeholders including procurement leads within NCA, executive team and council staff. Councillors were briefed on the proposed policy on 28<sup>th</sup> April ahead of this report.

##### **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.

#### **5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

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

#### **6. Financial and Resources Implications**

There are no direct financial implications or resource implications related to this policy. Proper application of the policy will continue to improve general financial outcomes relating to purchasing and contract management.

#### **7. Implementation**

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

#### **Attachment/s**

1 [↓](#) Procurement Policy D25/129203



# Procurement policy

Date authorised by Council: TBC

Commencement date: 1 July 2025

Review date: At least once during each 4-year term of Council

Responsible department: Business Transformation

## 1 Introduction

Section 108 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (Act) requires councils to adopt a Procurement Policy applicable to the purchase of goods and services and specify:

- Thresholds for competitive Tender.
- Criteria used to evaluate whether a contract provides value for money.
- Description on how a council will seek to collaborate with councils and public bodies.
- Conditions under which a council may purchase goods and services without a public tender or Expression of Interest (EOI).
- Description of the process to be undertaken in inviting a public tender or EOI.

It is a requirement that the policy is reviewed at least once during each 4-year term of the Council.

## 2 Context

The purpose of this Procurement Policy (Policy) is to:

- Provide a procurement framework for the Council to achieve value for money in the procurement of goods and services, including for carrying out of works.
- Assist in advancing the Council's sustainability and social objectives.
- Ensure continuous improvement in the provision of services for the community.
- Ensure that Council resources are used efficiently and effectively and for the benefit of the municipal community.

### 2.1 Alignment

The Council's procurement activities shall be carried out to the professional standards in accordance with best practice and in compliance with the Act and applicable policies and procedures including Codes of Conduct for Councillors, Council Staff and suppliers.

Compliance will be monitored by the Council's Procurement Team and minor issues identified will be addressed by Council Staff in leadership positions. Where required, serious compliance issues will be reported by the CEO to the Audit and Risk Committee and Council.

All Council policies comply with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

This Policy has clear linkages to a range of codes, charters, legislation and Council documents, including:

- [Local Government Act 2020](#)
- Procurement procedures and guidelines
- Purchasing and accounts payable manuals
- Codes of Conduct and associated policies
- Contract management guidelines

Compliance with relevant Federal or State legislation including but not limited to, [Competition and Consumer Act 2010](#), Goods Act 1958, Fair Work Act 2009, Workers Screening Act 2020, Child

Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 and the Environment Protection Act 1970 and Environment Protection Act 2017 and other relevant Australian Standards.

## **2.2 Organisational Context**

This Policy and procurement functions sets the direction of procurement governance, processes and procedures. The Policy applies to Councillor, Council Staff and any persons undertaking procurement on behalf of Council and the principles of the Policy must be complied with when undertaking contracting and procurement activities for goods and services.

The scope of the Policy commences from when Council has identified a need for procurement and continues through to the delivery or completion of the awarded contract, the management of the contract and contract closing.

It is recognised this Policy will enhance achievement of the Council's objectives such as sustainable and socially responsible procurement, supporting local economies and obtaining value for money, leading to a better result in the provision of goods, services and works for the benefit of the community.

In all cases, Council staff are responsible for complying with the Policy. Non-compliance with the Policy may result in a breach of our legislative requirements and disciplinary actions, including dismissal. In addition, criminal and civil penalties may be imposed in cases of fraud, corruption, bribery or breach of Australian Consumer Laws.

## **3 Objectives**

The objective of this Policy is for all procurement activities of Council to be conducted in an honest, competitive, fair and transparent manner, while delivering value for money outcomes, with consideration of Council's social, economic and environmental factors. The Policy also seeks to generate and support local and social businesses through inclusion where practical.

## **4 Policy details**

### **4.1 Procurement principles**

Council will apply the following fundamental best practice principles to procurement, irrespective of the value and complexity of that procurement:

- Value for money;
- Sustainability (economic, social and environmental);
- Open and fair competition;
- Accountability;
- Risk management;
- Ethics, probity and transparency; and
- Market testing.

## **4.2 Treatment of GST**

All monetary values stated in this policy are inclusive of GST unless specifically stated otherwise.

## **4.3 Conflict of Interest**

Members of staff (and all persons engaged in procurement on Council's behalf) must exercise the highest standards of integrity in a manner able to withstand the highest level possible of scrutiny. All members of staff have an overriding responsibility to act impartially and with integrity, declaring and managing conflicts of interest. In all procurement matters, all Council staff:

- Must complete and lodge a Disclosable Interests and Confidentiality Declaration if engaged in the evaluation of quotations or tenders.
- Must disclose a general or material conflict of interest (sections 127 and 128 of the Act) and the type of interest before providing advice or reports where it could be perceived that an interest might unduly influence them.
- Those who have been delegated Council powers, duties or functions are prohibited from exercising those powers, duties or functions if they have a conflict of interest.
- Council staff must declare to their Director any items delivered to Council which were not part of the requirements of the contract and which could be construed as gifts or new assets to Council. Such items must also be referenced on supplier invoices.

In procurement matters, all Councillor's:

- Must avoid conflicts between their public duties as a Councillor and their personal interests and obligations.
- Must not improperly direct or improperly influence a member of Council staff in the exercise of any power or in the performance of any duty or function.

In procurement matter, suppliers:

- must avoid actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest.

## **4.4 Internal controls**

All persons engaged in procurement processes must follow the established framework of internal controls over the procurement processes in order to ensure:

- More than one person is involved in, and responsible for each transaction
- Transparency in the procurement process;
- Clearly documented audit trail exists;
- Appropriate authorisations are obtained and documented;
- Systems are in place for appropriate monitoring and performance measurement; and
- A process is in place for escalation, where appropriate, of procurement matters (including procedural non-compliance) to the Executive Leadership Team, the Audit and Risk Committee and Council.

#### **4.5 Commercial in Confidence Information**

Commercial in Confidence information received by the Council must not be disclosed and is to be stored in a secure location.

#### **4.6 Complaints & Reporting suspicious activities**

##### **Complaints Handling**

Members of the public and suppliers, are encouraged to report known or suspected incidences of improper conduct to the CEO. Councillors and Council Staff will report and manage complaints in accordance with Council's internal policies and processes.

##### **Reporting Suspicious Activities**

All Councillors, Council Staff and Council suppliers are required at all times to act honestly and with integrity and to safeguard the public resources for which they are responsible. Council is committed to protecting all revenue, expenditure and assets from any attempt to gain illegal benefits (financial or otherwise).

Council will take all reasonable steps to protect those who assist Council by providing information about suspected fraud. This will include confidentiality of identity and protection from harassment, to the extent possible.

Suspected improper conduct, offers of bribes, commissions and any other irregular approaches from suppliers, prospective suppliers or other individuals will be investigated and reported in accordance with Council's internal policies and processes.

The CEO must notify IBAC of any matter they suspect on reasonable grounds to involve corrupt conduct occurring or having occurred in accordance with mandatory reporting requirements under the *Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2011*.

#### **4.7 Governance**

Council has delegated a range of powers, duties, and functions to the CEO in relation to procurement. The delegation aims to ensure that the Council's procurement structure operates according to processes that:

- 5 Are flexible enough to procure in a timely manner the diverse range of goods, works and services required by Council;
- 6 Guarantee that prospective contractors and suppliers are afforded an equal opportunity to tender or submit a quotation; and
- 7 Encourage competition and collaboration, even where the CEO runs a procurement process under delegation.

#### **4.8 Procurement Methodology**

The procurement methodology is dependent on the value threshold and/or risk of the purchase as shown below. The value threshold to determine the methodology is the total accumulated spend for the procurement including any anticipated variations for the procurement activity.

Section 108 of the Act details that each Council will set the public tender threshold above which tenders or expressions of interest for contracts must be publicly invited.

A public tender process must be used for all procurements valued at \$350,000 and above (incl. GST) for goods, services or works.

For procurements under \$350,000 (incl. GST), the procurement methodology and thresholds are detailed below.

#### **Requirement for tenders, proposals, and quotes**

Council will invite tenders, proposals, quotes, and expressions of interest from the supply market for goods, services and works in accordance with the thresholds listed below:

Procurement Threshold Incl. GST	Procurement Methodology
<\$1,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One informal (screenshot, email or verbal) quotation or written quote.</li> <li>Consideration should be given to local, social and/or First Nations suppliers depending on availability.</li> </ul>
\$1,001 - \$15,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek at least one written quotation.</li> <li>Consideration should be given to local, social and/or First Nations suppliers depending on availability.</li> </ul>
\$15,001 - \$50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek at least two written quotations.</li> <li>A minimum of one local or social or First Nations supplier must be invited, depending on availability.</li> </ul>
\$50,001 - \$100,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Obtain a Contract Number.</li> <li>At least three written quotes are to be invited from suppliers who are considered able to meet the requirements.</li> <li>Where less than three quotes are received from those invited, value for money must be demonstrated.</li> <li>Quotations process to consider sustainability principles (social, economic, and environmental).</li> </ul> <p>A minimum of one local or social or First Nations supplier must be invited, depending on availability.</p>
\$100,001 - \$350,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Obtain a Contract Number.</li> <li>Undertake a formal Request for Quote process (seeking a minimum of three written quotes) by following the process within Council's eTendering Portal.</li> <li>Where less than three quotes are received from those invited, value for money must be demonstrated.</li> <li>Quotations process to consider sustainability principles (social, economic, and environmental).</li> <li>A minimum of one local or social or First Nations supplier must be invited, depending on availability.</li> </ul>
\$350,000+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Public Tender Process is required for the procurement of goods, services and works where once- off or ongoing cumulative spend over the life the contract is expected to exceed \$350,000.</li> </ul>



Measures which intentionally seek to avoid the requirement of the procurement thresholds, for example, contract splitting, purchase order splitting or placing multiple orders, seeking multiple quotations with a single supplier or engaging in effect a single supplier under different guises, are considered to be a breach of this Policy.

### **Cumulative Spend**

It is recognised that certain goods, services or works of the same or a similar kind will be purchased from the same provider under separate arrangements on a regular basis. This will give rise to cumulative spend. In those circumstances, the procurement thresholds set out above must be considered.

The threshold to determine the procurement approach must allow for the potential accumulated spend with the supplier across the same project or initiative across a period of three years. The value of the accumulated spend determines the procurement approach.

### **4.8.1 Exemptions to the Procurement Methodology**

The following authority must be used for exemptions to the procurement methodology where the exemption is justified:

- Directors and CFO can sign off on exemption from quotations up to the public tender threshold;
- CEO can approve situations where there is an emergency as defined in the definitions section of this policy
- CEO can sign off on exemptions where the procurement methodology (section 4.8) and/or compliance requirements are not met

The following circumstances are exempt from the general publicly advertised tender, quotation, and expression of interest requirements.

Exemption Name	Explanation, limitations, responsibilities, and approvals
A contract made with, or a purchase from a contract made by, another government entity, government-owned entity or other approved third party.	<p>This general exemption allows engagements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With another government entity or government owned entity. For example, Federal, State or Local Government or an entity owned by the Federal, State or Local Government; and/or</li> </ul> <p>In reliance on contracts and arrangements established by another government entity, local authority or local government group purchasing scheme, Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) or National Procurement network members (e.g., Local Buy), Procurement Australia (PA).</p>
Extension of contracts while Council is at market	<p>Allows Council to extend an existing contract where the procurement process to replace the contract has commenced, and where the tender process or negotiations will take or are taking longer than expected.</p> <p>This exemption may be used when the establishment of an</p>

	interim short-term arrangement with an alternative supplier is considered not to be in the public interest, as it may be cost prohibitive and/or present a risk in the delivery of critical public services to the municipality.
Professional services unsuitable for tendering	Legal Services & Insurance
Novated Contracts	Where the initial contract was entered into in compliance with the Act and due diligence has been undertaken in respect to the new party.
Information technology resellers and software developers	Allows Council to renew software licenses and maintenance and support, or upgrade existing systems, where there is only one supplier of the software, who holds the intellectual property rights to the software.
Regional Waste and Resource Recovery Groups	Situations where a Regional Waste and Resource Recovery Group constituted the Environment Protection Act 1970 had already conducted a public tender for and on behalf of its member councils.
Statutory Compulsory Monopoly Insurance Schemes	Motor vehicle compulsory third party WorkCover
Operating Leases	Where a lessor leases an asset (generally a vehicle or plant and equipment) to the Council and assumes the residual value risk of the vehicle.
Sole supplier	Any procurement where a supplier is a monopoly, Services Authorities (water, gas, telecommunications, electricity) or has sole ownership or rights over a service, assets or goods and its use, or is mandatory for use by Council or subscriptions and professional memberships.
First Nation Businesses	Direct appointment of suitable First Nations businesses where the value of the expenditure does not exceed \$350,000
Local Businesses	Direct appointment of local businesses where the value of the expenditure does not exceed \$50,000

#### 4.9 Contract Variations

All contract variations must be assessed to determine whether they are properly characterised as variations, or whether they are in effect a new contract. This will depend on factors like:

- The monetary value of the proposed variation, i.e., the value of the variation in the context of the thresholds fixed by the Procurement Policy; and
- The subject matter of the proposed variation, and whether it is consistent with the scope of the original contract.

#### **4.10 Contract Extensions**

Delegation approval must be obtained from the relevant financial delegate before exercising the contract extension option(s), prior to the contract expiring. Contracts should have a defined end date, and automatic renewal (evergreen) contracts will not be permitted.

#### **4.11 Panel Contract Arrangements**

Where a Panel has been established through a procurement process, Council Staff are required to purchase services from the Panel. Council Staff may not purchase services from suppliers not on the Panel, unless a case for going outside the Panel can be justified.

##### **State Government Registers**

For building and construction works, where there are suitable building, and construction industry contractors or consultants on the Construction Supplier Register (CSR) maintained by the Department of Treasury and Finance for and on behalf of the State Government, staff are required to seek a minimum of three quotes (if the expenditure is expected to exceed \$350,000) from suppliers on the register in accordance with ministerial approval arrangements and applicable Procurement guidelines. Standard quotes processes then apply as outlined in the Procurement guidelines.

Other State Government Registers e.g., e-services register, and Ministerial Approved Arrangements.

#### **4.12 Public Tender Requirements**

All public tenders invited by the Council will be published via Council's eTendering Portal and may be advertised in the media. This can include communication channels most used by diverse communities and businesses (e.g., First Nations Media).

##### **Tender Evaluation**

A tender evaluation panel will be established to evaluate each tender submission against the tender's selection criteria. Tender evaluation panels can include external personnel in order to ensure the best outcome for a procurement activity and must comprise of at least 3 persons including a chairperson.

A detailed Tender Evaluation/Procurement Plan shall be developed, approved, and strictly adhered to by that panel. Amongst other things, this involves the establishment of more detailed evaluation criteria (i.e., than those published with the tender) and the application of a pre-approved and robust weighted scoring system.

The Tender Evaluation/Procurement Plan should be completed and signed off prior to the tender being issued.

##### **Evaluation Criteria**

The Council may include the following evaluation criteria categories to determine whether a proposed contract provides value for money:

- Mandatory Compliance criteria (e.g., ABN registration, OH&S, Fair Work Act);
- Tendered price – a cost weighting for evaluation of 50%. Should a requirement for weighting be lower or higher than 50%, Procurement unit manager and relevant director

must approve the change as a part of the procurement and probity plan;

- Capacity of the Tenderer to provide the goods and/or services and/or works;
- Capability of the Tenderer to provide the Goods and/or Services and/or Works; and
- Demonstration of sustainability (social, economic, and environmental).

#### **Probity Advisor and Probity Auditor**

A probity advisor may be appointed in the following circumstances:

- where a proposed contract is considered by Council or the CEO to be particularly complex, of a high risk or controversial nature, and requiring a high level of public confidence; or.
- Where proposed contract sum is \$10m for individual projects, not including panel arrangements; or.
- Where the Unit Manager Procurement or Chief Financial Officer sees the need.

A probity auditor may be appointed to review a completed procurement process or activity.

#### **4.13 Collaborative Procurement**

In accordance with section 108(c) of the Act, the Council will give consideration to collaboration with other Councils and public bodies or utilise Collaborative Procurement Arrangements, when procuring goods, services and works in order to take advantage of economies of scale.

Where practicable, Council will collaborate with other councils in order to take advantage of economies of scale, explore service design best practice, shared service opportunities and services plus drive innovation with suppliers. Opportunities to collaborate must be identified within the Procurement Plan.

#### **4.14 Contract Management**

In order to continually improve its procurement and contract management processes and outcomes, Council will evaluate and seek to improve on all aspects of procurement and contract management, in accordance with its documented procurement processes and Contract Management Guidelines.

Good contract management ensures goods, services and works are delivered to the required standards of quality and quantity as intended by the contract through:

- Establishing a system monitoring and achieving the responsibilities and obligations of all parties under the contract;
- Providing a means for the early recognition of issues and performance problems and the identification of solutions;
- Adhering to the Council's risk management framework and relevant Occupational Health and Safety and sustainability requirements.

