



Merri-bek
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

Wednesday 12 November 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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ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ 9280 0751 ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

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

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

Information about Council Meetings

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NEXT MEETING DATE The next Council meeting will be held on Wednesday 19 November 2025 commencing at 6.30 pm - Mayoral Election, 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 26 November 2025 commencing at 6.30 pm.

WELCOME

1. APOLOGIES/LEAVE OF ABSENCE

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

2. DISCLOSURES OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

3. MINUTE CONFIRMATION

The minutes of the Council Meeting held on 8 October 2025 be confirmed.

4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND OTHER MATTERS

5. PETITIONS

Nil.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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8. NOTICES OF MOTION

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9. NOTICE OF RESCISSION

Nil

10. FORESHADOWED ITEMS

Nil

11. URGENT BUSINESS

12. CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

- 12.1 CONTRACT AWARD: MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA (MAV) RS8017-2023 RECRUITMENT SERVICES

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

7. COUNCIL REPORTS

7.1 DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2025-2029

Acting Director City Infrastructure, Greg Rodwell

Amenity and Compliance

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Adopts the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-2029 (Attachment 1).
2. Provides a copy of the Plan to the Secretary of Victoria's Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) by 1 December 2025.
3. Makes an Order under Section 25 of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* to introduce 24-hour cat confinement, effective from 1 April 2027.
4. As part of its efforts in managing cat overpopulation rates and euthanasia rates, Council continues to require that all cats be desexed, with this requirement applying to all new cat registrations effective from 12 November 2025, except for cats exempt under the Domestic Animals Act 1994 and a copy of this resolution being published in the the Government Gazette and in a newspaper circulating the municipal district of the Council.

REPORT

Executive Summary

Merri-bek City Council has been developing its new Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) 2025 to 2029 and this report presents the proposed final plan for adoption.

The draft DAMP 2025-2029 was endorsed for public exhibition at the 10 September 2025 Council meeting. The public exhibition period ran from 18 September to 16 October 2025. As well as gauging overall thoughts on the draft DAMP, Council sought feedback on a proposed night time cat curfew and what kinds of support cat owners may require to help confine their cats to their properties.

The community holds a range of views on the merits and practicality of introducing any form of cat confinement. Council acknowledges and appreciates the contributions of the community and stakeholders on this matter. Officers have considered and weighed up the community feedback as well as revisiting the research on the impacts on cat wellbeing and wildlife of roaming cats and are recommending that 24 cat confinement be adopted. Research papers considered in forming this recommendation include the Victorian Cat Management Strategy, NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Cat Management (2024), Keeping Cats Safe at Home' project, Safe Cat, Safe Wildlife Campaign, Merri-bek Nature Plan and benchmarking against other Councils.

The Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-2029 (**Attachment 1**) is now being presented to Council for adoption.

Previous Council Decisions

Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-2029 – endorsement for public exhibition – 10 September 2025

That Council:

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

- a) *An increase in Council's cat desexing program, focused on areas with the highest levels of nuisance cat complaints*
- b) *Introduction of a night time curfew (7pm to 7am) from 1 July 2026 with an 8-month grace period*
- 2. *The above is subject to the following changes being made to the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-2029 before exhibition:*
 - a) *Replacing references to introducing a 24-hour cat curfew with a night time cat curfew*
 - b) *Authorising the Chief Executive Officer to have text and actions in the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-2029 amended to reflect this position.*
 - c) *Adding a further action under Objective 4A: To decrease the number of stray, abandoned and unwanted cats that states: "Undertake design of a possible grant program for low-income residents to help them transition their cats to containment and put it forward for consideration in the 2026/27 Budget" – to be completed in Year 1, and the measure of achievement to be that information is provided to Councillors before end December 2025.*

Dog Walking in Merri-bek – 9 July 2025

That Council:

- 1. *Revises Attachment 1 and Attachment 2 so that they reflect changes to Tate Reserve to increase the area zoned as No Dogs, still retaining a corridor for Dog Off-Leash along the western side of the No Dogs area.*
- 2. *Adopts the Council Order at Revised Attachment 1 (Dog Off-Leash and Dog Prohibited Areas) and directs for it to be published with tracked changes accepted in the Victorian Government Gazette with an effective date of 28 July 2025.*
- 3. *Endorses the implementation of the Stage 1 pilot program across eight identified parks the support the Council Order to trial draft principles and interventions for improved management of dog access (Revised Attachment 2) for a minimum of six months, utilising capital funding of \$150,000 set aside in 2025/26 for this purpose.*
- 4. *Notes that the community has participated significantly in consultation on Stage 1 of the Dog Walking in Merri-bek project summarised in Attachment 3 of this report and that officers will continue to engage with the community during the pilot.*
- 5. *Receives a future report at the conclusion of the Stage 1 pilot on outcomes, learnings and future recommendations as part of the preparation of Stage 2 of the Dog Walking in Merri-bek project (remaining off leash reserves).*

Cat Containment Strategy – 7 December 2022

That Council:

- 1. *Considers a multi-pronged approach to dealing with the issue of over-population of cats which particularly focuses on un-owned and semi-owned cats as well as an education program for pet cat owners.*
- 2. *Receive a report in 2023 which includes information on:*
 - a) *The number of cats coming into the Epping Animal Welfare Facility which are un-owned and owned.*
 - b) *The number of cats coming into the Epping Animal Welfare Facility which have been born within the previous 12 months.*

- c) *A comparison of local councils which have implemented cat curfews, voluntary cat containment strategies and strategies to de-sex un-owned/semi-owned cats for the number of cats being impounded, the number of complaints about roaming or nuisance cats, the number of cats being returned to owners, the number of cats being adopted and the number of cats being surrendered. Some councils which could be compared include City of Yarra Ranges, City of Casey and City of Banyule.*
- d) *Proposals on and recommended funding for:*
 - i) *A program of targeted de-sexing of semi-owned and unowned cats, including:*
 - *encouraging people who feed community cats to take ownership of and responsibility for the community cats that they feed with the offer of free de-sexing, free registration and free vaccination.*
 - *targeting hot spots for semi-owned or unowned cats with door knocks*
 - ii) *A program of education which including education about methods such as bed-time feeding to contain cats overnight as well as encouraging the use of and assistance with construction of cat enclosures.*
 - iii) *Resource citizen scientists to survey and get data on locations of threatened and endangered species in Merri-bek council area to inform areas to focus on for semi-owned and unowned cats, as well as cat owners who have cats which do predate.*
- e) *Notes that reducing local cat populations via free desexing is a proven mechanism to reduce the local cat population. In this context, council will provide an analysis of the cost of the above proposals, particularly free desexing, in relation to the costs of running the Epping Animal Welfare Centre (EAWC), given that free desexing will likely reduce impound rates at the EAWC, and therefore, running costs.*

Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 - 10 November 2021

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

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

Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan - 8 September 2021

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

1. Policy Context

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

Councils are responsible for developing a plan which:

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

- protects the community and the environment from nuisance dogs and cats
- identifies a method to evaluate whether the animal management services provided by council are adequate
- outlines the training programs for Authorised Officers to ensure the Officers are capable in administering and enforcing the provisions of the Act.

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

- promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats
- ensure that people comply with the Act, the regulations and any related legislation
- minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals
- address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats
- encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats
- minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance
- effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in the municipality and ensure those dogs are kept in compliance with the Act and the Regulations.

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

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

The Act requires dogs to be confined to their owner's property unless under effective control elsewhere. Cat confinement may be seen as a form of responsible pet ownership, placing similar requirements that apply to dog owners onto cat owners.

A Council Order is the regulatory framework to restrict the movement of cats and limit them to the boundary of their owner's property.

2. Background

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

The development of the DAMP was driven by a working group made up of representatives from the partner Councils and through four stages: stage 1 – background research and analysis; stage 2 – community consultation; stage 3 – joint Council planning; and stage 4 – public exhibition.

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

Merri-bek's draft DAMP 2025-2029 was endorsed for public exhibition at the 10 September 2025 Council meeting and the exhibition period ran from 18 September to 16 October 2025. Details are provided in the community consultation and engagement section of this report.