Council contracts are to include contract management requirements commensurate with the complexity of the procurement. Furthermore, contracts are to be proactively managed by the member of Council Staff responsible for the delivery of the contracted goods, services or works to ensure the Council and therefore the community, receives value for money.

Council awards some contracts that are strategically critical and of relatively high value.

#### **4.15 Demonstrate Sustained Value**

##### **Achieving Value for Money**

Achieving value for the money is the core rule of purchasing decisions. Council staff responsible for a procurement must be satisfied after reasonable enquiries, that the procurement achieves a value for money outcome. Lowest price is not the sole determinant of value for money. Council staff must consider the relevant financial and non-financial costs and benefits of each submission including, but not limited to the:

- Fitness for purpose of the product and service;
- Quality of the goods and services;
- Service and support;
- Whole-of-life costs;
- Potential supplier's relevant experience and performance history; and
- Environmental sustainability of the proposed goods and services (such as energy efficiency, climate change impact, environmental impact, circularity of the goods and services and use of recycled materials).

#### **4.16 Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) Procurement Considerations**

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.

The framework contains the following areas and priorities:

**Environmental Sustainability** - aiming to promote sustainable business practices by:

- Reducing air, water and soil pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, waste production, natural resource depletion and biodiversity depletion where they present an acceptable Value for Money outcome, and in some cases where they might not.
- Stimulating a circular economy by collaborating with existing and new suppliers to improve environmental management to deliver long-term circular economy practices;
- Ensuring suppliers carry out practices that support biodiversity and climate resilience.

**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

**Governance** - aiming to work with suppliers whose business practices meet legislative requirements and whose principles align with our own, by:

- Ensuring suppliers support safe workplaces including Occupational Health and Safety, compliance with Modern Slavery and Child Wellbeing and Safety legislation where required;
- Ensuring suppliers support a Fair workplace including gender equality and diversity, equal opportunities and National Employment Standards;
- Committing to procurement that supports local businesses and economic diversity.

To create a scalable approach and maximise value and outcomes, each procurement activity will align to the most achievable and realistic priorities for that situation. Governance priorities, supporting safe and fair workplaces are overarching principles considered in all procurements. An Evaluation weighting at a minimum of 10 per cent for sustainability will apply to all public tender procurement activities.

Merri-bek City Council recognises its obligations under the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 and Australia's International Human Rights treaty commitments and respects, protects and promotes human rights when making procurement decisions.

#### **4.17 Compliance requirements**

##### **Child Safety and Wellbeing**

Council is committed to being a child safe organisation and has zero tolerance for child abuse. All children and young people have the right to be and feel safe and their safety and wellbeing is the responsibility of everyone.

The requirement to comply with child safety requirements will form part of the procurement specifications. Depending on the nature of the services, the prospective service provider may need to provide Working with Children Checks and demonstration of the arrangements in place to meet compliance with the Child Safe Standards and Council's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

##### **Modern Slavery Act 2018 (Cth) Disclosure**

Council is committed to combating modern slavery in its operations and supply chain. Service providers will be required to complete a modern slavery questionnaire to demonstrate that they have processes/ procedures to reduce the risk of modern slavery in their supply chain. Service providers who do not comply will be considered being outside Council's supply chain risk appetite and shall be excluded.

### Other compliance items

Our procurement approach excludes procuring with companies whose main business is or specialises in:

- Gambling industry;
- Coal mining, including the development of coal mines;
- Onshore or offshore detention of refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia;
- Weapons used in war and to harm civilians

## 5. Roles and responsibilities

Who	Responsibility
All Council staff and all persons undertaking procurement on behalf of Council	Complying with this Policy and internal procedures and/or guideline documents
Procurement Unit Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administer and monitor compliance with this policy</li> <li>• Review and update this Policy as needed and in alignment with the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i></li> </ul>
Chief Executive Officer	Must notify IBAC of any matter they suspect on reasonable grounds to involve corrupt conduct occurring or having occurred in accordance with mandatory reporting requirements under the <i>Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2011</i> .

## 6. Monitoring, Evaluating and review

In accordance with the Act, Council will review its Procurement Policy at least once during each 4-year term of the Council.

## 7. Definitions

Term	Definition
Act	<a href="#">Local Government Act 2020</a> .
Circular Economy	<p>An approach to the delivery of projects and services aimed at eliminating waste creation through their use of materials and products.</p> <p>The products and materials are kept in use for as long as possible through processes such as sharing, leasing, reuse, repair, refurbishing, and recycling.</p>
Circularity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buildings and fit-outs use less materials, minimise waste, can be deconstructed and reused, are designed for adaptability and flexibility</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goods are durable, repairable, reusable, recyclable</li> <li>• Goods have been refurbished or existing goods are reused</li> <li>• Goods contain recycled content/recycled materials</li> <li>• Goods are recycled at the end of useful life</li> <li>• Goods are returned for resource recovery through a take-back or end-of-life scheme</li> <li>• Goods are available for lease, rent or product-as-a-service as an alternative to buying outright</li> </ul>
Collaborative Procurement Arrangement	A contract established by the Council, government or a nominated agent, such as Procurement Australasia, Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), Northern Region Group of Councils or local government entity, for the benefit state, federal and/or local government entities that achieves best value by leveraging combined economies of scale.
Commercial in Confidence	Information that, if released, may prejudice the business dealings or commercial interests of Council or another party, e.g., prices, discounts, rebates, profits, methodologies, and process information, etc.
Contract Management	The process that ensures all parties to a contract fully meet their respective obligations as efficiently and effectively as possible, in order to deliver the contract objectives and provide value for money.
Council	Merri-bek City Council
Councillors	Council's elected representatives (the Mayor and Councillors) or Administrator(s) appointed to act in this capacity.
Council Staff	Includes all Council officers, temporary employees, contractors, volunteers, and consultants while engaged by Council.
Embodied emissions	All greenhouse gas emissions that are released as part of creating and making a product for use. This is also referred to as 'embodied carbon'.
Emergency	A sudden or unexpected event requiring immediate action including but not limited to the occurrence of a natural disaster, flooding or fire event at a Council property; the unforeseen cessation of trading of a core service provider; any other situation which is liable to constitute a risk to life or property or business continuity
Probity Advisor	An external independent advisor who is appointed to provide advice and may produce a Probity Report at the end of the procurement process to provide verification, or detail reservations about whether that the procurement process was conducted in accordance with relevant Laws, Policies and Procedures.



	Further, they will evaluate whether value for money, compliance, a competitive process, fairness and impartiality, consistent and transparent processes, security and confidentiality and conflicts of interest, were judiciously managed.
Probity Auditor	An external independent advisor who is appointed to audit a procurement process and provide advice. They may produce a Probity Report at the end of the audit, detailing their findings and recommendations in accordance with relevant Laws, Policies and Procedures.  Further, they will evaluate whether value for money, compliance, a competitive process, fairness and impartiality, consistent and transparent processes, security and confidentiality and conflicts of interest, were judiciously managed.
First Nations	Refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
First Nations Business	A First Nations Business is one that is at least 50% owned by a First Nations person(s) (consistent with Supply Nation's definition).
First Nations Procurement Target	A 1% procurement target will be calculated as the number of First Nations businesses the department enters into purchase agreements (Contracts and Purchase Orders) with, divided by the number of small to medium enterprises (SMEs) that Council enters into Contracts and Purchase Orders with.
IBAC	The Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission
Local Business	A commercial business with an operational premises that is physically located within the municipal borders of the 7 Northern Regional Councils.
Northern Councils Alliance (NCA)	The 7 Councils comprising the NCA, being the Cities of Banyule, Darebin, Hume, Merri-bek and Whittlesea and Mitchell and Nillumbik Shire Councils.
Panel	A panel contract is a form of standing offer, established with multiple suppliers for the anticipated provision of goods or services as and when required over a specified period of time. Panels can be open or closed.  Open panels - can accept new suppliers at certain times during the contract period.  Close panel - Is restricted to supplier(s) who were successful to the panel at the start of the contract.
Probity	Within government, the term "probity" is often used in a

	general sense to mean "good process". A procurement process that conforms to the expected standards of probity is one in which clear procedures that are consistent with the Council's policies and legislation, are established, understood, and followed from the outset. These procedures need to consider the legitimate interests of suppliers and ensure that all potential suppliers are treated equitably.
Procedure	The procedures manual, procurement and contract management guidelines that support this policy.
Procurement	Procurement is the whole process of acquisition of external goods, services and works. This process spans the whole life cycle from initial concept through to the end of the useful life of an asset (including disposal) or the end of a service contract.
Schedule of Rates Contract	A standing offer arrangement based on a Schedule of Rates contract that sets out rates for goods and services which are available for the term of the agreement but without a commitment to purchase a specified value or quantity of goods or services.
Small to medium enterprise (SMEs)	An actively trading business with less than 200 employees
Social sustainability or enterprise	Social sustainability focuses on the social aspects of sustainability and social equity; addressing disadvantage and is underpinned by the principles of human rights that encompass respect for diversity. This is exemplified by acceptance, fairness, compassion, inclusiveness, and access for people of all abilities. A focus is also placed on people who are under-represented and with less opportunity.
Sustainable Development	Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
Sustainable Procurement	Sustainable procurement looks beyond the up-front cost to make purchasing decisions based on the entire life cycle of the goods and services, taking into account associated costs, environmental and social risks and benefits, and broader social and environmental implications.
Tender Process	The process of inviting parties from either a select list or via public advertisement to submit an offer by tender followed by evaluation of submissions and selection of a successful bidder or tenderer in accordance with pre- determined evaluation criteria.
Total Contract Sum	The potential total value of the contract including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• costs for the full term of the contract, including any options for either party to extend the contract;</li> <li>• applicable goods and services tax (GST);</li> <li>• anticipated contingency allowances or variations;</li> </ul>

	all other known, anticipated and reasonably foreseeable costs.
Value for money	<p>Value for money in procurement is about selecting the supply of goods, services and works taking into account both cost and non-cost factors including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-cost factors such as contribution to the advancement of Council's priorities, fitness for purpose, quality, service, and support; and</li> <li>• Cost-related factors including whole-of-life costs and transaction costs associated with acquiring, using, holding, maintaining, and disposing of the goods, services or works.</li> </ul>

## 8. Associated and Reference Documents

### Associated documents

- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Employee Code of Conduct
- Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy for Employees and Agents
- Councillor Support, Expenses and Resources Policy
- Travel, Accommodation and Personal Expenses Policy for Council Employees
- Councillors Travel, Accommodation and Personal Expenses Policy
- Corporate Credit and Purchasing Card Policy
- Fraud and Corruption Control Policy
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- S7 Instrument of Sub-Delegation by the Chief Executive Officer to Council staff
- S5 Instrument of Delegation by Council to the Chief Executive Officer
- Risk Management Policy
- Merri-bek Human Rights Policy

### Reference documents

- Local Government Act 2020
- Competition and Consumer Act 2010
- Goods Act 1958
- Fair Work Act 2009
- Workers Screening Act 2020
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
- Environment Protection Act 1970
- Environment Protection Act 2017
- ISO 31000:2009 Risk Management – Guidelines
- Australian Standard AS 5334 Climate Change Adaptation for Settlements and Infrastructure
- Victorian Local Government Best Practice Procurement Guidelines – MAV
- Sustainable Procurement Guide and Environmentally Sustainable Procurement Policy - Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
- Sustainability Victoria: <https://www.sustainability.vic.gov.au/circular-economy-and-recycling/for-councils-and-other-waste-recycling-operators/buy-circular-service/standards-and-specifications>

## 7.8 CONTRACT AWARD: RFT-2025-2 HOLBROOK RESERVE PAVILION AND GENDER INCLUSIVE CHANGE ROOMS

Director City Infrastructure Anita Curnow

Capital Works Planning and Delivery

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### Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to:
  - a) Make a formal offer to **Notion Partners** – ABN 30 328 629 266 (Contractor) to award to the Contractor contract RFT-2025-2 Holbrook Sports Pavilion (Contract) on the following terms and otherwise subject to and in accordance with paragraph 1(b) of the resolution:
    - i. For the total contract value of \$1,695,229.00 (excluding GST), comprising of \$1,395,229 fixed lumpsum (excluding GST) and a provisional amount of \$300,000 (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.

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

Holbrook Sports Pavilion is in the Holbrook Reserve Park, Brunswick West. This facility is home to cricket and soccer but longer meets the needs of the sporting codes and Council's policy to support gender diversity in sport. This new Pavilion will bring the facility up to current standards by delivering all gender change rooms, a social room and umpire rooms and an externally accessible public toilet. Also in scope are storerooms and all civil, services and landscape works.

Design of the pavilion commenced in September 2024 and was completed in consultation with key stakeholders and feedback from the community. The construction of this new pavilion is expected to commence in July 2025 and expected to be completed by June 2026.

The proposed pavilion will be compliant with the current standards. The designs have been finalised and approved by key stakeholders.

To secure a contractor to deliver the project, an advertisement was placed in *The Age* newspaper on Saturday, 25 January 2025 inviting tenders from suitably experienced contractors via the e-tender portal.

## Previous Council Decisions

There are no prior decisions relating to this 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 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 \$300,000 (incl GST) as well as the policy commitments contained in the Procurement Policy.

### 2. Background

The purpose of the report is to award tender for the construction of the new Holbrook Sports Pavilion in the Holbrook Reserve. The project is included as a deliverable within Council's Developer Contributions Plan.

The scope includes female friendly changing rooms, male changing rooms, a social room and umpire room, including all associated facilities required, such as storerooms and all civil, services and landscape works. Finally, all areas affected will be subject to make good before the termination of the works.

An advertisement was placed in *The Age* newspaper on Saturday, 25 January 2025 inviting tenders via the e-tender portal for suitable experienced contractors to undertake Holbrook Sports Pavilion Project. The tender closed on Wednesday, 26 February 2025 and 13 tenders were received.

Tenderer Name	ABN Number
MISR Engineering and Constructions	25 079 136 084
Schultz Building Group Pty Ltd	66 107 918 856
Black Sheep Construction Pty Ltd	75 639 577 825
Notion Partners	30 328 629 266
Circon Constructions Pty Ltd	44 113 265 044
FIMMA Constructions Pty Ltd	22 101 232 320
Key Integrated Pty Ltd	38 615 422 930
Constructive Group Pty Ltd	40 102 865 074
2MORO Group Pty Ltd	43 609 597 524
Harris HMC Interiors (VIC) Pty Ltd	77 130 177 614
Simbuilt Pty Ltd	86 140 288 080
Rossiter Constructions Pty Ltd	30 111 035 413
WP Contractors Aust Pty Ltd	20 668 895 118

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

One (1) tender was non-conforming due to failing to provide all mandatory information on the Tender Response.

#### Tender Evaluation

Tenders were evaluated in accordance with Council's Procurement Policy and in accordance with the approved Procurement Evaluation and Probity Plan for this contract.

The tender evaluation was based on the following the evaluation criteria:

Item	Weighting %
<b>Pricing Response</b>	
Price	40%
<b>Qualitative Criteria Response</b>	
Capability	20%
Capacity	10%
Tender Program / Works Program	10%
Construction Methodology and Task Appreciation	10%
Social Sustainability	3%
Economic Sustainability	3%
Environmental Sustainability	4%
Total Qualitative Criteria Response	60%
<b>Total Scores</b>	<b>100%</b>

The membership of the tender evaluation panel was as follows:

Title	Full Voting / Advisory Member
Project Manger	Full
Senior Project Manger	Full
Senior Project Manger	Full
Senior Project Manger	Full
Head of Building Projects	Technical member
Sustainable Building Officer	Technical member
Procurement Partner	Procurement Compliance

The evaluation process that included a supplier interview identified Notion Partners 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 project with specific timing requirements.

#### Social Sustainability

In addition to supporting Youthworx and the indigenous owned Panku Safety Solutions Pty Ltd, Notion Partners is committed to Corporate Social Responsibility, focusing on environmental sustainability and community development. This extends to project outcomes and creating an inclusive environment for staff with special needs.

## **Environmental Sustainability**

Over the past year, Notion Partners implemented a comprehensive recycling program that has successfully diverted 75 per cent of the company's waste from landfill, contributing to a 20 per cent reduction in overall carbon footprint. Some initiatives Notion Partners carries out across all projects as a standard plan for reducing carbon emissions are:

- Low-embodied energy material selection
- Low energy LED temp lighting
- Encourage site staff to use public transport
- Eliminate single use consumables on site
- Exceed 50 per cent recycled water content in concrete
- Source only responsibly accredited raw materials
- 80 per cent construction waste recycling

## **Economic Sustainability**

Notion Partners is committed to engage approximately 80-90 per cent of subcontractors and materials within the Northern Metropolitan Region.

## **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**

Consultation with key stakeholders was undertaken via public consultation and Conservations Merri-bek page from November 2024, the community was also informed of the project via letter drop on December 2024.

In response to feedback from the community, a public toilet that will be accessible to the public during daylight hours and maintained by Council has been incorporated into the design.

Nearby property owners and residents will be informed prior to the works commencing on site via a letter drop from Council and the contractor. Sporting clubs have previously been engaged on scope and timing of works, the sporting clubs at Holbrook Reserve will receive updated advice regarding the impending works to ensure impacts on their activities are understood and planned for.

Building Projects Unit as the leading service unit for this tender process consulted internally with:

- Recreation Services
- Community Development and Social Policy
- Sustainable Built Environment

In addition, the clubs who use the current Holbrook Reserve Pavilion were consulted.

It is recommended that the Contract be awarded to Notion Partners and that the project progress in line with the plans that have been agreed with the key stakeholders and community.

## **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 adopted budget has the below figures included in the capital works program for Holbrook Reserve Female Friendly change Rooms, Brunswick:

Budget and expenditure	Amount
2023/24 forecast	40,997
2024/25 forecast	405,990
Carry forward funding into 2025/26	700,000
2025/26 budget (proposed)	800,000
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$1,946,987</b>
Project expenditure to date	\$156,206
<b>Total Available Budget</b>	<b>1,790,781</b>
<b>Less</b>	
Maximum Contract Sum, made up of:	<b>1,695,229</b>
<i>Recommended contract with Notion Partners – tendered lump sum amount</i>	<i>1,395,229</i>
<i>Contract Provisional sum</i>	<i>300,000</i>
Other project costs	95,552

The project is expected to be delivered within the available budget subject to discovery of any significant site related latent condition.

## 7. Implementation and Timeline

This report is seeking a Council resolution that the Chief Executive Officer be authorised 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 by 30 June 2025. The site preparation works will follow around the end of mid-July 2025.

Construction of this new pavilion is expected to start late July 2025 with anticipated completion date of March 2026.

## Attachment/s

- 1 Tender Recommendation Report - New Holbrook Reserve Sports Pavilion and Gender Inclusive Change Rooms D25/252208

*Pursuant to section 3(1)(g(i)) 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 relates to trade secrets.*



## 7.9 CONTRACT AWARD RFT-2024-45 - CLEANING SERVICES - COLLABORATIVE PROCUREMENT

Director Business Transformation, Sue Vujcevic

Finance and Procurement

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### Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to:
  - a) Make a formal offer to **GDM Group Pty Ltd ATF Gagovski Family Trust (Cleaning Melbourne) (Contractor) ABN 54 160 063 325** to award to the Contractor contract **RFT-2024-45** for the **Provision of Cleaning Services (Contract)** on the following terms and otherwise subject to and in accordance with paragraph 1(b) of this Resolution:
    - i. For a supply contract for an initial contract term of 3-years ending 30 June 2028 with the option for Council to extend the contract for a further 2x1 year period.
    - ii. On a lump sum pricing basis for routine services and on a schedule of rates basis for additional reactive services. The total estimated spend for the 5 years is \$7,900,000 (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;
  - b) Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to exercise the option to extend contracts in accordance with the provisions within the Contract; and
  - c) Advises all tenderers of Council's decision in relation to the Contract.

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

This purpose of this report is to recommend the awarding of contract No RFT-2024-45 Cleaning Services Collaborative Procurement for the provision of cleaning services. Council, in collaboration with four northern region Councils, undertook a tendering process to seek submissions from suitably qualified and capable contractors to provide cleaning services to the four municipalities.

Council requires the provision of cleaning services across 110 sites comprising administration offices, community/recreation facilities, libraries, maternal and child health centres and public toilets and barbecues. The anticipated expenditure on this contract is forecast to be a maximum spend of \$7,9000,000 (excl. GST).

A key requirement of the tender submissions was to demonstrate how they would deliver on Council's social, environmental, and economic priorities, including strong environmental management practices and social and economic initiatives across the northern region community. The preferred tenderer has committed to employing a percentage of its workforce from within the northern region, including five per cent of employees from disadvantaged backgrounds. The preferred tenderer is also committed to the use of Good Environmental Choice Australia (GECA) certified cleaning products and the use of sustainable consumable products.

The potential term for the contract is five-years, with an initial period of 3 years and the option to extend for a further period of 2x1 years. The anticipated contract commencement date is 1 July 2025, which aligns across the other Councils and ensures a common end date of 30 June 2028 for the initial contract term.

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 \$300,000 (incl GST) as well as the policy commitments contained in the Procurement Policy.

### **2. Background**

The purpose of this report is to recommend the awarding of contract No. RFT-2024-45 Cleaning Services Collaborative Procurement for the provision of cleaning services.

In August 2024, Banyule as the Lead Council, along with Merri-bek City Council, Nillumbik Shire Council and a new inclusion of the Yarra Plenty Regional Libraries initiated planning of a new tender process to continue with the collaborative approach for cleaning services. Other Councils in the Northern Region elected not to participate.

The established tender panel consisted of a group of subject matter experts from within the day-to-day operational requirements for each participating organisation, as well as key procurement officers and an independent (external) Probity Advisor.

Nillumbik Shire Council was appointed to function as a tendering agent on behalf of Banyule, Merri-bek and Yarra Plenty Regional Libraries for seeking tenders for the Contract. The intention of the collaborative tender process was to:

- make the contract more attractive to the market;
- achieve better value than would be possible if the market were approached individually;
- encourage sharing and implementation of best practice learnings, and
- maximise innovation and value-added benefits.

Council sought submissions from suitably qualified and capable contractors to provide a wide range of cleaning services as follows:

- facility cleaning services (administration buildings, community buildings, convention centres, family buildings/MCH centres, recreational buildings, libraries)
- public toilet cleaning services
- public BBQ cleaning services
- set ups and set downs
- after function cleans

- consumables and
- periodical cleaning services.

The services comprise:

- Part A - Fixed routine services, periodical services, and reactive services, and
- Part B - Supply of consumables.

A key requirement in the tender specification included the use of environmentally friendly cleaning products and consumables to minimise the environmental impact of Council's cleaning activities.

The (RFT) event was released on 16 November 2024, a virtual tender market briefing was held on 20 November 2024, which was hosted by Banyule City Council.

The initial tender closing date was 12 December 2024. Due to request by industry to extend the closing date, the RFT event closed at 2:00pm on Thursday 19 December 2024, with submissions received via the electronic tender box from 23 suppliers.

The tender evaluation criteria included cost, capacity, capability, and social / environmental / local considerations. In particular, tenderers were asked insert number questions which cover the consideration of capacity, capability, and social / environmental / local aspects.

Detailed evaluation criteria and weighting are provided in the following table:

Criteria	Weighting
Cost	40%
Technical criteria, made up of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity and capability (55%)</li> <li>• Customer Service (30%)</li> <li>• Sustainable procurement (15%)</li> </ul>	60%

The membership of the tender evaluation panel from Merri-bek was as follows.

Title and/or company	Project Manager/ Generalist or Nominated Speciality	Full Voting / Advisory Member
Coordinator Council Facilities	(Chair)	Full
Glenroy Community Hub Coordinator	Generalist	Non-scoring member
Team Leader Community Venues	Generalist	Non-scoring member
Unit Manager Maternal Child Health and Immunisation	Generalist	Non-scoring member
Events and Facilities Team Leader	Generalist	Non-scoring member
Inclusive City and Community Coordinator	Generalist	Non-scoring member
Unit Manager Aquatic and Leisure Services	Generalist	Non-scoring member
Unit Manager Library Services	Generalist	Non-scoring member
Senior Procurement Partner	Procurement	Advisory
ArcBlue, Probity Advisor	External, probity	Advisory

The evaluation process is included at **Confidential Attachment 1**.

## **Issues**

A Tender Evaluation Panel (TEP) comprising representatives from each of the participating Councils evaluated the tenders in two stages using the below listed compliance and evaluation criteria. One voting member was nominated from each of the participating Councils to score on behalf of the relevant Council.

A Tender Evaluation Plan which included the agreed selection criteria and weightings was prepared and signed off by the TEP prior to tenders closing to ensure transparency, objectivity and fairness to all tenderers involved in this Request for Tender process.

## **Compliance and Comparative Criteria**

Compliance criteria:

- conformance with Councils' terms and conditions (or acceptability of proposed amendments)
- conformance with Councils' specification of works/ services (or acceptability of proposed amendments)
- ABN Registration;
- acceptable OHS standards and systems;
- commitment to provide evidence of insurances to the satisfaction of the Council
- satisfactory financial assessment outcome.

## **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.

In line with the *Local Government Act 2020*, Merri-bek City Council collaborated with 2 other local Councils within the NCA region and Yarra Plenty Regional Libraries.

## **Social, Environmental, Local Implications**

Cleaning Melbourne has provided a comprehensive Strategic Plan for Reducing Carbon Emissions and addressing environmental sustainability. They are committed to transitioning to hybrid and electric fleet vehicles, the use of Good Environmental Choice Australia (GECA) certified cleaning products and the use of sustainable consumable products, and integrating energy-efficient equipment.

All senior managers within the company are actively engaged in ongoing education and training related to environmental sustainability.

Cleaning Melbourne has committed to delivering meaningful social benefits to the Northern Region Councils' communities and libraries by implementing an employment program that provides opportunities for jobseekers from disadvantaged backgrounds and have confirmed and committed to the requirement to create a minimum of two positions within Merri-bek City Council annually. This aligns with their Social Employment Policy, which promotes a fair, inclusive, and equitable working environment and a commitment to corporate social responsibility.

Cleaning Melbourne will leverage existing partnerships with social enterprises and job placement agencies such as the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC), Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL), Salvation Army Employment Plus, and Himilo Community Connect.

## **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 and Engagement**

Advice was sought from officers across Council involved in cleaning services.

### **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**

Over the five-year term of the contract, the maximum spend is expected to be \$7,900,000 (excluding GST) which is within the existing operating budget.

### **7. Implementation and Timeline**

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

The contract will commence on 1 July 2025 following Council endorsement.

## **Attachment/s**

- |          |  |            |
|----------|--|------------|
| <b>1</b> | Tender_Evaluation_Report_for_1397-2024_Cleaning_Services | D25/243761 |
|----------|--|------------|

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

## **7.10 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 APRIL 2025**

**Director Business Transformation, Sue Vujcevic**

**Finance and Procurement**

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### **Officer Recommendation**

That Council notes the Financial Management Report for the period ended 30 April 2025, at Attachment 1 to this report.

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

This report presents the Financial Management Report for the financial year to date period ending 30 April 2025. A detailed financial review was undertaken across the organisation at the end of February 2025. The results of this review are included in this report as the Full Year Revised Forecast.

The 30 April 2025 Income Statement shows that Council has recorded a surplus of \$58.7 million, \$2.3 million higher than the year-to-date budget of \$56.4 million, as a result of higher overall revenue and lower overall expenditure. These differences are considered largely timing in nature. As set out in the Issues section of this report, operating surplus funds do not convert to immediately available cash to Council; they are used to fund important community infrastructure project like the Coburg Library and Piazza Redevelopment or recently completed projects like Fawkner Leisure Centre redevelopment and Balam Balam Place, Brunswick.

Council has spent \$73.7 million on capital expenditure, which is tracking below the year-to-date (YTD) budget of \$78.9 million, with \$19 million budget remaining.

### **Previous Council Decisions**

#### **2024/25 Third Quarter Financial Review – 9 April 2025**

*That Council:*

1. *Notes the 2024-25 Third Quarter Financial Report for the period ending 28 February 2025, including operating performance and capital performance at Attachment 1.*
2. *Notes the status of the capital works program for 2024-25.*
3. *Notes the increase to the full-year forecast for operating income of \$2.9 million and the decrease to operating expenditure of \$0.5 million arising from the 2024-25 Third Quarter Financial Review.*
4. *Endorses the full-year capital expenditure forecast of \$102.2 million, arising from the 2024-25 Third Quarter Financial Review.*
5. *Carries forward the following capital project funding to the 2025-26 Capital Works Program:*
  - a) *Fully or partially grant funded projects to be carried forward if the funding is secured and received this financial year:*
    - *McBryde St Reserve (Moomba Park) – Pavilion Gender Inclusive Facilities - \$1,456,539*
    - *Shared Zones – Victoria St and Albert Street - \$800,000*
    - *Dunstan Reserve Childcare - \$720,000*
    - *Brunswick Early Years Hub - \$400,000*
    - *Community Battery - \$400,000*

- *Bain Avenue from Plaisted to Boundary, Road Reconstruction - \$367,590*
- *Gowanbrae Dog Park - \$200,000*
- *Wombat Crossings – Barrow St & Blair St, Coburg - \$172,960*
- *Wombat Crossing – Dawson St at Melville Road, Brunswick West - \$145,390.*

*b) Rates funded projects:*

- *Shore Reserve – Football & Cricket - \$704,105*
- *Sim Cr & Victoria St – Engeny Hot Spot No 8 - \$491,829*
- *Brunswick City Baths Repainting & Renewal - \$300,000*
- *Narre Narre Stadium Floor Renewal - \$300,000*
- *Northwest Brunswick Pre-school - \$263,323*
- *Urquhart Street from Alva to Keith, Road Reconstruction - \$250,000*
- *Coburg Bluestone Cottage Complex Redevelopment - \$250,000*
- *Road Closures - \$205,000*
- *Victoria St Bike Lanes – Sydney Rd to Pearson St - \$203,527*
- *South Street – Engeny Hot Spot No 12 - \$200,000*
- *Merri Trail – Flood Mitigation – Bridge to Darebin - \$185,971*
- *Kendall/Harding Footbridge over Merri Creek - \$177,000*
- *Balfe Parks Sports Field Lights - \$163,929*
- *WSUD Implementation – Various - \$134,000*
- *Large Scale WSUD (Sportsfield Stormwater Reuse) - \$130,000*
- *Kerbside Waste Reform (waste charge funded) - \$102,735*
- *O’Hea St Bike Path Extension – Sussex to Derby St - \$100,000*
- *LXRP Equipment - \$87,002*
- *Hadfield Depot Masterplan Development & Drainage - \$75,000*
- *Craigieburn Shared Path – Stage 4 - \$40,000.*

*c) Reserve funded projects:*

- *York Street Park Close to Home - \$300,000*
- *Park Renewal – Gervase Reserve - \$263,104*
- *Saxon St Community Hub – Northwest Building - \$150,000*
- *Minor Park – Tate Reserve (Removal) - \$20,000.*

*6. Brings forward the following capital project funding to the 2024-25 Capital Works Program:*

- *Brunswick Activity Centre Upgrade Works – Wilson Ave - \$372,179*
- *Alva Gr from Urquhart to Bell, Road Reconstruction - \$338,661*
- *Urban Forest Strategy – Tricky to Plant Areas - \$262,024*
- *Gym Equipment Replacement Program – Various - \$251,896*
- *James Martin Reserve (former Pigeon Club) - \$250,000*
- *Park Renewal – Cox Reserve (reserve funded) - \$59,315*
- *Coburg Library Redevelopment (reserve funded) - \$50,227*
- *West Street Intersection and Streetscape - \$43,000.*

*7. Approves funding for new projects in the 2024-25 Capital Works Program:*

- *Property Purchase (reserve funded) - \$1,766,000*
- *40 km/h Rollout – Traffic Calming (76% externally funded) - \$409,064*
- *CB Smith – Electrical Works - \$300,000*
- *Carelink Go+ Device Purchases - \$160,000 (previously budgeted as operating)*
- *Bob Hawke Capital Improvements/Replacements - \$95,640*
- *Park Close to Home – 568-574 Sydney Road (reserve funded) - \$50,000.*