2. Issues

Overview of DAMP

The DAMP contains a wide range of actions that respond to the community feedback during the various consultation stages and ensures Merri-bek meets its statutory obligations under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. Broadly, these include:

- Ensuring our training of Authorised Officers equips them for their roles
- Creating programs and opportunities to promote and encourage responsible pet ownership and compliance with legislation
- Developing initiatives to address overpopulation of cats and seeking to reduce euthanasia rates
- Introduction of a Council Order to restrict the movement of cats through a cat curfew or cat confinement requirement.
- Building on initiatives to increase registration and identification of cats and dogs
- Continuing our efforts around managing restricted and menacing dogs and responding to dog attacks
- Overseeing functions relating to registration of Domestic Animal Businesses

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

Key initiatives identified within the DAMP 2025-2029

Addressing cat over-population

There are several activities listed in Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 aimed at addressing cat population – these are listed in the left-hand column of the table below. These initiatives will be maintained as part of the current approach to cat management and they will be further enhanced with additional actions as outlined in the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025–2029. The additional actions are listed in the right-hand column of the table below:

Cat management actions identified in the DAMP 2021-2025 and to be maintained	Additional cat management actions identified in the DAMP 2025-2029
Provide a subsidised/discounted cat desexing program (especially for low-income households). Partner with neighbouring councils (City of Whittlesea and City of Darebin) to expand desexing and re-homing of cats. Ensure all cats adopted from the wat djerring Animal Facility are desexed prior to going to new homes and prior to being transferred to rescue groups. Develop educational materials for cat owners covering topics such as responsible pet ownership, containment and nuisance issues. Monitor, collect and improve data on cats, track nuisance complaints, impoundment and euthanasia rates. Promote registration and microchipping of cats.	Increase the cat desexing program, focusing on areas with higher volumes of cat nuisance complaints. Partner with neighbouring councils (City of Whittlesea and City of Darebin) to seek partnership/funding opportunities to expand the desexing program. Develop and provide education materials for cat owners about cat enclosures, nuisance issues (roaming, predation) and containment. Introduce a cat curfew starting 1 April 2027. Design a grant program (for low-income residents) to help them transition their cats to containment.

Maintain limits on number of cats per property via local laws.	
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Tailored strategies for owned and unowned cats

The DAMP 2025–2029 proposes the introduction of a cat curfew/confinement requirement for owned cats. The benefits of implementing a cat curfew include:

- Safeguarding cats from potential harm caused by other animals
- Protecting local wildlife from predation by cats
- Minimising the risk of cats becoming lost or exposed to extreme weather conditions
- Reducing the likelihood of cats sustaining traumatic injuries, such as being hit by cars, dog attacks and cat fights
- Protecting cats' health by limiting exposure to infectious diseases from other cats, including feline immunodeficiency virus
- Decreasing the risk of disease transmission between cats and humans

The introduction of cat confinement requirement focuses on restricting the movement of owned cats and is less effective in relation to semi-owned or unowned cats where different strategies are needed to manage cat population. A two-pronged approach to cat management is therefore proposed:

- Management of semi-owned or unowned cats** - increasing Council's cat desexing program, focusing on the areas where the most cat nuisance complaints come from and resulting in more cats becoming owned and registered and reducing overpopulation.
- Management of owned cats** - introducing a cat curfew (with an education and transition plan).

This two-pronged approach allows for unowned and semi-owned cats to become owned (through the desexing program) and for owned cats to be kept within the boundary of its owner's property (through the curfew).

It is proposed that the desexing program would be operated on a similar basis to that undertaken at Banyule City Council and as has been undertaken by Merri-bek since 2019. This includes:

- Targeting the program to areas where there are the most complaints about nuisance cats;
- Taking an empathetic, educative approach, engaging with residents who might be feeding unowned cats in these areas; and
- Undertaking desexing, vaccination, microchipping of these cats for free and waiving the first year of registration for someone agreeing to take on ownership of a cat.

Further research undertaken on cat confinement

The community holds a range of views on the merits and practicality of introducing any form of cat confinement as reported in section 4: Community consultation and engagement. Council acknowledges and appreciates the contributions of the community and stakeholders on this matter. Officers have also considered and weighed up the Merri-bek Nature Plan, the State's Cat Management Strategy objectives and valuable work undertaken by researchers and expert committees in this field in coming to the recommendation for a 24 hour curfew (cat confinement).

Victorian Cat Management Strategy

The Victorian State Government, through the Victorian Cat Management Strategy (2025-2035) identifies seven themes and corresponding actions to achieve overarching objectives to:

1. Promote cat welfare and responsible ownership;
2. Protect native wildlife, the environment and community from the negative impact of cats; and
3. Improve processes, cooperation and knowledge sharing in cat management.

Cat containment as a key initiative in the 10-year cat management framework, specifically through the theme *Expand cat containment*. This theme addresses keeping cats within defined boundaries (indoors or secure outdoor enclosures) to protect cat welfare and reduce adverse wildlife impacts. Councils are supported to adopt curfews and educational/support programs are emphasised and encouraged.

Under this theme, specific actions include:

- *Action 6:* Provide cat containment support to councils with curfews to aid in the transition to new requirements.
- *Action 7:* Enhance cat containment education and programs, including reviewing and simplifying enclosure guidelines and conducting research on the welfare of contained cats.
- *Action 8:* Foster partnerships with local organisations to assist residents in *constructing* safe and simple cat enclosures.

NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Cat Management (2024) - The Management of cat populations in New South Wales Report 2 August 2025

A number of findings in this study are particularly relevant to this Council report, specifically:

Finding 1 – there is an urgent need to implement cat management strategies;

Finding 5 – there is some positive evidence to support the effectiveness of keeping cats indoors; and

Finding 6 – there is insufficient evidence that cat curfews or containment are effective.

The report suggests that voluntary containment i.e. keeping cats indoors or within a secure outdoor area is supported and has benefits for both cat welfare and wildlife. However, the report states that there is insufficient evidence that curfews are effective in reducing the number of free-roaming cats. The report suggests a broader cat management strategy including desexing, registration, microchipping, education and addressing semi-owned and unowned cats is more effective.

The report states that recent 'research suggests that cat containment is increasingly a social norm and community expectation, with evidence that many cat owners already contain their cats.'

Local Government NSW noted that cat containment is most effective if required 24 hours /7 days, as night-time curfews alone will not significantly reduce wildlife predation and the breeding of unwanted cats.'

'Keeping Cats Safe at Home' project

RSPCA NSW, in partnership with the NSW Government, 11 NSW councils, and key industry stakeholders, has developed the 'Keeping Cats Safe at Home' project. This initiative is a human behaviour change program designed to keep cats safe, reducing the number of cats roaming freely and improving cat welfare whilst protecting native wildlife. Its core purpose is to encourage cat owners to keep their cats indoors or contained through a combination of community education, behaviour-change initiatives and practical support such as subsidised desexing programs. The project, along with resources created and shared by RSPCA NSW, provides a framework for councils to implement cat containment strategies in response to community feedback. It also supports residents in keeping their cats safe from harm, while addressing wildlife protection, nuisance concerns, and cat population management. The project seeks to demonstrate that containment can reduce nuisance complaints, prevent unplanned litters, and improve animal wellbeing. The project has been largely successful in achieving its goals of increasing desexing, reducing roaming cats in pilot zones and changing behaviours through targeted interventions and direct engagement with cat owners.

Safe Cat, Safe Wildlife Campaign

Council supports the *Safe Cat, Safe Wildlife Campaign*, a collaborative initiative by Zoos Victoria and RSPCA Victoria, which emphasises that cats should be kept within their property boundaries to protect both the welfare of the cats and the surrounding environment. Keeping cats indoors at night, or ideally confined to their property at all times through enclosures or secure confinement, reduces risks such as injury, disease, or becoming lost, while also preventing nuisance issues like trespassing or spraying on neighbouring properties and protecting native wildlife from predation. The introduction of a cat curfew, or the confinement of cats to their property boundary, strengthens these measures and supports the intent of the initiative.

Merri-bek Nature Plan

In August 2020, Council formally considered and endorsed the Merri-bek Nature Plan, which was developed to better protect and enhance the city's natural environment. The Plan envisions a more diverse, connected, and resilient ecosystem where native birds and animals flourish, and where residents are encouraged to explore, appreciate, and engage with nature.

The Plan states that some of the pressures on fauna in the municipality include the increased presence and pressure from domestic cats and dogs and it notes that pets can affect fauna activity and behaviour. The Plan suggests that keeping cats contained to within the boundary of its owner's property and preferably inside at night supports wildlife habitat by reducing predation and disturbance.

Cats, whether stray, semi-owned or owned exhibit their natural hunting instincts by threatening and preying on native birds, lizards, and other wildlife. Approximately 46% of Australia's endangered species are found in urban areas, underscoring the need to protect these populations from predation (Ives et al., 2015).

There is consensus among sources that nighttime only curfews do not positively contribute to wildlife protection, as the predation continues to occur during day light hours. Birds and lizards (active during the day) are more at risk than nocturnal mammals which includes the introduced species such as mice and rats. 24-hour cat confinement is recommended to provide the greatest opportunity for wildlife protection (BirdLife Australia 2020; Legge et al, 2020)

Benchmarking

As at the end of 2024, over half (44) Victorian councils have introduced a cat curfew, with others considering doing so. At least 12 councils have night-time curfews including Darebin, Yarra and Banyule that have 7pm to 7am curfews; Melbourne (6pm to 8am) and Moonee Valley and Port Phillip that have a sunset to sunrise curfew. At least 10 council have 24-hour curfews including Whittlesea, Manningham, Knox, Cardinia, Casey and Greater Geelong. Glen Eira, Hobsons Bay and Maribyrnong Councils are considering a curfew as part of the current DAMP engagement.

With support for a cat curfew in the engagement, officers are recommending the phased introduction of a 24-hour curfew. This will line Merri-bek up with most M9 (inner) and Northern Councils who have either a 24-hour or night-time curfew.

Recommended approach

While there are no specific scientific studies into whether cat confinement leads to a reduction in the negative impacts of roaming cats, there are studies that show what impact roaming cats have on wildlife and poor outcomes for cats that roam. As such, it is a reasonable conclusion that reducing the number of roaming cats through strategies for both owned and unowned cats will reduce those impacts.

Feedback received during engagement on the Nature Plan, the DAMP 2021–2025, and the DAMP 2025–2029 indicates a clear expectation for Council to address cat overpopulation, nuisance caused by cats, and the impacts of cats roaming freely. This community and stakeholder input underpins our recommendation to introduce cat confinement.

Council Officers recommend that Council adopt the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) 2025–2029 and introduce a 24-hour cat curfew. This recommendation is informed by multiple considerations, including alignment with the Victorian Cat Management Strategy, the Merri-bek Nature Plan, programs such as ‘Keeping Cats Safe at Home’ and Safe Cat, Safe Wildlife, and survey results though these represent only one aspect of our engagement and research.

Confinement is essential not only for the welfare of cats but also for protecting the environment, local wildlife, and the broader community. Feedback gathered through engagement with residents, community groups, and industry experts indicates that the community supports stronger cat management and the promotion of responsible pet ownership, with cat confinement viewed as a key component of being a responsible pet owner and that cat confinement benefits both cats and their surroundings, ensuring they have the greatest opportunity for a long and healthy life. The community expects Council to address issues such as nuisance and noise caused by cats, impacts on other pets, and overpopulation, while also safeguarding wildlife and the ecosystem.

Merri-bek Council is committed to ensuring pets have the best opportunity to live long and healthy lives, keeping cats safe from harm, minimising nuisance, and protecting local wildlife. The most effective way to achieve this is by keeping cats at home, contained within their property. Achieving this requires a human behaviour change approach that encourages and supports cat owners to confine their cats, prevent roaming, and engage with responsible cat ownership practices.

Comparison of Draft and Final Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-2029

The table below shows the activities presented in the draft DAMP that was placed on public exhibition and the changes that have been made post exhibition. These changes have been made in response to feedback received during the exhibition period.

Pre public exhibition text	Post public exhibition text
Section 4 – Reducing Overpopulation Rates and Euthanasia Levels	Section 4 – Reducing Overpopulation Rates and Euthanasia Levels
<i>Support for the introduction of a cat</i>	<i>Support for the introduction of a cat</i>

curfew There was strong support (78%) for the introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew from the feedback in the online survey with 68% strongly supporting the proposal and 19% somewhat supporting but having concerns. This support was also shown from community pop-up participants where 76% supported the introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew. The DAMP survey did not include a question about a night time cat curfew. Council is proposing a night-time cat curfew from 7pm to 7am from 1 July 2026 with supporting education and transition arrangements.	curfew <u>Consultation period September-October 2025</u> There was support (55%) for the introduction of a cat curfew from the those that completed the survey. Of these, 37% support a 24 hour curfew and 18% supported a night time curfew. <u>Consultation period June-July 2025</u> There was strong support (78%) for the introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew from the feedback in the online survey with 68% strongly supporting the proposal and 19% somewhat supporting but having concerns. This support was also shown from community pop-up participants where 76% supported the introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew.
Design a possible grant program for low-income residents to help them transition their cats to containment and put it forward for consideration in the 2026/27 Budget Evaluation: Information provided to Councillors before end December 2025	Design a grant program for low-income residents to help them transition their cats to containment and put it forward for consideration in the 2026/27 Budget Evaluation: Considered in the 2026/27 budget process
Introduction of a 7pm-7am cat curfew with a commencement date of 1 July 2026. Introduce the curfew with a grace period until 28 February 2027.	Introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew with a commencement date of 1 April 2027. Introduce the curfew with a grace period until 1 July 2027.
Provide an education and support program to assist residents transition their cats to come in at night leading up to the introduction of a cat curfew on 1 July 2026.	Provide an education and support program to assist residents transition their cats to remaining within their property boundary leading up to the introduction of a cat curfew on 1 April 2027.

No changes are required to other parts of the final DAMP, as the feedback received has already been addressed through existing DAMP actions or incorporated into Council's standard business-as-usual activities.

Mandatory cat desexing

Section 10A of the Domestic Animals Act states:

(1) A Council may resolve that it will not, after a specified future date, register or renew the registration of a dog or cat unless the dog or cat (a) is desexed; or (b) is exempted under this Act from any requirement to be desexed.

(3) If a Council makes a resolution under this section – (a) it must cause a copy of the resolution to be published in the Government Gazette and in a newspaper circulating the municipality district of the Council; and (b) it must give effect to the resolution.

Community impact

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

Community members were invited to participate and have their say on the draft DAMP. Details are provided in the community consultation and engagement section of this report.

The introduction of cat confinement may have implications for those on lower incomes or living in rental properties. To support these groups, a grant program is being developed to assist with the transition to cat containment.

Having clear rules, supported by education and behaviour change programs and a sufficient transition period, helps the community understand their responsibilities as cat owners. This will be supported by an investment in communication, education and programs that remove barriers to responsible cat ownership e.g. free/subsidised desexing, microchipping and vaccination scheme and a grant program to help residents successfully keep their cats within the owner's property.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

There are no climate emergency implications associated with this report.

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

The introduction of a 24-hour curfew whereby cats will be required to be contained within the boundary of its owner's property is known to produce better outcomes for cats, better outcomes for overpopulation and better protection of wildlife.

Economic sustainability implications

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

Legal and risk considerations

The *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act) requires all Councils in Victoria to develop a Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP).

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

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

As referenced in the Policy Context, a Council Order is the legal instrument used to introduce cat confinement rules in the municipality. Subject to Council's decision, a Council Order (**Attachment 4**) will be made under Section 25 of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* to introduce 24-hour cat confinement, effective from 1 April 2027. Human Rights Consideration

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

The DAMP recognises the diverse needs and experiences within the community and seeks to balance the enjoyment and benefits of pet ownership with the right of all community members to use public spaces safely and comfortably.

Where restrictions apply to where dog and cat owners may take or allow their animals to roam, these measures are designed to be proportionate to the risks associated with uncontrolled dogs and free-roaming cats.

4. Community consultation and engagement

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

- Stage 1: June - July 2025: Broader community engagement
- Stage 2: June - July 2025: Interviews with key stakeholders
- Stage 3: September - October 2025: Test draft DAMP with the wider community via public exhibition.