8. Approves additional funding for the following existing projects:
- *McBryde St Reserve (Moomba Park) – Pavilion Gender Inclusive Facilities (externally funded) - \$1,456,539*
  - *Replace Council Fleet (banked carry forward) - \$786,559*
  - *Shared Zones – Victoria St and Albert St - \$270,000*
  - *Raeburn Reserve – Cricket Training Nets (externally funded) - \$225,000*
  - *Accommodation Changes to Meet Service Demand - \$225,000*
  - *Merri Trail – Flood Mitigation – Bridge to Darebin - \$185,971*
  - *Road Closures - \$165,000*
  - *Installation of Pedestrian Operated Signals - \$110,000*
  - *Feasibility Study/Investigation/Design – Forward Planning - \$100,000*
  - *Kent Road – Separated Bike Lane Trial - \$100,000*
  - *Coburg Library Redevelopment (banked carry forward) - \$100,000*
  - *Craigieburn Shared Path - Stage 4 - \$65,000*
  - *Coburg Streetscape Masterplan – Louisa St - \$60,400*
  - *Wombat Crossing – Albion to Melville - \$50,000*
  - *Brunswick Activity Centre Upgrade Works – Wilson Ave - \$50,000*
  - *Park Close to Home – 260 Sydney Road (reserve funded) - \$46,000*
  - *Woodlands Bridge (50% externally funded) - \$30,102*
  - *Turner Street Kindergarten Expansion - \$30,000*
  - *Gym Equipment Replacement Program – FLC - \$26,770*
  - *Carlise Street – Nicholson – Glenora, Coburg - \$23,745*
  - *Cole Reserve Upgrade Masterplan – Lighting - \$18,804*
  - *Gillon Cricket Practice Nets - \$13,850*
  - *Brearley Reserve – Public Toilets – \$9,513*
  - *Harding Street Corridor - \$9,195*
  - *Transport Trial Sites – bike lanes & shared zones - \$7,980*
  - *Cole Reserve Upgrade Masterplan – Groundworks (banked carry forward) - \$6,429*
  - *Municipal Art Collection – Various - \$1,737*
  - *Park Renewal – HW Foletta Park - \$840.*
9. Notes savings realised from the following existing projects in the 2024-25 Capital Works Program:
- *Fawkner Leisure Centre Redevelopment (reserve funded) - \$600,000*
  - *Dawson St Bike Lanes - \$459,250*
  - *De Carle Street from Donald to Davies, Road Reconstruction - \$260,000*
  - *Mitchell Pde Retaining Wall - \$230,000*
  - *Bendigo Street from Alpine to Cumberland, Road Reconstruction - \$210,000*
  - *Oak Park Kindergarten - \$200,000*
  - *De Carle St Bike Lanes – The Avenue to Moreland Rd - \$189,679*
  - *Merri Creek Trail Access and Safety Upgrades - \$185,971*
  - *Carnarvon Street from Blyth to Dorothy, Road Reconstruction - \$150,000*
  - *Furniture & Fittings Replacement Program - \$150,000*
  - *Park Renewal – Fisher Reserve (reserve funded) - \$147,573*
  - *Carnarvon Street from Dorothy to Stewart, Road Reconstruction - \$115,000*
  - *Yungera St from Wyuna to Mutton, Road Reconstruction - \$106,339*
  - *Road Safety and Amenity Improvements Program - \$100,000*
  - *Peterson Avenue from Mehegan to Jackson, Road Reconstruction - \$90,000*
  - *Tyson Street from Jukes Rd to Denys Street, Road Reconstruction - \$90,000*
  - *Derby St Kindergarten Children’s Centre - \$70,000*
  - *Park Close to Home Frith Street (reserve funded) - \$60,000*
  - *Raeburn Reserve – Lights - \$52,055*
  - *Chris Court from Devereaux to Dead End, Road Reconstruction - \$41,984*



- *Lonsdale Street from O'Hea to Murray, Road Reconstruction - \$40,000*
- *Coburg (Former) Bowls – Upgrades - \$35,835*
- *Rayner Reserve – Pavilion Upgrade & Gender Inclusive Facilities - \$35,000*
- *Pedestrian Access & Priority Treatments - \$33,000*
- *Park Renewal – CB Smith Reserve - \$25,000*
- *Coburg Activity Centre Upgrade Works – Victoria St - \$25,000*
- *Commercial Tenancy Maintenance Obligations - \$17,376*
- *Immunisation Room – Minor Capital - \$10,740*
- *Temple Park – Public Toiler Renewal – 24 Gray Street - \$4,750*
- *Rayner Reserve – New Public Toilet - \$2,000*
- *Oxygen Youth Centre – Accessible Door Installation - \$1,878*
- *Kaumple Street, Pascoe Vale, Drainage Works - \$1,604*
- *Shore Reserve – Public Toilets – Reynard Street - \$634.*

## **2024/25 Second Quarter Financial Review – 12 February 2025**

*That Council:*

1. *Notes the 2024-25 Second Quarter Financial Report for the period ending 31 December 2024, including operating performance and capital performance at Attachment 1.*
2. *Notes the status of the capital works program for 2024-25.*
3. *Notes the decrease to the full-year forecast for operating income of \$5.3 million and the decrease to operating expenditure of \$2.7 million arising from the 2024-25 Second Quarter Financial Review.*
4. *Endorses the full-year capital expenditure forecast of \$107.1 million, arising from the 2024-25 Second Quarter Financial Review.*
5. *Carries forward the following capital project funding to the 2025-26 Capital Works Program:*
  - a) *Grant funded projects to be carried forward if the funding is secured and received this financial year:*
    - *Oak Park Sports and Aquatic – Electrification (83% grant funded) - \$900,000*
    - *Cole Reserve Upgrade Masterplan – Groundworks - \$816,132*
  - b) *Rates funded projects:*
    - *Shore Reserve – Football & Cricket - \$1,207,629*
    - *McBryde St Reserve (Moomba Park) – Pavilion Gender Inclusive Facilities - \$1,000,000*
    - *Replace Council Fleet - \$928,755*
    - *Dunstan Reserve Childcare (8% grant funded) - \$700,000*
    - *Holbrook Reserve Female Friendly Change Rooms - \$700,000*
    - *Glenroy Activity Centre Upgrade – W heatsheaf Rd - \$600,000*
    - *Sylvester St Oak Park Land Slide - \$600,000*
    - *Narre Narre Stadium Floor Renewal - \$400,000*
    - *Coburg Bluestone Cottage Complex Redevelopment - \$400,000*
    - *McBryde St Reserve (Moomba Park) – Social Room Amenities & Kitchen - \$350,000*
    - *O'Hea St Bike Path Extension – Sussex to Derby St - \$313,850*
    - *Hadfield Depot Masterplan Development & Drainage - \$300,000*
    - *Shared Zones – Victoria St and Albert St - \$200,000*
    - *Merri Trail – Flood Mitigation – Bridge to Darebin - \$200,000*
    - *Coburg Library Redevelopment - \$100,000*
    - *Hosken Reserve Stage 3 Football Pitches - \$80,000*

- c) *Reserve funded projects:*
- *York Street Park Close to Home - \$600,000*
  - *Park Renewal – McCleery Reserve - \$23,800.*
6. *Brings forward the following capital project funding to the 2024-25 Capital Works Program:*
- *Sim Cr & Victoria St – Engeny Hot Spot No 8 - \$381,000*
  - *Gowanbrae Dr & Birk Ct – Engeny Hot Spot No 6 - \$99,000*
  - *Kerbside Waste Reform – \$48,300.*
7. *Approves funding for new projects in the 2024-25 Capital Works Program:*
- *Woodlands Bridge (50% externally funded) - \$38,939.*
8. *Approves additional funding for the following existing projects:*
- *Waste Truck Additional – Walter St Depot (waste charge funded) - \$1,587,441*
  - *Greenbank Crescent Retaining Walls - \$831,118*
  - *Coburg North Sports Hub Upgrades - \$372,559*
  - *Brunswick Activity Centre Upgrade Works - Stewart St - \$294,667*
  - *Accommodation Changes to Meet Service Demand - \$261,436*
  - *Gowanbrae Dr & Birk Ct – Engeny Hot Spot No 6 - \$201,000*
  - *Feasibility Study/Investigation/Design - Forward Planning - \$200,000*
  - *Street Landscape Improvements (69% reserve funded) - \$162,183*
  - *Richards Reserve Natural Turf Renewal - \$148,000*
  - *Sim Cr & Victoria St – Engeny Hot Spot No 8 - \$140,829*
  - *Shore Reserve – Football & Cricket - \$123,400*
  - *CB Smith Reserve Passive Irrigation Trial (fully grant funded) - \$122,073*
  - *Dawson St Bike Lanes - \$114,500*
  - *Toilets Lake Reserve – Adjoining Tool Shed - \$70,298*
  - *Bonwick St Toilets, Fawkner - \$62,875*
  - *Carlisle Street – Nicholson – Glenora, Coburg - \$60,752*
  - *Park Close to Home – 260 Sydney Road (fully reserve funded) - \$55,000*
  - *Resurfacing Program – Various - \$50,000*
  - *Derby St Kindergarten Children’s Centre - \$50,000*
  - *Park Renewal – HW Foletta Park (fully reserve funded) - \$37,000*
  - *Sportsfield & Ovals Minor Capital Program - \$30,582*
  - *Sumner Park – 3 Alister Street, North Fitzroy - \$22,525*
  - *Gillon Oval Cricket Practice Nets - \$18,010*
  - *Wallace Reserve – North - \$11,622*
  - *Merri Creek Trail – Seating Installation - \$10,000*
  - *De Carle Street – The Grove to Rennie – Coburg - \$556.*
9. *Notes savings realised from the following existing projects in the 2024-25 Capital Works Program:*
- *Replace Council Fleet - \$1,587,441*
  - *Oak Park Kindergarten - \$200,000*
  - *Transport Trial Sites – bike lanes & shared zones - \$114,500*
  - *Allard Park Sportsfield Redevelopment - \$70,138*
  - *Paisley Court from Bluebell Kerb Line to Dead End - \$33,795*
  - *Mitchell Pde Retaining Wall - \$27,319*
  - *Kerb and Channel Repairs – Various Locations - \$25,000*
  - *Bridge Programmed Maintenance – Various Locations - \$25,000*
  - *Lorn St – Kiddle – Wilson, Fawkner - \$18,350*
  - *Holbrook Reserve – Netting - \$4,055*
  - *Chiller Unit – Civic Centre - \$2,296.*

10. *Notes, as at the end of the second quarter, as per Section 97 (3) of the Local Government Act 2020, the Chief Executive Officer is of the opinion that a revised budget is not required, however impacts to the full year forecast will continue to be closely monitored.*

#### **2024-25 First Quarter Financial Report – 11 December 2024**

*That Council:*

1. *Notes the 2024-25 First Quarter Financial Report for the period ending 30 September 2024, including operating performance and capital performance at Attachment 1.*
2. *Notes the status of the capital works program for 2024-25.*
3. *Notes the increase to the full-year forecast for operating income of \$12.7 million and the increase to operating expenditure of \$4.9 million arising from the 2024-25 First Quarter Financial Review.*
4. *Endorses the full-year capital expenditure forecast of \$114.1 million, arising from the 2024-25 First Quarter Financial Review.*
5. *Carries forward the following capital project funding to the 2025-26 Capital Works Program:*
  - a) *Grant funded projects to be carried forward if the funding is secured and received this financial year:*
    - *Brunswick Early Years Hub - \$2,100,000*
  - b) *Rates funded projects:*
    - *Dunstan Reserve Childcare - \$2,000,000*
    - *Kendall/Harding Footbridge over Merri Creek - \$800,000*
6. *Brings forward the following capital project funding to the 2024-25 Capital Works Program:*
  - *South Street from Jensen to West, Road Reconstruction - \$952,380*
  - *Yungera Street from Wyuna to Mutton, Road Reconstruction - \$744,244*
  - *Fawkner Leisure Centre Redevelopment - \$642,000*
  - *Kerbside Waste Reform - \$103,510*
  - *Charles Mutton Reserve - \$50,000.*
7. *Approves funding for new projects in the 2024-25 Capital Works Program:*
  - *Property Purchase (fully reserve funded) \$3,245,000*
  - *Coburg North Sport Hub Upgrades (transferred from operating) - \$1,780,152*
  - *Sylvester Street Oak Park Land Slide - \$750,000*
  - *Pedestrian Improvements (fully grant funded) - \$598,140*
  - *Blackspot Project East Street and North Street, Hadfield (fully grant funded) - \$88,464*
  - *Edgars Creek Corridor Connection Project (fully grant funded) - \$77,302*
  - *Shade Sail Installation – Anne Sgro Children’s Centre (86% grant funded) - \$48,295*
  - *Immunisation Room – Minor Capital - \$18,000*
  - *Oxygen Youth Centre – Accessible Door Installation - \$12,000.*
8. *Approves additional funding for existing projects in the 2024-25 Capital Works Program:*
  - *Hosken Reserve Stage 4 Open Space and Civil Work (fully reserve funded) - \$1,678,799*
  - *Park Close to Home Frith Street (50% grant funded, 50% reserve funded) - \$650,136*
  - *Dunstan Reserve Stormwater Harvesting (fully grant funded) - \$375,000*

- Snell Grove – Public Toilet, Oak Park – \$155,000
- Raeburn Reserve – Lights - \$142,150
- Shore Reserve – Public Reserve – Reynard Street – \$142,000
- Fawkner Community Hall – CB Smith Reserve - \$120,000
- Lake Reserve Toilets – Adjoining Tool Shed - \$40,000
- Temple Park Public Toilet Renewal – 24 Gray Street - \$30,000
- Coburg Olympic Pool – Pool Plant and Building Works - \$20,000
- Commercial Tenancy Maintenance Obligations - \$20,000
- Hadfield Depot Internal Break Out Area Works - \$20,000
- Oak Park Kindergarten - \$20,000
- Parker Reserve – Pavilion South - \$10,172
- Municipal Art Collection: Various - \$8,200.

9. *Notes savings realised from existing projects in the 2024-25 Capital Works Program:*

- Hosken Reserve Stage 3 Football Pitches - \$512,836
- Gym Equipment Replacement Program Fawkner Leisure Centre - \$374,900
- McPherson Street from Dead End to Reynard - \$320,628
- Carnarvon Street from Blyth to Dorothy, Road Reconstruction - \$172,028
- Pascoe Vale Community Centre – Children’s Area Refurbishment - \$164,266
- Kent Road from Bawden to Derby, Road Reconstruction - \$158,183
- Park Renewal – Evans Reserve - \$154,000
- Bain Avenue from Plaisted to Boundary, Road Reconstruction - \$151,458
- Paisley Court from Bluebell Kerb Line to Dead End, Road Reconstruction - \$126,978
- Beccles Street from Anderson Kerb Line to Lowson Kerb Line - \$122,212
- Carnarvon Street from Dorothy to Stewart, Road Reconstruction - \$110,000
- Lonsdale Street from Ohea to Murray, Road Reconstruction - \$102,559
- Chris Court from Devereaux to Dead End, Road Reconstruction - \$59,660
- Allard Park Sportsfield Redevelopment - \$47,362
- Carbon Management Strategy: Various - \$20,000
- De Carle Street: The Grove to Rennie – Coburg - \$7,509
- De Carle Street: The Avenue to The Grove – Coburg - \$5,492.

**2023-24 Financial Statements and Performance Statements – 11 September 2024**

*That Council, in accordance with the recommendations of the Audit and Risk Management Committee, and having considered Council’s Financial and Performance Statements for 2023/24 Statements at Attachments 1 and 2 to this report:*

1. *Approves ‘in principle’ the Financial and Performance Statements 2023/24.*
2. *Authorises the Mayor, Cr Adam Pulford, Deputy Mayor, Cr Lambros Tapinos, and the Chief Executive Officer, Cathy Henderson, to certify the Financial and Performance Statements for 2023/24 in their final form.*
3. *Notes the unrestricted surplus of \$1.141 million transfers to the Significant Projects Reserve.*
4. *Carries forward the \$536,978 of tied grant funding or contributions that were not spent as of 30 June 2024.*
5. *Carries forward the \$41.377 million of capital project funds into the 2024/25 Capital Works Program.*
  - *Noting that this does not include a carry forward for the Brunswick Velodrome community pump track due to the funding source being grant funding which was not successful.*

6. *Authorises the Principal Accounting Officer to implement any minor administrative changes to the Financial and Performance Statements for 2023/24 if recommended by the Auditor-General upon final review, for approval by the Chief Executive Officer.*

## 1. Policy Context

The 2024-2028 Budget was adopted by Council on 26 June 2024. The Budget sets out the resources required to deliver the Council Plan, Services and Capital Works Program for the 2024/25 financial year.

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

## 2. Background

The Financial Management Report at Attachment 1 provides Council's financial statements for the year to date (YTD) period ended 30 April 2025. The actual results are compared to the budget in the Executive Summary and compared to the revised forecast in all other parts of the report, which include carry forwards from 2024-25 and the outcomes of the First, Second and Third Quarter Financial Reviews.

### Relevant Council Plan action, strategy, policy, or resolution

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

## 3. Issues/Discussion

Council ended April 2025 with a surplus operating result of \$58.7 million which is \$8.9 million (13%) less than the year to date (YTD) revised forecast of \$67.6 million. These differences are due to recognition of asset book value write-offs occurring as a result of capitalisation of recently completed asset renewal projects across roads, footpaths and drainage.

It is important to note that the \$58.7 million operating surplus does not convert to immediately available cash to Council. Surplus funds are used to fund important community infrastructure projects like the recently completed Fawkner Leisure Centre redevelopment or Balam Balam Place, Brunswick.

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

Significant variance explanations are provided below to clarify where the current YTD variances are expected to be a timing or permanent difference by 30 June 2025. A timing variance is a current difference between actual result and budget which is expected to be resolved before the end of the financial year. A permanent variance is a current difference between actual result and budget which will continue to the end of the financial year.

The main items contributing to the overall variance are:

### Revenue

- **Grants Capital** ended \$1.9 million (57%) favourable primarily due to the timing of receipt of grant funding for Roads to Recovery projects (\$0.8 million), JP Fawkner Sportsfield Lighting (\$0.5 million), Fawkner Leisure Centre Redevelopment (\$0.3 million) and Oak Park Kindergarten (\$0.2 million).

### Expenditure

- **Net Loss on Disposal of Assets** ended \$13.1 million (1084%) unfavourable due to recognition of asset book value write-offs occurring as a result of capitalisation of recently completed asset renewal projects across roads, footpaths and drainage (permanent).