The draft DAMP 2025-2029, prepared following community and stakeholder engagement which ran from 25 June to 23 July 2025, was endorsed for public exhibition at the 10 September 2025 Council meeting. The public exhibition period ran from 18 September to 16 October 2025 and aimed to gather community feedback on the draft DAMP, including views on the proposed cat curfew and the types of support cat owners may need to help confine their cats to their properties.

The submission period was promoted via social media, via My Merri-bek e-news, at Customer Service Centres and libraries, and to all registered cat owners in Merri-bek. We received a total of 438 submissions of which 403 were online survey responses, 3 paper survey responses and 32 email responses.

Throughout the public exhibition engagement period a range of stakeholders provided feedback, including (but not limited to) people who represent animal rescue/welfare organisations (4%), members of wildlife/environmental groups (6%), researchers into wildlife/habitat safety and biodiversity (2%), and residents who do not own cats (26%). Sixty per cent of respondents to the engagement do own cats.

Most feedback focused on the proposed cat curfew, with limited comments on other elements of the DAMP.

A copy of the Engagement Summary Report for stage 3 engagement (Sept-Oct) is at **Attachment 2**.

A copy of the Engagement Summary Report for stage 1 and 2 engagement (June-July) is at **Attachment 3**.

Themes related specifically to cats

Survey respondents expressed a wide range of views on the proposed cat curfew, with opinions both for and against being relatively balanced.

Key concerns included:

- **Enforcement** - many respondents doubted Council's ability to effectively enforce a curfew, especially overnight.
- **Effectiveness** - several respondents felt a curfew would not address stray or community cats, the main source of issues, since most owned cats are already desexed and often kept indoors at night.
- **Fairness** - some considered a curfew unfair for older cats used to being outdoors and suggested extending the grace period or applying the rule only to kittens. Fixed confinement times (e.g. 7am–7pm) were viewed as impractical for working people and during daylight savings.
- **Cost and support** - concerns were raised about the financial burden of confinement, particularly for renters and low-income households, with calls for financial assistance and education campaigns.

Supporters of a curfew highlighted benefits such as keeping cats safe from cars, disease, dog attacks and wildlife, reducing nuisance behaviours (fighting, defecating on neighbouring properties), and protecting biodiversity.

Common themes across both sides included support for:

- Education campaigns on responsible pet ownership (for both cats and dogs).
- Council investment in subsidised desexing and cat confinement programs.
- Evidence-based approaches to address stray and community cat issues rather than punitive measures.

Overall, while opinions were divided, there was consensus on the need for education, financial assistance, and practical, evidence-driven solutions.

Other themes

Several themes unrelated to cats also emerged from survey respondents, including

- **Role of Council** - the most frequently raised non-cat theme, with respondents focusing on Council's responsibilities, resources, and approach to animal management. Respondents felt Council should do more to address issues with dog owners not picking up waste and provide more bins for dog waste.
- **Responsible dog ownership** - calls for greater education on responsible pet ownership.
- **Enforcement** - calls for enforcement around picking up dog waste, dogs off lead and managing dogs appropriately.
- **Dogs on-lead** - concerns about compliance with off-lead rules and ensuring safe use of public spaces.
- **Overall support for the draft Plan** - general endorsement of the broader Domestic Animal Management Plan rather than cat-specific elements.
- **Concerns around equity between dogs and cats** - some felt that the rules and resources should be applied fairly across cats and dogs.
- **Limits to the number of pets** - a minor theme touching on general pet ownership regulation which is addressed in the Local Law.

In summary, while most feedback related to cats, several respondents also focused on the broader role of Council, responsible pet ownership (especially dogs), equity between pet types, and overall support for the draft Plan.

In response to these themes, Council will partner with Whittlesea and Darebin councils to develop an education and communication plan focused on responsible pet ownership; and we will run targeted campaigns addressing issues raised during the consultation and public exhibition periods, such as picking up after dogs, and providing information at community events and festivals. As part of our ongoing commitment, we are reviewing the General Local Law 2018, including all provisions relating to domestic animals. We will continue to enforce legislation regarding dog owners not picking up waste and dogs being off-leash in on-leash areas. Proactive patrolling will also continue to support compliance and community safety. No changes to the activities listed in the DAMP are necessary, as these actions are already included or are part of standard business operations.

Affected persons rights and interests

Before making a decision that affects a person's rights, Council must identify whose rights may be directly affected and provide an opportunity for that person (or persons) to convey those views regarding the effect on their rights and consider those views. All members of the community are either directly (pet owners) or indirectly impacted by the DAMP. The community and key stakeholders have had an opportunity to express their views through the 3-stage engagement process as detailed above.

5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

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

6. Financial and Resources Implications

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

7. Implementation

Subject to Council's decision a copy of the Domestic Animal Plan 2025-2029 will be provided to the Secretary of Victoria's Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) by 1 December 2025.

Upon Council resolution, the cat curfew would be introduced with the following approach:

- Cat Curfew (24 hours) Order is made in November 2025, with a commencement date of 1 April 2027;
- Develop and implement in early 2026 an education and implementation plan to support the community transition to the cat confinement initiative;
- Cat owners, as part of their registration renewal, to receive specific information about the forthcoming cat curfew, and provided with information and tips to support their transition to keeping their cats within the boundary of its owner's property;
- Specialist advice and support to be made available to cat owners who are concerned that their cat may not be able to make the transition to remaining within the boundary of its owner's property; and
- A grant program for low-income residents to help them transition their cats to confinement be put forward for consideration in the 2026/27 budget process. Work has commenced on the development of a grant program and information will be provided to Councillors in December 2025.

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

Attachment/s

1	Merri-bek Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-2029	D25/587787
2	Merri-bek DAMP Engagement Summary Report - Stage 3 (October 2025)	D25/587508
3	Merri-bek DAMP Engagement Summary Report - Stage 1 & 2 (August 2025)	D25/587622
4	Merri-bek DAMP - Council Order - Cat Confinement	D25/596942



Merri-bek
City Council

Domestic Animal Management Plan

2025-2029



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1 Introduction and Context

1.1 Purpose of Domestic Animal Management Plan

The Domestic Animals Act 1994 (the Act) requires councils in Victoria to develop a Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) every four years. The DAMP must outline services, programs and policies established by council to address the administration of the Act, and Council's management of cat and dog issues in the community. Councils must review the DAMP annually and publish an evaluation of the implementation of the past year's actions in the Annual Report.

The DAMP should:

- Encourage compliance with the Act, its regulations and any related legislation.
- Minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals.
- Address overpopulation and high euthanasia rates for cats and dogs.
- Encourage the registration and identification of cats and dogs.
- Minimise the potential for cats and dogs to create a nuisance.
- Effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in that district and ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act and the regulation.
- Provide for the review of existing orders made under this Act and local laws that relate to the Council's municipal district with a view to determining whether further orders or local laws dealing with the management of cats and dogs in the municipal district are desirable.
- Provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of cats and dogs in the Council's municipal district that it thinks necessary.
- Provide for the periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy or review outlined under the plan.

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

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

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

- preventing loneliness
- motivating people to exercise regularly
- creating opportunities to meet people and make new friends
- teaching responsibility, as pets require ongoing care.

Pets are often viewed as extended members of the family and can provide great companionship, affection and joy. At the same time, responsible pet ownership involves ensuring that animals do not adversely affect the health, safety or enjoyment of others or the environment.

1.2 Approach to Develop the Plan

Merri-bek City Council's DAMP was developed through a sector-leading approach in partnership with two neighbouring Councils, Darebin and Whittlesea. An inter-organisational working group was developed to encourage partnerships and lead best practice. The development of the DAMP was driven by the working group and through four specific stages.

Stage 1: Background Research and Analysis

A review of the local government area; relevant state and local policies; review of Council's current DAMP; emerging issues in domestic animal management; and current animal management statistics.

Stage 2: Community Consultation

A comprehensive community engagement program was delivered to encourage the community to have their say on domestic animal management issues. Approximately 186 people who live, work or play in Merri-bek provided feedback. Feedback was gathered through four methods: a detailed online survey which was available through a dedicated project webpage; community pop-ups held at key venues and locations across the local government areas; submissions and telephone interviews conducted with key stakeholders.

Online survey	3 Community Pop-ups	Email Submissions	Key stakeholder interviews
131 surveys completed	42 participants	3 submissions	10 key stakeholders interviewed

The feedback received from community members has been used to inform the priorities and actions outlined in the DAMP. A full engagement report which outlines the community feedback is also available. The key themes found across the engagement program are outlined in Table 1. These themes come from the Domestic Animals Act Section 68A(2) which covers the topics required to be included in a DAMP. The relevant subsection references are provided in the table below.

Table 1: Key themes across the engagement program and associated DAMP objectives

Theme and Source	Key sub-theme	DAMP objective (note: objective numbering draws from relevant section number)
Responsible pet ownership Section 68A(2)(c)(i)	- Improving owner behaviours and control of animals - Increasing community education and communications about responsible dog and cat ownership	3 Promote responsible cat and dog ownership
Dog attacks Section 68A(2)(c)(iii)	- Education around dog behaviour, selecting the 'right' dog and effects of dog attacks - Improving safety at dog parks - Increased patrol and enforcement of rules associated with dog walking (on leash, off leash and no dog areas)	7A Decrease the number of confirmed dog attacks in the community 7B Increase community awareness of how to report dog attacks

Theme and Source	Key sub-theme	DAMP objective (note: objective numbering draws from relevant section number)
Overpopulation of cats and dogs Section 68A(2)(c)(iv)	• Providing free cat desexing program or increasing and continuing to provide low cost and subsidised desexing • Increasing rehoming efforts • Reducing illegal and irresponsible backyard breeding • Reducing stray cats • Provide education to the community about the benefits of desexing animals • Consider the introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew	4A To decrease the number of stray, abandoned and unwanted cats 4B To minimise the number of animals euthanised
Registration and identification of cats and dogs Section 68A(2)(c)(v)	• Reducing registration fees • Educating about the purpose and benefits of registration	5 Increase the number of cat and dog registrations
Protection from nuisance Section 68A(2)(c)(vi)	• Addressing dog waste in public places • Addressing roaming cats, especially at night • Addressing cats preying on wildlife • Addressing dogs off-leash when they shouldn't be • Availability of cat traps • Having dog free nature reserves	6 Reduce the number of nuisance complaints in Merri-bek
Dangerous and restricted dogs Section 68A(2)(c)(vii)	• Addressing aggressive dogs in off-leash parks • Stricter rules specifically for dangerous breeds	8A Managing dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs 8B Ensure all declared dogs are compliant to relevant legislation and regulations
Review of Council services Section 68A(2)(d) and (e)	• Increasing patrols and officer visibility • Increasing community education • Increasing fines for people doing the wrong thing • Reviewing dog off / on leash areas for different dog sizes	10A Review the operation of the Wat djerring Animal Facility to ensure it is achieving best practice 10B Emergency management planning for domestic animals (as part of Council's Municipal Emergency Management Plan)

Theme and Source	Key sub-theme	DAMP objective (note: objective numbering draws from relevant section number)
Training for authorised officers Section 68A(2)(b)	Providing training to encourage positive interactions with the community	2A Develop a training policy that clearly identifies minimum training requirements and any additional training needs that should be undertaken by animal management officers 2B Ensure animal management officers have the skills necessary to support the community and effectively perform their regulatory role

Additional DAMP objectives

Part 4 of the Domestic Animals Act 1994, Sections 44 to 63, covers matters relating to Domestic Animal Businesses. DAMP objectives relating to this are:

9A Identify and register all Domestic Animal Businesses in the municipality

9B Annually inspect and audit all registered Domestic Animal Businesses

Section 68A (3) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 requires Councils to annually review their DAMP, submit a copy of the Department Secretary and publish in Council's annual report an evaluation of implementation with plan actions. Council's objective is to comply with this clause:

11 Comply with Section 68A(3)

Stage 3: Joint Council planning

Relevant Council officers from Darebin, Merri-bek and Whittlesea participated in a joint Council planning session to analyse the community feedback, determine appropriate actions for their respective DAMPs and identify opportunities for partnerships and cost saving.

Stage 4: Public exhibition

To finalise the Plan and ensure that community feedback was captured on the draft Plan. A formal public exhibition period will be held from 15 September to 12 October 2025.

1.3 Demographic Profile of Council

Merri-bek City Council is located in the inner north of Melbourne, about 4km from the Central Business District (CBD). It covers approximately 50.9 square kilometres and is made up of the following suburbs:

- Brunswick
- Brunswick East
- Brunswick West
- Coburg
- Coburg North
- Fawkner
- Glenroy
- Gowanbrae
- Hadfield
- Oak Park
- Pascoe Vale
- Pascoe Vale South
- Fitzroy North (part)

The population of Merri-bek for 2025 is 191,747, with a slightly higher growth rate than Greater Melbourne. In 2021, the City of Merri-bek had a lower proportion of children (under 18) and a lower proportion of persons aged 60 or older than Greater Melbourne.

Merri-bek is a multicultural municipality, where in 2021 over 34.5% of local residents spoke a language other than English at home. The most common languages spoken other than English are Italian, Arabic and Greek. In 2021, there were 1,268 people who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in Merri-bek.

Figure 1: Map of the City of Merri-bek



1.4 Animal Management in Merri-bek

The purpose of Merri-bek City Council's animal management service is to:

- Implement Council's responsibilities under the Act and the General Local Laws.
- Promote the welfare of cats and dogs.
- Inform and educate the community about the benefits associated with pets, responsible pet ownership and the needs of companion animals.
- Reflect the needs of pet owners, non-pet owners, wildlife and the environment when making decisions about animal management.
- Respond to issues raised by the community about nuisance animals, e.g. barking dogs.
- Provide programs and services to support the community to be responsible pet owners, such as desexing programs, education campaigns and park patrols.
- Provide animal welfare services through the wat djerring Animal Facility in partnership with City of Darebin and City of Whittlesea.

A high-level summary of the Merri-bek services for domestic animals is outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Current services for domestic animals

Program or Service	Service Level
Identification & registration	7 business days
Domestic animal complaints	Acknowledge in 2 business days
Dangerous dog complaints	Immediate response
Routine street, park, reserve and creek patrols	Weekly or more frequently in response to complaints
wat djerring Animal Facility	Monday 10am -4pm

Program or Service	Service Level
	Tuesday 12-6.30pm Wednesday 10am - 4pm Thursday 12-6.30pm Friday 10am - 4pm Saturday 11am - 3pm Sunday - Closed
Microchipping and/or desexing programs	Council offers a cat desexing program which includes microchipping, vaccination and first year registration. The program is free for concession card holders and subsidised for non-concession card holders. This program is currently offered annually, limit of 2 cats per household.
After hours emergency service	Emergency call-out service for dog attacks and other animal related incidents.

1.5 Domestic Animal Statistics

Currently there are 21,821 registered pets in Merri-bek, 13,291 dogs and 8,530 cats. There has been a 16% increase in pet ownership since July 2021. Trend information is shown in Table 3.

Merri-bek has 22 dog declared menacing and 20 dogs declared either dangerous or restricted breed.

Merri-bek has thirteen registered Domestic Animal Businesses; 7 boarding establishments, 2 pet shops, 1 dog trainer, 1 combined pet shop and dog trainer, and 2 combined boarding establishments and dog trainers.

Table 3: Number of cats and dogs registered in Merri-bek

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Dogs	13256	13455	13996	13722
Cats	7415	7986	8547	8607
Total	20671	21441	22543	22329

* The periods above relate to the 'animal registration year' of 10 April – 9 April each year.

The animal management team responded to 70 reports of dogs at large and 21 cases where dogs were not under effective control in 2024/25. There were 20 reported dog attacks causing non-serious injury, along with 2 incidents involving failure to collect and dispose of animal waste.

2 Training of Authorised Officers

In order to deliver animal management services that meet the requirements of the Act to the level that the community expects, it is crucial to ensure that all authorised officers are appropriately trained through participation in a robust training program.

The community engagement program illustrated a growing community expectation that Council officers should be fostering partnerships, supporting community education initiatives and facilitating positive interactions with the community.

2.1 Context and Current Situation

Merri-bek has a combination of Animal Management and Animal Collections Officers. A relevant qualification, such as either a Certificate IV in Government Statutory Compliance or Certificate IV in Animal Control and Regulation is desirable when recruiting to these roles.

Authorised Officers involved in animal management undertake Council required training programs as outlined in Table 4. Any training gaps are discussed with relevant staff and plans put in place to address the gaps.