## **Key Definitions**

Surplus – is reported based on the Australian Accounting Standards and includes all operating income and expenditure recognised in the financial period, including gifted subdivisional assets (non-monetary), developer contributions and grants towards capital works projects. It is important to note that the surplus is not a cash surplus. It does not convert to immediately available cash for Council. Significant amounts of the surplus are restricted by legislation and must be used for future infrastructure investment.

Adjusted underlying surplus – is the surplus for the year adjusted for non-recurrent capital grants and contributions. It is an accepted measure of financial sustainability as it is not impacted by non-recurring or once-off items of revenue and expenses that can often mask the operating results.

Unrestricted result – this is the net funding result after considering the funding requirements to meet loan principal repayments and transfers to and from reserves.

## **Capital Projects – Capital Expenditure**

Council has spent \$73.7 million on capital expenditure year to date which is tracking \$10.0 million (12%) below the YTD forecast of \$83.7 million, with \$28.6 million (28%) of the revised budget remaining.

## **Cash**

Council's cash assets were \$93.9 million as at 30 April 2025. This is a \$12.8 million decrease on 30 June 2024 cash levels.

Cash fluctuates frequently over the year due to a number of factors, mainly due to the timing of when the rates instalments fall due. It is expected that cash levels will increase during May due to the fourth rates instalment due on 31 May.

## **Solvency Assessment**

Council officers have reviewed Council's liquidity (Current Assets divided by Current Liabilities) at 30 April 2025 as 4.1. The Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) recommends that this ratio be 1.5 or higher. This is a positive result and shows that Council is solvent.

## **Human Rights Consideration**

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

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

Community consultation and engagement was not required for this report as it reflects the performance against the budget and delivery of the capital works program.

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

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

## **5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

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

## **6. Financial and Resources Implications**

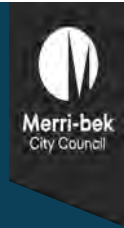
The overall corporate objective is to deliver the 2024-25 budget with the best possible outcome for Council and the community and in line with the approved revised forecast targets.

## **7. Implementation**

The financial position of Council will continue to be monitored and managed. The progress of the capital works program will continue to be monitored and managed.

## **Attachment/s**

- 1 [!\[\]\(e662c6fdc679f154c0e75d901761d894\_img.jpg\)](#) Council Monthly Financial Management Report - April 2025 D25/261548



# **Executive Monthly Financial Management Report**

**10 Months Ended April 2025**



## Contents

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## Executive Summary

### Operating Performance

For the ten months ended 30 April 2025, Council recorded an operating surplus of \$58.7 million which is \$2.3 million (4%) more than the year to date (YTD) budget of \$56.4 million. This comprises total revenue of \$266.4 million which is \$13.1 million (5%) more than the YTD budget of \$253.3 million and total expenditure of \$207.7 million which is \$10.8 million (5%) unfavourable compared to the YTD budget of \$196.9 million.

Income Statement	YTD Actuals \$'000	YTD Budget \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	YTD Variance %	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
Total Revenue	266,376	253,247	▲ 13,129	5%	275,568	285,867	▲ 10,299
Total Expenses	207,675	196,867	▼ (10,809)	(5%)	235,890	238,639	▼ (2,750)
<b>Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<b>58,701</b>	<b>56,381</b>	<b>▲ 2,320</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>39,679</b>	<b>47,228</b>	<b>▲ 7,549</b>

YTD favourable variance in revenue is driven by \$5.2 million relating to the timing recognition of capital grants, receipt of \$4.7 million from the state government contribution to the Level Crossings Removal Projects, \$0.9 million relating to the timing of receipt of Open Space Contributions, and \$0.9 million relating to supplementary valuation income. YTD unfavourable variance in expenses is primarily due to \$14.2 million of unbudgeted asset write offs resulting from asset renewals, offset by a favourable temporary timing difference of \$3.9 million of Materials & Services expenditure.

### Capital Works Program

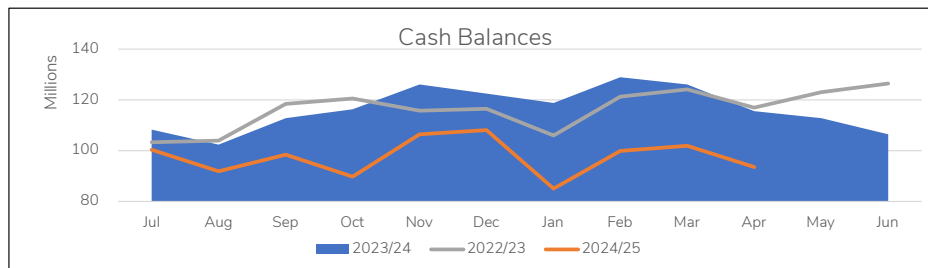
Council has spent \$73.7 million on capital expenditure to 30 April 2025 which is \$5.2 million (7%) less than the YTD budget, with \$19.0 million (20%) of the full year budget remaining. The variance is driven by underspends to budget for roads projects (\$4.2 million), footpaths & cycleways (\$1.9 million) and Parks, Open Space and Streetscapes (\$1.2 million), offset by an overspend to budget for land purchases (\$3.4 million).

Financial Results Summary	YTD Actuals \$'000	YTD Budget \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	YTD Variance %	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
New asset expenditure	20,486	17,470	(3,017)	(17%)	20,204	26,364	(6,160)
Asset renewal expenditure	40,629	46,329	5,700	12%	53,512	55,712	(2,200)
Asset upgrade expenditure	12,544	15,069	2,525	17%	18,984	20,153	(1,169)
<b>Total capital works expenditure</b>	<b>73,660</b>	<b>78,868</b>	<b>5,208</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>92,701</b>	<b>102,229</b>	<b>(9,528)</b>

### Cash & Investments

Cash assets are \$93.6 million at 30 April 2025. This is a decrease of \$12.8 million on 30 June 2024 cash levels, mainly as a result of both a property purchase, reimbursement of the fire services property levy back to state government as well as an on-track spend against the capital works program. Cash fluctuates frequently over the year due to a number of factors, mainly due to the timing of when the rates instalments fall due.

Of the \$93.6 million cash assets, \$33.6 million is convertible to cash in less than 60 days and \$75.0 million (92%) is held in green investments. The portfolio is in compliance with Council policy which requires at least \$20.0 million to be convertible to cash and green investments to make up greater than 70% of all investments.



### Procurement

The compliance report shows the number of invoices paid on time at a rate of 74%. There were 6 contracts approved under delegation during April 2025.

## Operating Performance

### Income Statement

YTD Variance (\$)		YTD Variance (%)	
▲	> \$500k	▲	> 10%
■	< \$500k & > (\$500k)	■	< 10% & > (10%)
▼	< (\$500k)	▼	< (10%)

Income Statement	Notes	YTD Actuals \$'000	YTD Forecast \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	YTD Variance %	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
<b>Revenue</b>								
Rates and charges		194,788	194,391	397	0%	194,037	194,491	454
Statutory fees and fines		15,229	15,335	(106)	(1%)	18,436	18,258	(178)
User Fees		7,745	8,029	(285)	(4%)	8,594	9,656	1,061
Contributions - Monetary		8,457	9,325	(868)	(9%)	9,056	11,017	1,961
Grants - Operating		18,988	18,723	265	1%	22,879	21,944	(935)
Grants - Capital	1	5,197	3,315	1,882	57%	11,928	12,917	988
Other Revenue		15,447	15,513	(66)	(0%)	10,547	17,121	6,574
Asset Sales		22	-	22	0%	90	62	(27)
<b>Total Revenue</b>		<b>266,376</b>	<b>265,032</b>	<b>1,344</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>275,568</b>	<b>285,867</b>	<b>10,299</b>
<b>Expenses</b>								
Employee Benefits		95,970	95,894	(76)	(0%)	111,824	114,628	(2,804)
Contracts, Materials & Services		60,535	63,000	2,465	4%	78,247	77,293	955
Depreciation		32,491	32,866	374	1%	40,890	40,146	744
Amortisation		197	197	-	0%	236	236	0
Bad and doubtful debts		2,924	2,991	66	2%	3,064	3,501	(436)
Net loss on disposal of assets	2	14,357	1,213	(13,145)	(1084%)	(0)	1,213	(1,213)
Finance Costs		702	724	22	3%	869	887	(17)
Other Expenses		498	525	27	5%	758	735	23
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b>207,675</b>	<b>197,409</b>	<b>(10,266)</b>	<b>(5%)</b>	<b>235,890</b>	<b>238,639</b>	<b>(2,750)</b>
<b>Net Result</b>		<b>58,701</b>	<b>67,623</b>	<b>(8,922)</b>	<b>(13%)</b>	<b>39,679</b>	<b>47,228</b>	<b>7,549</b>

### Notes

#### Revenue

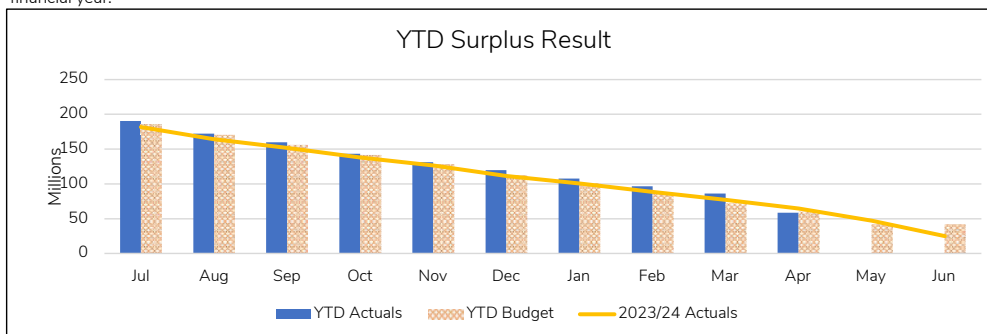
**1. Grants Capital** ended \$1.9 million (57%) favourable primarily due to the timing of receipt of grant funding for Roads to Recovery projects ( \$0.8 million), JP Fawcner Sportsfield Lighting (\$0.5 million), Fawcner Leisure Centre Redevelopment (\$0.3 million) and Oak Park Kindergarten (\$0.2 million).

#### Expenses

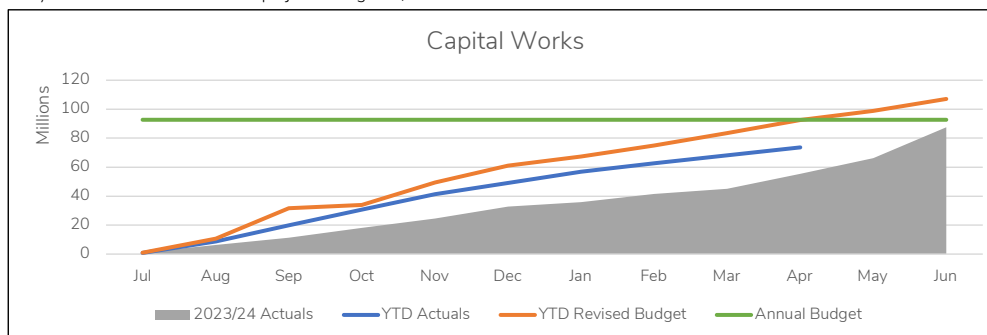
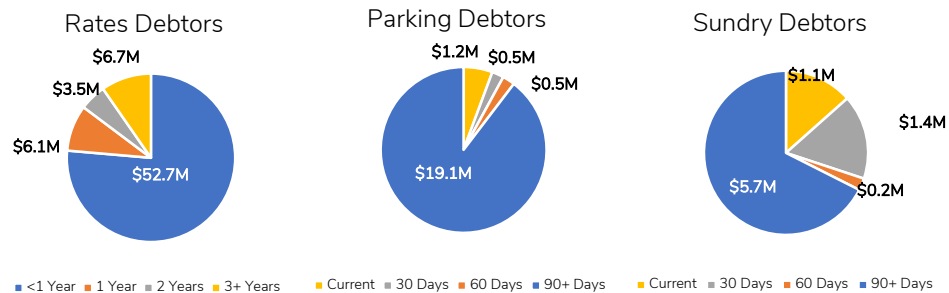
**2. Net Loss on Disposal of Assets** ended \$13.1 million (1084%) unfavourable due to recognition of asset book value write-offs occurring as a result of capitalisation of recently completed asset renewal projects across roads, footpaths and drainage.

**YTD Operating Result**

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

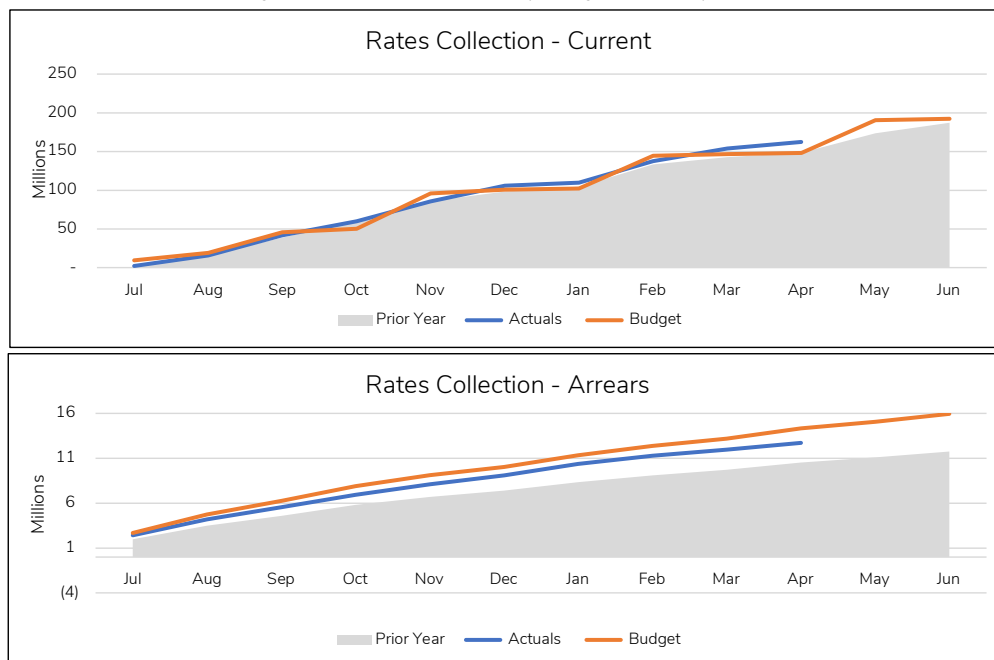
**Capital Works**

Council has spent \$73.7 million on capital expenditure to 30 April 2025 which is \$10 million (12%) lower than the YTD revised forecast, with \$19 million (20%) of the full year budget remaining. The capital revised forecast of \$102.2 million reflects \$67.6 million of expenditure from the adopted 2024-25 budget, \$41.4 million of carry forwards from 2023-24, projects requiring additional funding of \$23.4 million, and funding for projects brought forward from 2025-26 and 2026-27 of \$4.6 million less \$24.0 million of carry forwards into 2025-26 and project savings of \$9.7 million.

**Debtors**

### Rates Collection

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



### Investments

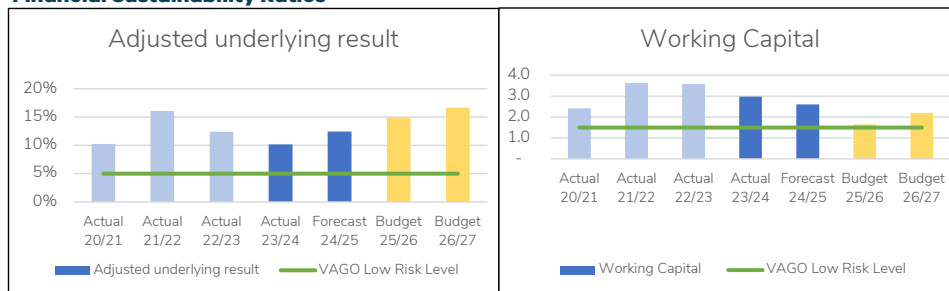
Of the \$93.6 million cash assets, \$33.6 million is convertible to cash in less than 60 days and \$75.0 million (92.6%) is held in green investments. The portfolio is in compliance with Council policy which requires at least \$20.0 million to be convertible to cash and green investments to make up greater than 70% of all investments.