Table 4: Authorised Officer training status - completed and in progress

Authorised Officer Training	Completed
Animal handling training	4
Animal Management Officer specific training e.g. - statement taking and prosecutions training.	3
OH&S training e.g. dealing with aggressive customers and occupational violence prevention training	4
Cert IV in Government Statutory Compliance or Certificate iv in Animal Control and Regulation (Desirable but not required)	2

2.2 Training for Authorised Officers

Merri-bek City Council has planned a thorough training program for Authorised Officers to ensure that they have the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the requirements of the Act and to deliver service in a manner that the community expects. Table 5 shows the planned training for 2026-2029 and the expected timeframe of each.

Table 5: Planned training of Authorised Officers for the 2026-2029 period

Planned Training (2026-2029)	Expected Timeframe
OH&S Dealing with aggressive customers Defensive driving Occupational violence prevention	Annually or as required
Industry Training Animal handling Animal assessment Statement taking Evidence gathering	Annually or as required
Restricted Breed Dog Identification	As required
Council e-learning opportunities	Annually
Customer Service	As required
Cert IV in Animal Control and Regulation	As required
Cert IV in Local Government (Regulatory Services)	As required
Australian Institute of Animal Management	As they are provided
Management seminars/conference	As they are provided
Animal Welfare Victoria seminars	As they are provided

2.3 Our Plan

Table 6 shows the activities, timeframe and method of evaluation to meet objectives 2A and 2B.

Table 6: Activities for Training for Authorised Officers

Objective 2A: Develop a training policy that clearly identifies minimum training requirements and any additional training needs that should be undertaken by animal management officers		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify minimum training requirements by consultation with management and staff	Year 1	Documentation to be finalised
Objective 2B: Ensure animal management officers have the skills necessary to support the community and effectively perform their regulatory role		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Explore opportunities for ongoing training, development and health and safety practices in partnership with the City of Darebin and City of Whittlesea	Ongoing	No. of events/training programs undertaken
Maintain a training register for individual officers detailing completed and proposed training	Annually	Review of training register
Develop an induction process for new staff members	Year 1	Reviewed induction process
Explore providing information to Council in home service providers around domestic animal management relevant to their roles.	Year 1	Engagement with relevant service providers

3 Responsible Pet Ownership

Responsible pet ownership was a key theme that emerged from the community consultation. There was a strong desire for community education topics such as responsibilities of dog owners when walking or exercising their dog, the importance of desexing, what 'effective control of a dog' means and why cat containment is important. Many key stakeholders were keen to partner with Council to help deliver education programs on these topics as well as others, including domestic animals and wildlife, cat and dog behaviour, how to help injured animals, microchipping and desexing.

3.1 Context and Current Situation

Council provides information and advice to the community regarding responsible pet ownership and has a number of initiatives and programs in place to encourage responsible pet ownership and to address compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements. Some of these programs include:

- Educating the community about responsible pet ownership, including the benefits of desexing, registration and microchipping
- Providing an annual subsidised cat desexing program and an ongoing voucher scheme to reduce the cost of cat and dog desexing for concession card holders
- Providing cat traps to residents for free and facilitating the collection of trapped cats
- Maintaining, promoting and patrolling the on and off-leash dog parks, dog prohibited areas and fenced in dog parks across Merri-bek
- Comparing Council's database of registered animals against microchip registries to ensure breeds align
- Following up on unpaid animal registration renewals to ensure pets are registered as per legislation
- Investigating alleged breaches of the Domestic Animals Act and the General Local Law, issuing infringements for breaches of legislation, pursuing unpaid infringements and prosecuting matters in court as required.

Development of principles and proposed interventions for dog walking in Merri-bek

From March - May 2025, Council asked the community for feedback to help shape how they manage dog walking in parks and open spaces. Over 1,850 people participated through surveys, pop-up events, workshops and submissions. People reported how much they value open space, not just for dog walking, but also for social connection, health and wellbeing, and enjoying nature. Many supported the proposed principles and interventions, such as clearer rules, designated on and off leash areas, and better infrastructure. Others raised concerns about safety, protecting the natural environment and how new rules would be enforced.

This feedback has guided a six-month pilot across eight parks, running on a rolling program in 2025/2026. The pilot is testing different approaches to sharing space, including timed off leash access, fencing and improved signage, to see what works best for the community. The project has highlighted the importance of supporting responsible dog ownership, creating inclusive and accessible spaces, and finding the right balance for all park users, including those who may feel uncomfortable around dogs.

The following parks within Merri-bek have designated off-leash areas:

Brunswick West Sheils Reserve Holbrook Reserve Brady Reserve Wylie Reserve	Brunswick Clifton Park A G Gillon Oval *Gilpin Park Reaburn Reserve	Brunswick East Balfe Park Jones Park Methven Park Phillips Reserve Sumner Park Abrahams Reserve Kirkdale Park Fleming Park
Pascoe Vale South Esslemont Reserve Brearley Reserve Morris Reserve	Coburg Bush Reserve McDonald Reserve DeChene Reserve Bridges Reserve Anderson Reserve Campbell Reserve Shore Reserve Egan Reserve Bowden Reserve #Harmony Park #Robinson Reserve #Tate Reserve Dunstan Reserve Fraser Reserve *Upfield Linear Park (Audley Street)	Coburg North Jackson Reserve Cash Reserve Hosken Reserve *Richards Reserve Parker Reserve
Pascoe Vale Joyce Reserve Raeburn Reserve Austin Crescent Reserve Hallam Reserve Cole Reserve Rayner Reserve		Fawkner Charles Mutton Reserve **Lorne Street Fenced Dog Park *Moomba Park Reserve
Oak Park J P Fawcner Reserve		Hadfield Martin Reserve Roberts Reserve Tony Mommson Reserve
Gowanbrae * Elms Court Reserve	Glenroy Sewell Reserve Wallace Reserve Gervase Ave Reserve Jacana Valley *Kingsford Smith Ulm Reserve #GE Clarke Reserve	

* Includes a fenced in off-leash dog area

** Fenced dog park only (not surrounding Reserve)

Part of the Walking Dogs in Merri-bek 6-month trial (As per 9 July 2025 Council meeting)

Compliance activities

Table 7 shows the trend in issue of cat and dog infringements over the past 4 years.

Table 7: Cat and dog infringements issued Merri-bek

Number of offences	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
	1,508	3,111	1,092	1,662

Compliance activities include the following:

- Enforcement using Notices to Comply, infringement notices, Animal Management Agreements and, where required, court prosecution
- Officer visits to properties of non-renewed pet registrations
- Random inspections of properties of declared dogs
- Follow up of notifications from pet welfare agencies of claimed or rehoused pets which are housed within the municipality
- Provision of cat traps to complainants
- Impoundment of dogs or cats found wandering. Unregistered and/or unidentifiable dogs or cats are brought to the Wat djerring Animal Facility. Registered and identifiable cats and dogs are reunited with their owners.
- Complaint investigation
- Patrols of dog parks, sporting fields and reserves, creeks and waterways to educate and remind owners of their responsibilities, and where required, issue infringement notices.
- Social media posts around the registration/renewal period and the 'Top of the Class' campaign about responsible pet ownership.

3.2 Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

Section 26 Domestic Animals Act 1994 – Merri-bek Council requires dogs to be kept under effective control while in a public place including in designated off-leash areas.

Orders:

- The Dogs Off-Leash Areas Order was endorsed by Council on 8 March 2006; this order designated the off-leash or partial off-leash dog walking areas within Merri-bek municipality.
- The Dogs Off-Leash Areas Order was amended by the 9 July 2025 Council meeting; the Dog Off-Leash and Dog Prohibited Area Order - the Order creates five new designated off-leash areas and modifies two.

Local Laws:

- General Local Law 2018 Part 5 - Merri-bek requires residents provide responsible care and management of animals.
- The General Local Law 2018 is being reviewed in 2025-2026, consultation is intended in late 2025 and early 2026 where the community will have the opportunity to comment and contribute to the development of the new Local Law.

Policies and Procedures:

- Process for issuing notices to comply, infringement notices and filing charges for prosecution
- Standard Operating Procedures
- Compliance and Enforcement Framework

3.3 Our Plan

Table 8 shows the activities, timeframe and method of evaluation to meet DAMP objectives relating to responsible pet ownership.