Bank	Maturity Date	Green %	Interest Rate %	S & P short term rating	Amount \$'000	Ratio %
Minor Cash*	N/A		N/A	N/A	88	
Westpac	N/A		4.45%	A-1+	1,805	
Westpac	N/A		4.55%	A-1+	10,674	
ME Bank - 4	5/08/2025	100%	4.65%	A-2	10,000	24.7%
ME Bank - 3	13/06/2025	100%	4.45%	A-2	10,000	
CBA - 4	31/07/2025		4.60%	A-1+	6,000	7.4%
Bendigo Bank - 4	20/05/2025	100%	4.90%	A-2	4,000	17.3%
Bendigo Bank - 4	24/07/2025	100%	4.60%	A-2	10,000	
Suncorp - 3	3/06/2025	100%	4.48%	A-1	11,000	13.6%
IMB - 3	6/05/2025	100%	4.55%	A-2	10,000	24.7%
IMB - 3	3/07/2025	100%	4.65%	A-2	10,000	
Westpac - 6	10/10/2025	100%	4.36%	A-1+	4,000	12.3%
Westpac - 6	6/06/2025	100%	4.96%	A-1+	6,000	
<b>Total</b>		93%			<b>93,567</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Green</b>					<b>75,000</b>	<b>92.6%</b>

\* Minor cash includes NAB holding account and Petty Cash

## Financial Sustainability

### Financial Sustainability Ratios

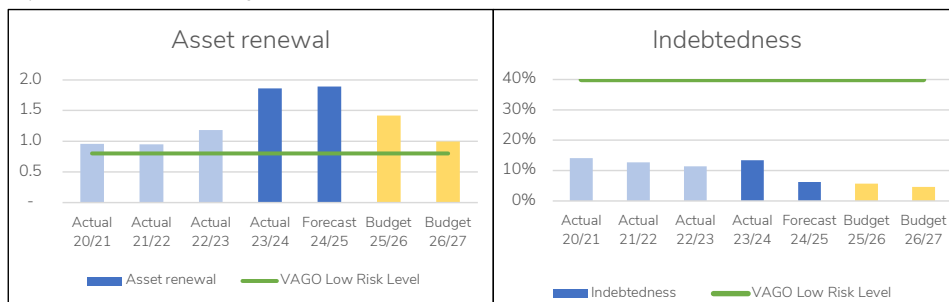


#### Adjusted underlying surplus (deficit) / adjusted underlying revenue

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

#### Current assets / current liabilities

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



#### Renewal & upgrade spend/ depreciation

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

#### Non-current liabilities / own-source revenue

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

### Treasury Corporation of Victoria (TCV)

TCV loan requirements		Target	Forecast
Interest Cover	EBITDA/Interest Expense	> 2	94
Interest Bearing Loans	Interest Bearing Liabilities/Own Source Revenue	< 60%	11%

TCV financing is conditional upon the Council maintaining a sustainable financial position when measured by the interest cover and interest bearing loans ratios. Forecast results indicate that the Council is meeting the minimum requirements. TCV loan requirements are well within target given limited borrowing compared to own source revenue and liability obligations.

## Standard Statements

### Comprehensive Income Statement

Comprehensive Income Statement	YTD Actuals \$'000	YTD Forecast \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
<b>Revenue</b>						
Rates and charges	194,788	194,391	397	194,037	194,491	454
Statutory fees and fines	15,229	15,335	(106)	18,436	18,258	(178)
User Fees	7,745	8,029	(285)	8,594	9,656	1,061
Contributions - Monetary	8,457	9,325	(868)	9,056	11,017	1,961
Contributions - Non-monetary	503	401	102	-	401	401
Grants - Operating	18,988	18,723	265	22,879	21,944	(935)
Grants - Capital	5,197	3,315	1,882	11,928	12,917	988
Other Revenue	15,447	15,513	(66)	10,547	17,121	6,574
Asset Sales	22	-	22	90	62	(27)
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>266,376</b>	<b>265,032</b>	<b>1,344</b>	<b>275,568</b>	<b>285,867</b>	<b>10,299</b>
<b>Expenses</b>						
Employee Benefits	95,970	95,894	(76)	111,824	114,628	(2,804)
Contracts, Materials & Services	60,535	63,000	2,465	78,247	77,293	955
Depreciation	32,491	32,866	374	40,890	40,146	744
Amortisation	197	197	-	236	236	0
Bad and doubtful debts	2,924	2,991	66	3,064	3,501	(436)
Net loss on disposal of assets	14,357	1,213	(13,145)	(0)	1,213	(1,213)
Finance Costs	702	724	22	869	887	(17)
Other Expenses	498	525	27	758	735	23
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>207,675</b>	<b>197,409</b>	<b>(10,266)</b>	<b>235,890</b>	<b>238,639</b>	<b>(2,750)</b>
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for the year</b>	<b>58,701</b>	<b>67,623</b>	<b>(8,922)</b>	<b>39,679</b>	<b>47,228</b>	<b>7,549</b>

Underlying Result	YTD Actuals \$'000	YTD Forecast \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
<b>Surplus for the Year</b>	<b>58,701</b>	<b>67,623</b>	<b>(8,922)</b>	<b>39,679</b>	<b>47,228</b>	<b>7,549</b>
<b>Other Comprehensive Income</b>						
Net asset revaluation	-	-	-	290	290	-
<b>Total Comprehensive Result</b>	<b>58,701</b>	<b>67,623</b>	<b>(8,922)</b>	<b>39,969</b>	<b>47,518</b>	<b>7,549</b>
<b>Non Operating Income and Expenditure</b>						
Net loss on disposal of assets	14,335	1,213	13,122	(90)	1,150	1,240
Contributions Capital (cash & non-monetary)	(321)	(303)	(18)	(56)	(885)	(829)
Grants - Capital	(5,197)	(3,315)	(1,882)	(11,928)	(12,917)	(988)
PRRLF Reserve	(7,706)	(8,622)	916	(9,000)	(10,135)	(1,135)
DCP Reserve	(343)	(357)	14	-	(397)	(397)
Net asset revaluation	-	-	-	(290)	(290)	-
<b>Total Capital Income</b>	<b>767</b>	<b>(11,385)</b>	<b>12,152</b>	<b>(21,073)</b>	<b>(23,184)</b>	<b>(2,109)</b>
<b>Underlying Result</b>	<b>59,468</b>	<b>56,238</b>	<b>3,230</b>	<b>18,606</b>	<b>24,046</b>	<b>5,440</b>
<b>Less</b>						
Loan Principal Repayments	1,606	1,606	-	2,071	1,997	74
Additional Rates Funded CAPEX	(6,979)	(6,979)	-	3,373	(8,375)	11,748
Transfers to Reserves - Operating	464	440	(24)	15,350	16,035	(685)
Transfers from Reserves - Operating	-	-	-	(2,189)	(2,726)	537
Carry Forwards processed into FY26	15,958	15,958	-	-	15,958	(15,958)
<b>Total Transfers &amp; Other</b>	<b>11,050</b>	<b>11,025</b>	<b>(24)</b>	<b>18,605</b>	<b>22,890</b>	<b>(4,286)</b>
<b>Unrestricted Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<b>48,417</b>	<b>45,212</b>	<b>3,205</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1,155</b>	<b>1,154</b>

**Statement of Financial Position**

Statement of Financial Position	YTD Actuals \$'000	30/06/24 Actuals \$'000	Movement Inc/(Dec) \$'000	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
<b>Current assets</b>						
Cash and cash equivalents	33,567	22,387	11,180	45,874	45,152	(722)
Trade and other receivables	81,218	44,236	36,981	39,222	39,241	19
Other financial assets	60,000	84,000	(24,000)	70,000	70,000	-
Inventories	687	659	28	252	252	-
Prepayments	1,184	2,429	(1,245)	-	-	-
Non-current assets classified as held for sale	-	11,019	(11,019)	-	-	-
Other assets	3,972	2,208	1,764	2,976	2,976	-
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>180,629</b>	<b>166,940</b>	<b>13,689</b>	<b>158,324</b>	<b>157,621</b>	<b>(703)</b>
<b>Non-current assets</b>						
Unlisted Shares	2	2	-	2	2	-
Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	2,843,228	2,811,429	31,799	3,104,130	3,113,590	9,460
Right-of-use assets	745	600		475	475	-
Investments	37,225	36,024	1,201	29,267	29,267	-
<b>Total non-current assets</b>	<b>2,881,200</b>	<b>2,848,054</b>	<b>33,000</b>	<b>3,133,874</b>	<b>3,143,334</b>	<b>9,460</b>
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>3,061,829</b>	<b>3,014,994</b>	<b>46,689</b>	<b>3,292,198</b>	<b>3,300,955</b>	<b>8,757</b>
<b>Current liabilities</b>						
Payables						
Payables	18,361	18,751	(390)	15,082	15,082	-
Revenue Received in Advance	2,240	6,898	(4,658)	1,851	1,851	-
Provisions	20,363	22,194	(1,831)	28,014	28,450	436
Interest Bearing Loans and Borrowings	1,997	1,997	-	14,274	14,212	(62)
Trust Funds & Deposits	1,104	6,092	(4,988)	1,839	1,839	-
Lease liabilities	(5)	109	(115)	-	-	-
<b>Total current liabilities</b>	<b>44,060</b>	<b>56,042</b>	<b>(11,982)</b>	<b>61,059</b>	<b>61,434</b>	<b>374</b>
<b>Non-current liabilities</b>						
Provisions	2,494	2,603	(109)	2,310	2,310	-
Interest-bearing liabilities	26,214	27,127	(913)	12,776	13,609	833
Lease liabilities	253	20	233	-	-	-
Trust Funds & Deposits	694	694	-	-	-	-
<b>Total non-current liabilities</b>	<b>29,655</b>	<b>30,444</b>	<b>(789)</b>	<b>15,086</b>	<b>15,919</b>	<b>833</b>
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>73,715</b>	<b>86,486</b>	<b>(12,771)</b>	<b>76,145</b>	<b>77,353</b>	<b>1,207</b>
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>2,988,114</b>	<b>2,928,509</b>	<b>59,606</b>	<b>3,216,053</b>	<b>3,223,602</b>	<b>7,549</b>
<b>Equity</b>						
Asset revaluation reserves	2,066,293	2,066,206	87	2,266,398	2,266,398	-
Other reserves	79,958	76,570	3,388	45,617	63,684	18,067
Accumulated surplus	841,864	785,733	56,131	904,037	893,519	(10,518)
<b>Total equity</b>	<b>2,988,114</b>	<b>2,928,509</b>	<b>59,606</b>	<b>3,216,053</b>	<b>3,223,602</b>	<b>7,549</b>



**Statement of Cashflows**

Statement of Cash Flows	YTD	Annual	Annual	Annual
	Actuals	Budget	Forecast	Variance
	\$'000 Inflows (Outflows)	\$'000 Inflows (Outflows)	\$'000 Inflows (Outflows)	\$'000 Inflows (Outflows)
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>				
Rates and charges	153,282	192,295	192,727	432
Statutory fees and fines	9,959	15,710	15,535	(175)
User fees	9,557	21,064	22,126	1,061
Grants - operating	18,938	22,585	21,650	(935)
Grants - capital	1,060	10,752	11,740	988
Contributions - monetary	8,493	9,056	11,017	1,961
Interest received	5,294	4,014	4,651	638
Trust funds and deposits taken	32,050	15,225	15,225	-
Other receipts	11,316	5,718	11,655	5,937
Net GST refund/(payment)	1,165	7,274	7,274	-
Payments to Employees	(98,576)	(108,154)	(110,958)	(2,804)
Payments to Suppliers	(63,605)	(87,649)	(86,694)	955
Trust funds and deposits repaid	(24,561)	(15,225)	(15,225)	-
Other payments	(545)	(3,822)	(3,799)	23
<b>Net cash (used in) / provided by operating activities</b>	<b>63,825</b>	<b>88,842</b>	<b>96,921</b>	<b>8,080</b>
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>				
Payments for property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	(64,929)	(92,701)	(102,229)	(9,528)
Proceeds from sale of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	(12,468)	90	63	(27)
Payments/(Proceeds) for investments	3,000	5,900	5,900	-
<b>Net cash used in investing activities</b>	<b>(74,397)</b>	<b>(86,711)</b>	<b>(96,266)</b>	<b>(9,556)</b>
<b>Cash flows from financing activities</b>				
Finance costs	(702)	(869)	(886)	(17)
Repayment of borrowings	(1,607)	(2,071)	(1,997)	74
Repayment of lease liabilities	118	-	-	-
<b>Net cash used in financing activities</b>	<b>(2,248)</b>	<b>(2,940)</b>	<b>(2,884)</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Net increase/(decrease) in cash held</b>	<b>(12,820)</b>	<b>(809)</b>	<b>(2,229)</b>	<b>(1,420)</b>
Cash at beginning of period	22,387	46,683	22,387	(24,296)
<b>Cash at end of period</b>	<b>9,567</b>	<b>45,874</b>	<b>20,158</b>	<b>(25,716)</b>
<b>Cash Position</b>				
Non-restricted Cash at 1 July 2024	22,387	46,683	22,387	(24,296)
Other Financial Assets at 1 July 2024	84,000	75,900	84,000	8,100
<b>Cash &amp; cash equivalents at beginning of financial year</b>	<b>106,387</b>	<b>122,583</b>	<b>106,387</b>	<b>(16,196)</b>
Non-restricted Cash at end of financial period	33,567	45,874	45,152	(722)
Other Financial Assets at end of financial period	60,000	70,000	70,000	-
<b>Cash &amp; cash equivalents at end of financial period</b>	<b>93,567</b>	<b>115,874</b>	<b>115,152</b>	<b>(722)</b>

**Statement of Capital Works**

Statement of Capital Works	YTD Actuals \$'000	YTD Forecast \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
<b>Property</b>						
Land	3,423	3,409	(14)	-	3,245	(3,245)
Buildings	27,349	28,056	707	28,133	30,096	(1,963)
Building Improvements	3,487	3,987	501	6,985	6,720	265
<b>Total property</b>	<b>34,258</b>	<b>35,452</b>	<b>1,193</b>	<b>35,119</b>	<b>40,061</b>	<b>(4,942)</b>
<b>Plant and equipment</b>						
Plant, machinery and equipment	4,040	4,382	342	3,962	5,175	(1,213)
Fixtures, Fittings and Furniture	132	132	(1)	339	189	150
Computers and telecommunications	763	719	(44)	745	950	(206)
Artworks	53	54	2	44	54	(10)
Library books	877	930	53	1,082	1,082	-
<b>Total plant and equipment</b>	<b>5,865</b>	<b>6,217</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>6,172</b>	<b>7,451</b>	<b>(1,279)</b>
<b>Infrastructure</b>						
Roads	13,416	16,029	2,613	18,877	20,576	(1,699)
Bridges	139	152	13	1,411	372	1,040
Footpaths and cycleways	1,900	1,932	32	4,600	3,628	973
Drainage	1,321	1,649	329	1,439	3,681	(2,243)
Waste management	60	440	379	212	545	(333)
Parks, open space and streetscapes	15,894	20,655	4,761	23,610	24,656	(1,046)
Other infrastructure	806	1,104	298	1,261	1,261	0
<b>Total infrastructure</b>	<b>33,537</b>	<b>41,961</b>	<b>8,424</b>	<b>51,410</b>	<b>54,718</b>	<b>(3,307)</b>
<b>Total capital works expenditure</b>	<b>73,660</b>	<b>83,630</b>	<b>9,970</b>	<b>92,701</b>	<b>102,229</b>	<b>(9,528)</b>
<b>Represented by:</b>						
New asset expenditure	20,486	22,111	1,624	20,204	26,364	(6,160)
Asset renewal expenditure	40,629	46,432	5,803	53,512	55,712	(2,200)
Asset expansion expenditure	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asset upgrade expenditure	12,544	15,087	2,543	18,984	20,153	(1,169)
<b>Total capital works expenditure</b>	<b>73,660</b>	<b>83,630</b>	<b>9,970</b>	<b>92,701</b>	<b>102,229</b>	<b>(9,528)</b>

## 7.11 GOVERNANCE REPORT - JUNE 2025 - CYCLICAL REPORT

Director Business Transformation, Sue Vujcevic

### Governance and Strategy

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#### Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the summary of minutes from Advisory Committees, provided as Attachment 1 to this report, as follows:
  - a) Arts Advisory Committee held 7 May 2025.
  - b) Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee held 8 May 2025.
2. Notes the Records of Meetings, at Attachment 2 to this report.
3. Notes the response to a question taken on notice during Public Question Time at the April Council meeting, provided as Attachment 3.
4. Revokes the Plaques Policy 2021–2031 and notes it will be replaced with operational guidelines authorised by the Chief Executive Officer.
5. Notes that Council's five-year funding agreement with CERES Earth Ltd (CERES) will expire in June 2025.
6. Endorses a grant to CERES Earth Ltd \$261,182 (excl. GST) in 2025-26, equivalent to the current year annual funding, noting that this amount is budgeted in Council's draft 2025-2026 Budget.
7. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to finalise a funding agreement for the 2025-26 grant with CERES Earth Ltd.
8. Notes that a new five-year agreement with CERES Earth Ltd is under negotiation, to start in 2026-27, and a report will be brought back to Council for consideration.

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

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

This Governance report includes:

- A summary of the minutes of the Advisory Committees.
- Records of Meetings, with a recommendation that Council notes the records.
- A response to a Public Question Time item taken on notice at the April 2025 Council meeting, with a recommendation that Council notes the response.
- A recommendation to revoke the Plaques Policy.
- A recommendation relating to the 2025-26 funding and proposed 5-year funding agreement with CERES Earth Pty Ltd.