Table 8: Activities relating to responsible pet ownership

Objective 3: Promote responsible cat and dog ownership		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Develop a communication plan in partnership with City of Darebin and City of Whittlesea and stakeholders on responsible pet ownership topics	Annually	Communications plan developed

Objective 3: Promote responsible cat and dog ownership		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Run a campaign publicising the relevant animal related trends (e.g. the importance of dog socialisation and training, picking up after dogs etc)	Quarterly	Social media reach
Stage 2 of the Dog Walking in Merri-bek	Ongoing	No. recommendations and improvements
Attend Council run festivals and events where residents can meet the team and receive information on responsible pet ownership	Ongoing	No. events
Run a campaign about the importance of responsible pet ownership, sending information or QR codes for information out with renewal notices	Annually	No. nuisance complaints
Hold an annual open day at wat djerring Animal Facility to improve community awareness of the facility and the services delivered.	Annually	No. events
Develop engaging fact sheets and web content regarding legislative obligations	Year 1	Fact sheets completed and distributed
As part of the upcoming Local Law review, review all elements relating to domestic animals	Year 1	Local Law domestic animal clauses reviewed

4 Reducing Overpopulation Rates and Euthanasia Levels

The overpopulation of cats and dogs is an issue that presents challenges in the community such as impacts on wildlife, people and other cats and dogs. There are also impacts on the welfare of cats and dogs if they are stray, semi-owned, or malnourished due to limited capacity of owners to care for them. In particular, the overpopulation of cats leads to challenges with high rates of euthanasia within the stray cat population due to low rehoming rates.

During the community engagement program, key stakeholders highlighted the need for low cost desexing of animals, increased re-homing efforts and reducing illegal and irresponsible backyard breeding to help combat overpopulation and high euthanasia rates. Community education was seen as important to help the community understand the importance of desexing and the impact of un-desexed cats roaming in the community.

Support for the introduction of a cat curfew

Consultation period September-October 2025

There was support (55%) for the introduction of a cat curfew from the those that completed the survey. Of these, 37% support a 24-hour curfew and 18% supported a night time curfew.

Consultation period June-July 2025

There was strong support (78%) for the introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew from the feedback in the online survey with 68% strongly supporting the proposal and 19% somewhat supporting but having concerns. This support was also shown from community pop-up participants where 76% supported the introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew.

4.1 Context and Current Situation

Euthanasia rates

The population and euthanasia rates are demonstrated in Table 9. There has been a gradual increase in the number of the dogs impounded over the four year period, rising from 189 in 2021/22 to 228 in 2024/25. The most notable increased occurred between 2023/24 and 2024/25, where impoundments rose by 39. The number of dogs returned to their owners remained relatively stable, with figures

dropping slightly from 133 in 2021/22 to 130 in 2024/25. Rehoming rates have also shown a positive trend, with the number of dogs rehomed increasing from 39 in 2021/22 to 70 in 2024/25.

For cats, the number has fluctuated but remains high overall. Between 2021/22 and 2022/23, there was a decrease of 93 impoundments, followed by another drop of 49 between 2022/23 and 2023/24. However, this trend reversed in 2024/25 with a significant increase of 212, bringing the total number of cats impounded to 954. The number of cats returned to owners has remained low throughout this period, increasing slightly from 43 in 2023/24 to 57 in 2024/25. Rehoming rates have improved over time, rising from 471 in 2023/24 to 570 in 2024/25, an increase of 99, reflecting ongoing efforts to support rehoming.

Table 9: Numbers of cats and dogs impounded and subsequent outcomes

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Dogs				
Impounded	198	192	189	228
Returned to owner	130	133	133	130
Euthanasia (feral or unsafe to rehome)	11	13	17	35
Rehomed	47	39	39	70
Cats				
Impounded	884	791	742	954
Returned to owner	66	46	43	57
Euthanasia (feral or unsafe to rehome)	203	223	228	334
Rehomed	527	484	471	570

Reuniting domestic animals with their owners is a strong focus for Council and many community welfare organisations. Pets are valued members of the family, and it can be distressing for owners and animals when they are missing or being held within the pound. To be able to reunite animals with their owners the pet must be registered and microchipped, this is further explored in Section 5 of the DAMP.

Animals that are not reclaimed are offered for rehoming if they meet temperament and health requirements. Animals may be euthanised if they have an untreatable disease or if they have temperament issues that pose a risk to the community.

Merri-bek City Council provides the following educational and community awareness activities:

- Print and media campaigns promoting responsible pet ownership
- Cat-trapping service (available to all residents)
- Annual free cat desexing, microchipping and immunisation program for eligible cat owners
- Reduced-rate desexing program for eligible cat owners (ongoing program in conjunction with vets).

Cat overpopulation management

Since its launch in 2019, Council's annual cat desexing program has continued to support responsible pet ownership and reduce the number of unwanted litters in the community. The program has seen consistent uptake, with a total of 908 cats desexed over six years. Annual desexing numbers have steadily increased, rising from 140 in 2019/2020 to a record high of 192 in 2024/25. The most significant growth occurred in the past two years, reflecting increased community awareness and demand. Council will continue to invest in this initiative as a key strategy in managing the local cat population.

Merri-bek City Council has provided a heavily discounted desexing program in partnership with The Vet Project. They have provided an accessible and affordable high-quality desexing service for the local community. This program was delivered through the Targeted Cat Desexing Program grant, funded by Department Energy, Environment and Climate Action.

Merri-bek has held two events with The Vet Project, one in May 2025 where 29 cats and kittens were desexed, and three days in July 2025 where 50 cats and kittens were desexed.

Cat curfew

Unlike Merri-bek's animal management partner Councils of Whittlesea and Darebin, Merri-bek does not have a cat curfew. Instead, there has been a focus on education around cat containment and desexing programs.

4.2 Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

- Local Laws
- General Local Law 2018 Part 5 - maximum number of animals allowed in a private premises.

Compliance Activities

- Investigation of reports of animal hoarding and feeding of community cats
- Enforcement of registration, microchipping and tag-wearing requirements
- Issuance of infringement notices for cats and dogs found at large.

4.3 Our Plan

Table 10 shows the activities, timeframe and method of evaluation to meet each activity relating to reducing cat populations and reducing euthanasia rates.

Table 10: Activities to manage cat populations and euthanasia rates

Objective 4A: To decrease the number of stray, abandoned and unwanted cats		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Partner with City of Darebin and City of Whittlesea to seek partnership/funding opportunities to increase the size of the desexing program	As grant funding is available	No. of successful grant opportunities
Increase Council's cat desexing program, focusing on areas with high volumes of cat nuisance complaints	Ongoing	No. cats desexed
Develop and provide material about cat enclosures and nuisance issues for cat owners	Year 1	No. complaints
Design a grant program for low-income residents to help them transition their cats to containment and put it forward for consideration in the 2026/27 Budget	Year 1	Considered in the 2026/27 budget process
Promote 'Safe Cat, Safe Wildlife' education material	Year 1	Fewer reports of nuisance cats
Provide educational material to owners promoting the benefits of cat containment to cats, the community and wildlife ahead of introducing a cat curfew	Year 1	Fewer requests for cat cages
Provide an education and support program to assist residents transition their cats to remain within their property boundary leading up to the introduction of a cat curfew on 1 April 2027.	Year 1	No. cat owners engaging with the program
Run a campaign on social media about the introduction of a cat curfew	Year 1	Social media reach

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Introduce a 24-hour cat curfew with a commencement date of 1 April 2027. Introduce the curfew with a grace period until 1 July 2027.	Year 1	Introduction of cat curfew
Objective 4B: To minimise the number of animals euthanised		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Encourage partnerships between shelters and rescue groups, through section. 84Y agreements	Ongoing	No. partnerships

5 Registration and Identification

Registration and the requirement to be microchipped is a legislative requirement which provides Council with an understanding of the level of pet ownership and allows for the development of relevant services and programs. It also assists in the safe and prompt return of lost cats and dogs to their owners.

A total of 90.5% of respondents in the online survey were aware that dogs need to be registered, and 82.2% did not know anyone who had an unregistered dog or cat. This confirms the majority of cat and dog owners in Merri-bek have a good awareness and responsibility when it comes to pet registration. The top barrier perceived to registering a pet once it reaches the appropriate age was the cost.