#### Previous Council Decisions

**Ceres Funding Agreement 2019/2020 - 2024/2025 - Draft for Endorsement – 8 May 2019**

*That Council:*

1. *Notes the diverse environmental and social community benefits delivered by CERES as highlighted in their most recent annual report at Attachment 2.*

2. *Endorses the attached draft Funding Agreement at Attachment 1 between Council and CERES Inc. 2019/20 – 2024/25.*
3. *Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to finalise and sign the Moreland City Council and CERES Inc. Funding Agreement 2019/20 – 2024/25.*
4. *In accordance with the Funding Agreement provisions, authorises the Director City Futures to review and approve an annual program of improvement works or other initiatives over the term of the agreement.*

## **Moreland Plaques Policy – 25 October 1999**

*Council adopt the “Moreland Plaques Policy” as provided at Attachment 1.*

### **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 contains provisions which enable the Chairperson to take a question On Notice, with a considered written response being provided to the questioner, in circumstances including where the question requires information that is either not available or accessible at the time of that meeting, or where the time allowed for Public Question Time has elapsed.

The diverse services and mission of CERES Earth Ltd contribute to achievement of Council’s vision and strategic objectives within our Zero Carbon Merri-bek 2030 Framework and draft Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025, Merri-bek Transport Strategy, Draft Circular Economy Strategy 2025 and Food Systems Strategy.

### **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.

CERES Earth Ltd is a unique sustainability education organisation, located in Brunswick. They deliver education and training programs in sustainable living, and trade in organic food, permaculture plants and sustainable timber. All the proceeds fund a community visitor centre and 4.5-hectare site that demonstrates sustainable living. The idea for the Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies (CERES) took shape in the late 1970s, when a group of local residents and school teachers began to explore ways to address social and environmental issues facing urban communities.

In 1982, the then Brunswick City Council agreed to lease to the community group a barren 4.5-hectare block in Brunswick East, that was a decommissioned rubbish tip and was once a bluestone quarry, on the banks of the Merri Creek.

### **3. Issues**

#### **Advisory Committee minutes**

A summary of the minutes of the Advisory Committees is provided at **Attachment 1** for Council’s information:

- a) Arts Advisory Committee held 7 May 2025.
- b) Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee held 8 May 2025.

### **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 – 28 April 2025
- Central Coburg Program Councillor Workshop – 1 May 2025
- Councillor Briefing – 5 May 2025
- Central Coburg Program Councillor Meeting – 8 May 2025
- Councillor Briefing – 12 May 2025
- Councillor Briefing – 19 May 2025
- Activity Centres Advisory Group - 21 May 2025
- Planning Briefing – 26 May 2025
- Merri-bek Affordable Housing Pipeline Councillor Briefing - 28 May 2025.

### **Responses to Questions taken On Notice at Council meetings**

At Council meetings, questions are taken On Notice during Public Question Time, where persons submitting questions are not in attendance or where the maximum allowable time for public questions has elapsed.

Questions taken On Notice are provided with a written response following the meeting for which they are submitted and reported to Council at the next practicable meeting. The questions are recorded in the meeting minutes.

The response to a question taken On Notice at **Attachment 3** to this report relates to a question from 9 April 2025 Council meeting regarding the McDonald Reserve Feasibility Study.

### **Revocation of Plaques Policy**

The Plaques Policy was originally adopted by Council in 1999 and is now out-of-date. It will be replaced with guidelines authorised by the Chief Executive Officer.

The Chief Executive Officer endorsed guidelines will establish how Council considers proposals for, and management of, memorials, monuments; and commemorative plaques or memorials proposed to be sited on or in Council owned or managed public infrastructure and open space.

The guidelines aim to ensure plaques and memorials appropriately honor individuals or events while maintaining the integrity and aesthetics of Council facilities.

The new Guidelines will include processes not currently contained in the Policy, including:

- A process for memorials requested by the public.

- A process for considering community requests for plaques.
- An outline of criteria to help inform decision making around plaque approval.
- Specific references to plaques relating to public art.
- Alternative ways to memorialise an event, person or organisation before proceeding with a plaque approval.
- Consideration of new and innovative formats to traditional plaques and memorials, such as digital plaques.

Currently there is no register of existing plaques across the City of Merri-bek. The new guidelines require Council officers to add plaques to Council's asset register.

In the last 12 months, Council had approximately seven requests for new plaques. Three of these were community requests for plaques.

### **CERES Funding Agreement**

CERES is a valued environmental and educational community organisation within our municipality. Council acknowledges CERES' significant contributions in delivering environmental and sustainability education, advancing climate action, urban agriculture, circular economy innovation and fostering community engagement and connection.

In addition to the 50-year peppercorn Lease Agreement with Council, Council has provided CERES Earth Ltd with a series of 5-year funding agreements since 2008/09, providing a combination of capital and operational funding. The current funding agreement expires in June 2025. Council is currently in discussions with CERES about the next 5-year funding agreement which will not be resolved by the time of expiration of the agreement.

Over recent years, CERES have been making a number of difficult financial and operational decisions to ensure their financial sustainability in post-Covid and cost of living crisis that has been impacting on revenue of functions like the grocery and Merri café. There continues to be a 'funding gap' between the revenue CERES is generating through its diversity of social enterprises and activities and the true cost of maintaining and enhancing the site and delivering collective benefits to visitors and customers. Council funding is understood to play a critical role in bridging that gap.

It is proposed to provide a one-off grant to CERES of \$261,182 (excl. GST) in 2025-2026. The one-off grant funding is commensurate with previous annual funding and is included in the proposed budget currently out for community consultation. This one-off funding acknowledges the significant contribution CERES makes to climate action, community resilience and environmental innovation, and is aligned with the intentions of our previous five-year funding partnership.

Council has an intention to continue working with CERES on a future five-year funding agreement of similar scale to the current agreement, subject to key performance indicators.

Council has provided CERES with a series of 5-year funding agreements since 2008/09, providing a combination of capital and operational funding. The current funding agreement expires in June 2025.

This funding acknowledges the significant contribution CERES makes to climate action, community resilience and environmental innovation, and is aligned with the intentions of our previous five-year funding partnership.

### **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.

The following areas of Council were consulted regarding the revocation of the Plaques Policy and in the development of the proposed alternative guidelines:

- Community Development
- Cultural Development, Governance
- Civic Events
- Places and Property
- Community Engagement
- Open Space Design
- Maintenance.

#### **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.

The total one-off CERES funding proposed for the 2025-26 financial year is \$261,182 (excluding GST). This is included in Council's draft 2025-26 Budget.

Council has an intention to work with CERES on a future five-year funding agreement of similar scale to the current agreement, once CERES has completed a significant current initiative to develop a realistic financial sustainability strategy.

#### **7. Implementation**

Governance activity, including reports of Committees to Council, Records of Meetings and Community Question Time items will continue to be reported to Council monthly.

Subject to Council's decision the next steps include:

- The removal of the Plaques Policy from all communication channels.
- Council officers will execute the one-off, one-year CERES grant agreement.
- Working with CERES to negotiate a new five-year funding agreement with CERES which will be brought back to Council at a future meeting.

#### **Attachment/s**

<a href="#"><u>1</u></a>	Reports from Advisory Committees to Council - June 2025	D25/269932
<a href="#"><u>2</u></a>	Records of Meetings - June 2025	D25/269733
<a href="#"><u>3</u></a>	Response to a question taken On Notice - June 2025	D25/270024

**ARTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE - 7 MAY 2025**

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A report of the Arts Advisory Committee meeting held on 7 May 2025 is provided for Council's information.

Councillors appointed to the Arts Advisory Committee: Cr Dr Jay Iwasaki, Cr Nat Abboud.

**Key Items Discussed**

- Public Art Policy consultation.
- Community venues for performance scoping.
- Thank you to the committee for their contribution.

**Disclosures of Conflict of Interest**

No conflict of interest was disclosed at the meeting.

**Committee Recommendation**

There were no recommendations from the committee to Council.

**Attachment/s**

There are no attachments for this report.



**ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE - 8 MAY 2025**

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A report of the Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee meeting held on Thursday 8 May 2025 are provided for Council's information.

Councillors appointed to the Committee: Cr Iwasaki.

**Key Items Discussed**

An overview of the draft Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025-30 including draft goals and introduction of two new pillars:

1. Supporting a socially just and climate resilient transition.
2. Council as role model' – zero carbon, circular and climate resilient.

**Disclosures of Conflict of Interest**

No conflict of interest was disclosed at the meeting.

**Committee Recommendation**

There were no recommendations from the committee to Council.

**Attachment/s**

There are no attachments for this report.

# Record of Meeting

**Meeting: Councillor Briefing**

**Date: 28 April 2025**

**Meeting time: 6.00pm – 8.00pm**



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

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

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

Attendees	
<b>Councillors</b>	<div>Cr Helen Davidson, Mayor</div> <div>Cr Chris Miles</div> <div>Cr Nat Abboud</div> <div>Cr Oscar Yildiz JP</div> <div>Cr Liz Irvin</div> <div>Cr Jay Iwasaki</div> <div>Cr Ella Svensson</div> <div>Cr Katherine Theodosios</div> <div>Cr Adam Pulford</div>
<b>Apologies</b>	<div>Cr Sue Bolton</div> <div>Cr Helen Politis, Deputy Mayor</div>
<b>Council Staff</b> (name and position)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cathy Henderson, Chief Executive Officer</li> <li>• Anita Curnow, Acting Director City Infrastructure</li> <li>• Eamonn Fennessy, Director Community</li> <li>• Pene Winslade, Director Place and Environment</li> <li>• Sue Vujcevic, Director Business Transformation</li> <li>• Indivar Dhakal, Manager Capital Works Planning and Delivery</li> <li>• Jemma Wightman, Chief Financial Officer</li> <li>• Sandra Troise, Manager Amenity and Compliance</li> <li>• Alayna Chapman, Unit Manager Strategic Planning</li> <li>• Georgina Earl, Acting Manager Cultural Development</li> </ul>
<b>External participants</b>	Nil

Items discussed		Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1	Capital Projects update	-	
2	Procurement Policy 2025–2029	-	
3	Local Law Amendment – Feeding of birds	-	
4	New Developer Contributions Plan – commencement of planning scheme amendment	-	

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Items discussed		Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
5	Library Social Work Program Trial	-	

**Name and title** of Council officer completing record: Sue Vujcevic, Director Business Transformation

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

# Record of Meeting

**Meeting: Central Coburg Program Councillor Workshop**

**Date: 1 May 2025**

**Meeting time: 6:00pm**



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

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

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

<b>Attendees</b>	
<b>Councillors</b>	<div>Cr Nat Abboud</div> <div>Cr Jay Iwasaki</div> <div>Cr Liz Irvin</div> <div>Cr Ella Svensson</div> <div>Cr Katherine Theodosis</div> <div>Cr Helen Davidson, Mayor</div> <div>Cr Chris Miles</div>
<b>Apologies</b>	<div>Cr Helen Politis, Deputy Mayor</div> <div>Cr Sue Bolton</div> <div>Cr Adam Pulford</div> <div>Cr Oscar Yildiz JP</div>
<b>Council Staff</b> (name and position)	<div>Cathy Henderson, Chief Executive Officer</div> <div>Pene Winslade, Director Place and Environment</div> <div>Eamonn Fennessy, Director Community</div> <div>Sue Vujcevic, Director Business Transformation</div> <div>Anita Curnow, Director City Infrastructure</div> <div>Peter Sagar, Program Director Central Coburg</div> <div>Lisa Dempster, Manager Cultural Development</div> <div>Indivar Dhakal, Manager Capital Works Planning and Delivery</div> <div>Bec Fitzgerald, Coburg Revitalisation Lead</div> <div>Lachlan McGowan, Revitalisation Project Manager</div>
<b>External participants</b>	<div>3 Representatives from Bridge 42</div> <div>1 Representative from MGS Architects</div> <div>1 Representative from GLAS Landscape Architects</div>

Items discussed	Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1 Central Coburg Program	No conflict declared	-

**Name and title** of Council officer completing record: Lachlan McGowan, Revitalisation Project Manager

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

# Record of Meeting

**Meeting: Councillor Briefing**

**Date: 5 May 2025**

**Meeting time: 6.00pm – 8.00pm**



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

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

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

Attendees	
<b>Councillors</b>	<div>Cr Katherine Theodosis</div> <div>Cr Chris Miles</div> <div>Cr Nat Abboud</div> <div>Cr Helen Politis, Deputy Mayor</div> <div>Cr Liz Irvin</div> <div>Cr Jay Iwasaki</div> <div>Cr Ella Svensson</div>
<b>Apologies</b>	<div>Cr Adam Pulford</div> <div>Cr Sue Bolton</div> <div>Cr Oscar Yildiz JP</div> <div>Cr Helen Davidson, Mayor</div>
<b>Council Staff</b> (name and position)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cathy Henderson, Chief Executive Officer</li> <li>• Anita Curnow, Acting Director City Infrastructure</li> <li>• Eamonn Fennessy, Director Community</li> <li>• Pene Winslade, Director Place and Environment</li> <li>• Sue Vujcevic, Director Business Transformation</li> <li>• Peter Sagar, Program Director Central Coburg</li> <li>• Chrissy Grayland, Acting Manager Community Wellbeing</li> <li>• Petr Svoboda, Social Policy and Projects Officer</li> <li>• Alayna Chapman, Unit Manager Strategic Planning</li> <li>• Jamie Grainger, Unit Manager Open Space Maintenance</li> <li>• Bernadette Hetherington, Acting Manager Open Space and Environment</li> <li>• Barry Hahn, Manager Early Years and Youth</li> <li>• Indivar Dhakal, Manager Capital Works Planning and Delivery</li> </ul>
<b>External participants</b>	Nil

Items discussed		Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1	Central Coburg Draft Directions	-	
2	Ballert Mooroop update	-	
3	Food security groups – accommodation needs update		

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

Items discussed		Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
4	Planning reforms update	-	
5	Use of pesticides at Shore Reserve	-	
6	Brunswick Early Years Hub - design and funding update	-	

**Name and title** of Council officer completing record: Sue Vujcevic, Director Business Transformation

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

# Record of Meeting

**Meeting: Central Coburg Program Councillor meeting**

**Date: 8 May 2025**

**Meeting time: 10 – 11:30am**



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

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

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

Attendees	
<b>Councillors</b>	Cr Helen Politis, Deputy Mayor      Cr Jay Iwasaki Cr Liz Irvin      Cr Ella Svensson
<b>Apologies</b>	Cr Helen Davidson, Mayor      Cr Nat Abboud Cr Adam Pulford      Cr Katherine Theodosis Cr Chris Miles      Cr Sue Bolton Cr Oscar Yildiz JP
<b>Council Staff</b> (name and position)	Pene Winslade – Director Place & Environment Eamonn Fennessy – Director Community Peter Sagar – Program Director Central Coburg Lisa Dempster – Manager Cultural Development
<b>External participants</b>	2 Representatives from MGS Architects 1 Representative from Bridge42

Items discussed	Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1 Further Central Coburg Options Discussion	Nil	n/a

**Name and title of Council officer completing record:** Peter Sagar – Program Director Central Coburg

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

# Record of Meeting

**Meeting: Councillor Briefing**

**Date: 12 May 2025**

**Meeting time: 6.00pm – 8.00pm**



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

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

Attendees	
<b>Councillors</b>	<div>Cr Helen Davidson, Mayor</div> <div>Cr Chris Miles</div> <div>Cr Nat Abboud</div> <div>Cr Helen Politis, Deputy Mayor</div> <div>Cr Liz Irvin</div> <div>Cr Jay Iwasaki</div> <div>Cr Ella Svensson</div> <div>Cr Katherine Theodosios</div> <div>Cr Adam Pulford</div> <div>Cr Oscar Yildiz JP</div>
<b>Apologies</b>	Cr Sue Bolton
<b>Council Staff</b> (name and position)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cathy Henderson, Chief Executive Officer</li> <li>• Anita Curnow, Director City Infrastructure</li> <li>• Eamonn Fennessy, Director Community</li> <li>• Pene Winslade, Director Place and Environment</li> <li>• Sue Vujcevic, Director Business Transformation</li> <li>• Peter Sagar, Program Director Central Coburg</li> </ul>
<b>External participants</b> (include organisation represented)	Nil

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

**Name and title** of Council officer completing record: Sue Vujcevic, Director Business Transformation

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# Record of Meeting

**Meeting: Councillor Briefing**

**Date: 19 May 2025**

**Meeting time: 6.00pm – 8.00pm**



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

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

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

Attendees	
<b>Councillors</b>	<div>Cr Helen Davidson, Mayor</div> <div>Cr Chris Miles</div> <div>Cr Nat Abboud</div> <div>Cr Helen Politis, Deputy Mayor</div> <div>Cr Liz Irvin</div> <div>Cr Jay Iwasaki</div> <div>Cr Ella Svensson</div> <div>Cr Sue Bolton</div> <div>Cr Adam Pulford</div>
<b>Apologies</b>	<div>Cr Katherine Theodosios</div> <div>Cr Oscar Yildiz JP</div>
<b>Council Staff</b> (name and position)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cathy Henderson, Chief Executive Officer</li> <li>• Anita Curnow, Acting Director City Infrastructure</li> <li>• Eamonn Fennessy, Director Community</li> <li>• Pene Winslade, Director Place and Environment</li> <li>• Sue Vujcevic, Director Business Transformation</li> <li>• Richard Tolliday, Unit Manager Open Space Design and Development</li> <li>• Bernadette Hetherington, Acting Manager Open Space and Environment</li> <li>• Simon Van Wijnen, Principal Open Space Planner</li> <li>• Kim Critchley, Unit Manager Aquatic and Leisure Services</li> <li>• Chrissy Grayland, Acting Manager Community Wellbeing</li> <li>• Kamal Singh, Head of Building Projects</li> <li>• Phil Priest, Group Manager City Development</li> <li>• Mark Hughes, Unit Manager Urban Planning</li> <li>• Mike Collins, Principal Advisor Social and Affordable Housing</li> <li>• Greg Rodwell, Acting Manager Property, Place &amp; Design</li> <li>• Robyn Mitchell, Unit Manager Sustainable Built Environment</li> <li>• Victoria Hart, Manager Sustainability and Climate</li> <li>• Michaela Skett, Unit Manager Sustainable Communities</li> </ul>
<b>External participants</b>	Nil

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Items discussed		Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1	Dog Walking in Merri-bek Consultation Update	-	
2	Options for North West Building (Phoenix Street, Brunswick) and Brunswick Baths Gym Expansion	-	
3	Capital Projects Updates	-	
4	State Planning Reforms	-	
5	Merri-bek Affordable Housing: pipeline of potential sites	-	
6	Carbon Offsets Policy	-	
7	Circular Economy Strategy & Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025-2030	-	

**Name and title** of Council officer completing record: Sue Vujcevic, Director Business Transformation

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

# Record of Meeting

**Meeting:** Activity Centres Advisory Group

**Date:** 21 May 2025

**Meeting time:** 6.30pm



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

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

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

Attendees	
<b>Councillors</b>	<div>Mayor Cr Helen Davidson</div> <div>Deputy Mayor Cr Helen Politis</div> <div>Cr Nat Abboud</div> <div>Cr Adam Pulford</div> <div>Cr Liz Irvin</div> <div>Cr Ella Svensson</div> <div>Cr Dr. Jay Iwasaki</div> <div>Cr Katherine Theodosios</div> <div>Cr Chris Miles</div>
<b>Apologies</b>	Cr Oscar Yildiz JP
<b>Council Staff</b> (name and position)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Caden McCarthy, Manager Transport</li> <li>Greg Rodwell, Acting Manager Property, Place &amp; Design</li> <li>Pene Winslade, Director Place &amp; Environment</li> </ul>
<b>External participants</b>	Nil.

Items discussed	Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1 Role of Activity Centres Advisory Group and discussion around Councillor priorities	-	
2 Strategic framework for public realm work	-	

**Name and title** of Council officer completing record: Pene Winslade, Director Place & Environment

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

# Record of Meeting

**Meeting: Planning Briefing**

**Date: 26/05/2025**

**Meeting time: 6:00pm**



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

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

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

Items discussed		Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1	City Development Activity Report (March quarter)	-	-
2	MPS/2024/486 – 463-465 Victoria Street, Brunswick West	1. Cr Helen Politis, Deputy Mayor 2. General <b>3. Nature of the conflict</b> Has interest in property within 100 metres of the site.	Yes - left meeting at 6.05 pm to 6.30 pm

**Name and title** of Council officer completing record: Mark Hughes, Acting Group Manager City Development

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

# Record of Meeting

**Meeting: Merri-bek Affordable Housing Pipeline Councillor Briefing**

**Date: 28 May 2025**

**Meeting time: 5.00pm**



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

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

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

Attendees	
<b>Councillors</b>	<div>Mayor Cr Helen Davidson</div> <div>Deputy Mayor Cr Helen Politis</div> <div>Cr Nat Abboud</div> <div>Cr Oscar Yildiz JP</div> <div>Cr Liz Irvin</div> <div>Cr Ella Svensson</div> <div>Cr Dr. Jay Iwasaki</div> <div>Cr Chris Miles</div>
<b>Apologies</b>	<div>Cr Sue Bolton</div> <div>Cr Adam Pulford</div>
<b>Council Staff</b> (name and position)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mike Collins, Principal Advisor Social and Affordable Housing</li> <li>Greg Rodwell, Acting Manager City Strategy and Economy</li> <li>Pene Winslade, Director Place &amp; Environment</li> <li>Cathy Henderson, CEO</li> </ul>
<b>External participants</b>	Nil.

Items discussed	Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1 Role of the pipeline of sites for Merri-bek Affordable Housing	-	
2 Each proposed site	-	

**Name and title** of Council officer completing record: Greg Rodwell, Acting Manager City Strategy and Economy

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**From:** [John Englar](#)  
**To:** [Christina Grayland](#)  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: PQT McDonald Reserve  
**Date:** Monday, 19 May 2025 10:48:34 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

---

On Mon, May 19, 2025 at 10:30 AM Christina Grayland <[CGrayland@merri-bek.vic.gov.au](mailto:CGrayland@merri-bek.vic.gov.au)> wrote:

Hi John,

[REDACTED]

**Question:** Will trees that provide canopy shade be part of the car park design and landscaping as stipulated in the February 2025 Council motion?

[REDACTED]

**Response**

*Yes, The future access and facility parking zone, as identified within the plan states it would include permeable surface treatments. The permeable surface treatments will be designed to support green infrastructure, which may include trees/and or garden beds. This will be identified within the design development.*

Thanks

**Christina Grayland**  
**Acting Manager Community Well-being**  
Merri-bek City Council

T [REDACTED]  
[www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au](http://www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au)



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

Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail.

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(Commonwealth), as applicable. This e-mail, including all attachments, is confidential. If you are not the intended recipient, any use, disclosure or copying of this e-mail is unauthorised. If you are not the intended recipient of this e-mail, please immediately notify Merri-bek City Council via [info@merri-bek.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@merri-bek.vic.gov.au) or telephone (03) 9240 1111 and then delete this e-mail. Any personal comments contained within this e-mail are those of the sender and do not necessarily represent the views of Merri-bek City Council. Merri-bek City Council has attempted to make this e-mail and any attachments free from viruses but cannot provide an assurance that this e-mail or any attachments are free of viruses and accepts no liability.

## 8. NOTICES OF MOTION

### 8.1 ABOLISHING SUB MINIMUM WAGES FOR DISABLED WORKERS

Cr Sue Bolton

---

#### Motion

That Council:

1. Signs the open letter that calls for subminimum wages for disabled workers to be abolished and for these workers to be paid a 100% of the minimum wage instead (as provided  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Dj4N8NtD9RKJi7eypPgKkIPggKI2aONCrwBOEzjrElq/edit?pli=1&tab=t.0>
2. Write to the Federal Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme Mark Butler and the Victorian Minister for Disability Lizzie Blandthorn to advocate for the Australian and Victorian Governments to adopt the recommendations of the Royal Commissioner to increase minimum wages for employees with disabilities to 100% of the minimum wage by 2034.
3. Write to the federal Industrial relations Minister Amanda Rishworth, requesting that the Federal Government urgently implement the recommendations tabled by the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability and abolish the practice of allowing Australian Disability Enterprises and other Companies to pay disabled workers a sub minimum wage.
4. Requests the CEO to:
  - a) To provide advice to Council relating to possible amendments to the grants policy and guidelines to ensure that grants aren't awarded to organisations that are engaged in restrictive practices or pay a subminimum wage.
  - b) Conduct an Audit of Council web pages and the list of support services for older people and or people with disability to ensure that there are no references to Australian Disability Enterprises.

#### 1. Background

Cr Bolton's background:

For decades, many people with disabilities have worked in segregated workplaces for Australian Disability Enterprises where they earn as little as \$3 per hour despite putting in a full days work.

This is way below the Australian minimum wage which was \$24.17 in 2025.

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability recommended that the federal government reduce workplace segregation and increase minimum wages for employees with disabilities to 100% of the minimum wage by 2034.

The Royal Commission also recommended that government procurement rules should be amended to give preference to enterprises that can demonstrate they provide employment opportunities to people with disability in open, inclusive and accessible settings and pay employees with disability at least the full minimum wage at the time of the procurement process.

Amending council and government procurement processes in this way, will help ensure that all workers with disabilities get at least 100% of the minimum wage.



Australian Disability Enterprises:

- Are tax-exempt
- Receive tens of millions in direct federal funding
- Directly underpay their workers (as little as \$3/hr)
- Drain their workers NDIS plans to receive free employees (legally, support persons, but often to pay for business overhead and management)
- Receive free and discounted services from local Councils around the country
- Benefit from community goodwill on the presumption they're helping disabled people

A national campaign has formed to campaign against the subminimum wage paid by Australian Disability Enterprises and to ban procurement from Australian Disability Enterprises if they don't pay the national minimum wage.

Two local councils – Town of Victoria Park (WA) and City of Sydney (NSW) - have voted to ban procurement from Australian Disability Enterprises because of their payment of subminimum wages.

Almost 300 organisations all over Australia have signed on to an Open Letter titled "Abolish subminimum wage". The campaign is inviting local councils to sign on to the letter, as well as disability organisations.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Dj4N8NtD9RKJj7eypPgKkIPggKI2aONCrwBOEzjrElq/edit?pli=1&tab=t.0>

The open letter states:

*We oppose the practice of paying disabled workers subminimum wage. It is unacceptable that in 2025 disabled people living in Australia can be paid as little as \$3.01 per hour, while the minimum wage for others is \$24.10 per hour.*

*These practices don't help disabled people find work. We know from the Disability Royal Commission that Australia has one of the lowest disability employment rates in the OECD. As disabled people and allies, we support transition to fairer, equitable work through more modern and just practices to support disabled people in the workplace, such as supported employment and customised employment.*

## **2. Policy Context**

Officer's comments:

Council officers have a pre-scheduled review of policies and guidelines in the coming months and can consider any necessary amendments to ensure that grants are not awarded to organisations engaged in restrictive practices or those that pay a subminimum wage.

## **3. Financial Implications**

Officer's comments:

The research and advisory components of the motion will not have any financial impact and can be accommodated within the existing budget, along with the preparation of any correspondence as outlined.

## **4. Resources Implications**

Officer's comments:

There are no resource implications associated with this proposal.

## 8.2 EMERGENCY SERVICES AND VOLUNTEER FUND

**Cr Sue Bolton**

---

### **Motion**

That Council:

1. Calls on the State Government to only use the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund for the core activities of the essential services that it is meant to fund such as sufficient safe equipment maintaining minimum staffing levels.
2. Opposes the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund preferring that these emergency services be funded through the State Government's consolidated revenue fund.

### **1. Background**

Cr Bolton's background:

The Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (2009-2010) recommended the introduction of a property-based Fire Services Property Levy to provide sufficient resources for the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (since renamed Fire Rescue Victoria) and the Country Fire Authority.

The Fire Services Property Levy was enacted in 2013. The CFA and Fire Rescue Victoria were funded by a combination of the levy, and consolidated revenue.

The Victorian government is in the process of legislating to replace the Fire Services Levy with the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund. The fund is to cover an expanded number of services.

Triple Zero Victoria, Emergency Management Victoria, the State Emergency Service as well as Fire Rescue Victoria and the CFA.

These are services which are currently paid for out of taxes on the community that are paid into consolidated revenue.

The government's initial proposal for the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund left the door open for a reduction in funding for Fire Rescue Victoria and Country Fire Authority by not including a minimum amount of funding for the fire services. It was only an 11<sup>th</sup> hour deal.

The worry is that the state government won't use the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund for core needs such as replacing fire trucks and maintaining minimum staffing levels for fire and other emergency services, but instead use it to pay for massive salaries for top executive positions and lawyers to litigate against workers.

The experience of the Fire Services Property Levy is that it hasn't been used to replace sufficient numbers of unreliable and unsafe fire trucks. A large portion of the fund was used to fund lawyers, senior executive salaries and other non-core elements.

Currently, 42% of FRV fire trucks are over 15 years old, unreliable and should be off the road. By the end of 2025, two out of three fire trucks will be out of date and unreliable. The high volume of emergency incidents that the FRV respond to means that the reliability of fire trucks after 15 years is uncertain.

In Merri-bek alone, Fire Rescue Victoria responded to more than 3700 emergency incidents in 2021-2022.

In order to get the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund through the parliament, the state government agreed to the reintroduction of a Rolling Replacement Program for the Fire Rescue Victoria Fleet.

However that commitment is for a meagre \$10 million a year. Less than one-sixth of one per cent of funds raised over the first three years of the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund will be allocated to repairing the FRV's dangerous fleet of fire trucks.

The Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund is inequitable in that it isn't a progressive tax. Like council rates, someone on a very low income can live beside someone who is a millionaire and they pay the same amount for the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund.

The exemptions for CFA volunteers are very limited.

The emergency services that are the focus of the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund are vital services for everyone living in and visiting Victoria, so they should be paid for out of the consolidated revenue fund, which all Victorians pay for with our taxes.

While the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund has passed through parliament, it is important that Merri-bek council expresses its view about the fund.

## 2. Policy Context

Officer's comments:

The Fire Services Property Amendment (Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund) Bill 2025 passed the Victorian Parliament on 16 May 2025 and will replace the Fire Services Property Levy (FSPL) with the Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund (ESVF) from 1 July 2025.

Council is legislated under the *Fire Services Property Levy Act 2012* as the collection agency on behalf of the State Government. If Council did not include this in the Rates Notices we would be in breach of the law.

The levy is an annual levy collected by councils via rates notices. The levy is made up of a fixed charge that varies by property type, and a variable charge based on property values. These amounts are set by the treasurer each year. The ESVF will result in increases on all rates notices across the municipality, with commercial and industrial properties set to be hit the hardest.

## 3. Financial Implications

Officer's comments:

The advocacy in this report has no financial implications. However, it is important to note that the levy will have significant financial implications on the ratepaying community from 1 July 2025.

The below table shows an indicative impact on the average property type for the 2025-26 financial year.

Property type <sup>1</sup>	Estimated average property value	Increase in levy
Residential	\$800,000	\$72.80
Commercial	\$1,200,000	\$807.20
Industrial	\$1,300,000	\$682.70

In comparison, the estimated average rates increase is \$51.50.

Noting that the average property values and estimated average rate increase are based on the draft budget and are subject to change with the certified valuations included in the adopted budget.

#### **4. Resources Implications**

Officer's comments:

The advocacy required to state government can be done with existing resources.

It is important to note that due to the significant increase in the levies that will be shown on the annual rates notices being sent out in late July/early August officers are expecting a significant increase in call volumes. Officers are also amending the rates brochure and rates notice to make it clear that this levy is set by the state government and Council has no choice in collecting the levy.

Officers are also anticipating an increased number of ratepayers who may require payment plans as a result of the increased levy. Officers are currently working through the resourcing requirements on both a short-term period as well as any ongoing implications.

## 8.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY FORUM FOR ROAD SAFETY

Cr Liz Irvin

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### Motion

That Council:

1. Requests Officers to host a community forum at Coburg Town Hall to discuss Road Safety matters in Merri-bek, including; Recent trends in road safety incidents throughout Merri-bek. Council efforts to address road safety, including current road safety projects and advocacy.
2. Requests Officers to invite relevant stakeholders such as the Department of Transport and Planning, Victoria Police, the Transport Accident Commission and RACV to attend the forum.

### 1. Background

Cr Irvin's background:

Two fatalities have occurred on state-managed roads in the Merri-bek Council area in the last month. In an effort to collate data for further council advocacy campaigns, council can hold a community forum to better understand concerns and potential solutions.

### 2. Policy Context

Officer's comments:

Two fatalities occurred in May this year on state roads in Coburg. These incidents highlighted the increasing road toll in Victoria for 2025. As of 3 June 2025, there have been 134 deaths on Victorian roads. This compares to 119 at the same time in 2024.

Council continues to prioritise road safety through policy, advocacy and council projects. As an inner-urban area, Merri-bek is particularly concerned with vulnerable road user safety including pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists, children, older people and people who are mobility impaired or have a disability. Merri-bek addresses road safety through investment in local road infrastructure, acquiring state and federal grant funding for road safety projects, and advocating to state government for policy and regulatory changes such as speed limit reviews, changes to traffic signals and investment in safety improvements to state managed roads.

A community forum with stakeholders and community members can be run to discuss community road safety issues and identify opportunities for partnership with stakeholders and the community to address road safety in Merri-bek.

### 3. Financial Implications

Officer's comments:

The motion can be delivered within the existing council budget. Expected costs for materials, promotion and equipment are expected to cost less than \$1000.

### 4. Resources Implications

Officer's comments:

The motion can be delivered using existing council resources.