5.1 Context and Current Situation

There are currently 13,291 registered dogs and 8,530 registered cats in Merri-bek, as shown in Table 11. It is difficult to capture data on the actual ownership population of cats and dogs, as we know that not all cats and dogs are registered. Of the total registrations, 789 dogs and 636 cats were new registrations, while 11,514 dogs and 7,195 cats were renewals. There has been an increase in the number of cats and dogs registered in 2024/25* from the 2020/2021 period, 28% in cats and 9% in dogs.

Concession rates were accessed by approximately 11% of dog owners and 11% of cat owners.

*'Animal registration year' 10 April 2024 – 9 April 2025

Table 11: Registration and microchipping numbers of cats and dogs

	Dogs	Cats
Registration Numbers	13291	8530
New	789	636
Renewal	11514	7195
Concessions	1413	903

Merri-bek provides the following educational and community awareness activities:

- Providing education on the need to register animals via social media, print material, online, on hold message and officers on patrol.
- Providing renewal information and reminders via postal mail; emails; text messaging; and prominent displays in the community.
- Liaising with local veterinary practices to ensure relevant information on responsible pet ownership is available.
- Increasing registration education in parks by Animal Management Officers.
- Attending council run events and speaking with the community about responsible pet ownership and the need to register
- Providing pro-rata registration for new applications from 10 July each year.

- Following up registrations for cats and dogs purchased from pet shops and shelters, or adopted.
- Providing free applications for registered animals moving from another Victorian municipality into Merri-bek.
- Offering online application for new registrations (along with hard-copy application forms available on request and at Customer Service Centres).
- Offering online payment options for renewal registrations.
- Ensuring registration application forms are available at all domestic animal businesses.
- Comparing microchip registry databases with Council's registration database and writing to dog/cat owners whose pet is microchipped but not registered
- Fawkner Festa and Glenroy Festa stalls to promote responsible pet ownership and registration.
- Welcome pack for newly registered animals.
- Free registration for the first year for cats if desexed.
- Providing free micro-chipping at Council run events and partnering events e.g. at the RSPCA low-cost veterinary clinics held in Merri-bek

5.2 Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

Domestic Animals Act 1994 s10C – requirement of dogs/cats to be microchipped at time of renewal of registration

Local Laws:

- General Local Law 2018 Part 5 - regulating the number and types of animals a person may keep without a permit

Policies and Procedures:

- Application for registration and renewal of registration of cats and dogs.
- Procedure for seizing and impounding unregistered and/or unidentified cats and dogs.
- Process for issuing notices to comply, infringement notices and filing charges for prosecution.
- Process for follow-ups on unpaid renewals.
- Process for follow-ups of microchipped but not registered pets
- Enforcement guidelines

Compliance Activities:

- Regular patrols of streets, parks, creeks and reserves including random checks of registration and tag details.
- Use of microchip scanners on patrols.
- Issuance of a registration renewal notice in advance of the due date each year.
- Sending of a reminder text followed by a reminder notice for unpaid registrations after the due date.
- Enforcement action if renewal notice is not paid after the reminder

5.3 Our Plan

Table 12 shows the activities, timeframe and method of evaluation to meet DAMP objectives relating to animal registration.

Table 12: Activities to encourage pet registration

Objective 5: Increase the number of cat and dog registrations		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Promote registration through annual door knocks and communications e.g. variable message boards, a-frames, decals on vans	Annually	No. pets registered
Partner with vets and key stakeholders to provide information to the community.	Annually	No. stakeholders engaged

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Objective 5: Increase the number of cat and dog registrations		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Promote registration discounts for concession card holders for desexed cats and dogs	Annually	No. discounted registrations
Cross-reference microchip databases and Central Animal Records (CAR) information with current Council registration database	Annually	No. cats and dogs registered

6 Nuisance

According to the Domestic Animals Act 1994 a dog or cat is regarded as a nuisance: if it injures or endangers the health of any person; or if it creates a noise (e.g. barking), which persistently occurs or continues to such a degree or extent that it unreasonably interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience of any person in any other premises.

Community feedback showed several key nuisance themes in the community, particularly relating to dog waste, roaming cats, dogs being off-leash when they shouldn't be and cats preying on wildlife. Council has a role in protecting the community from unnecessary nuisance from cats and dogs through their services and community education.

6.1 Context and Current Situation

Table 13 illustrates the number of complaints received by Council in relation to cat and dog management over the past four years. Overall, the data reflects encouraging signs of improvement in several areas, along with increased community engagement in animal management programs.

Reports of dogs at large have declined from a high of 153 in 2023/24 to 122 in 2024/25, suggesting improvements in containment practices and greater awareness among pet owners about their responsibilities. Similarly, barking dog complaints decreased from 252 in 2023/24 to 226 in 2024/25, indicating some success in addressing nuisance issues through education and intervention.

There has also been a strong community response to Council's cat trapping, with cat cage requests rising to 245 in 2024/25, the highest in the four year period. This reflects growing interest in managing stray cats and roaming cats in a humane and proactive way.

While dog attack and dog rushes incidents have shown some increases over the four years, the consistent reporting may also reflect improved community awareness and willingness to report concerning behaviour. These areas remain a priority for Council, with ongoing efforts to support responsible pet ownerships and ensure animals are safely managed in public spaces.

Table 13: Cat and dog complaints to Council from 2021/22 to 2024/25

Nature of Complaint	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Dog Attack	131	117	139	149
Dog at Large	87	107	153	122
Barking Dog	214	192	252	226
Dog Rush	69	66	66	76
Animal Violation (other)	328	369	468	457
Cat cage requests	229	156	171	245

Merri-bek's current educational and promotional activities surrounding nuisance include:

- Providing information and advice on methods for resolving nuisance in the community.
- Encouraging complainants to speak to the owner of the animal causing the nuisance directly and as early as possible.

- Providing signage and decals related to control of dogs in parks.
- Patrols of parks, creeks and reserves. Patrols are undertaken on bikes and in vehicles to ensure that officers can access all areas frequented by cats and dogs.

6.2 Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

Local Laws:

- General Local Law 2018 Part 5- any structure used for housing an animal must be maintained: so as not to cause any nuisance.

Compliance Activities

- Animal Management Officers investigate nuisance complaints and issue infringements and, when necessary, prosecute.
- Officers proactively patrol Council parks, reserves and residential areas.
- Officers actively work with other agencies including the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, and Victoria Police on broader nuisance issues.

6.3 Our Plan

Table 14 shows the activities, timeframe and method of evaluation to meet DAMP objectives relating to managing nuisance from domestic animals.

Table 14: Activities relating to managing nuisance

Objective 6: Reduce the number of nuisance complaints in Merri-bek		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Review and adjust frequency of increase patrols as required	Ongoing	Review conducted
Maintain appropriate signage about cleaning up after your dog, on/off leash areas and dogs being under effective control	Ongoing	No. signs installed
Run a media education campaign to promote exercising dogs to reduce barking complaints	Annually	No. barking complaints

7 Dog Attacks

Dog attacks against people and other animals unfortunately do occur in the local area. Community feedback indicated that public dog parks are a particular area of concern and that owner behaviours and understanding of responsibilities needs to be addressed.

7.1 Context and Current Situation

In 2024/25, Council responded to 149 dog attacks, an increase from 139 in 2023/24, 117 in 2022/23 and 131 in 2021/22. This continues an upward trend over the past three years, indicating the need for ongoing community education and enforcement around responsible pet ownership.

In addition to dog attacks, there were 76 dog rush incidents reported in 2024/25, up from 66 in each of the previous two years, but still slightly lower than the 69 incidents recorded in 2021/22.

Dog rush incidents are typically situations where a dog approaches a person aggressively but without physical contact. These are often distressing for the individuals involved and are treated seriously by officers, with follow up.

Reports of dog attacks and rushes are investigated to determine the seriousness of the incident. Serious dog attacks may result in court prosecution, while non-serious matters are addressed through infringements or Animal Management Agreements.

Current activities undertaken by Council to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals include:

- Providing proactive park and street patrols.

- Inspecting properties where dangerous and restricted breed dogs reside.
- Responding promptly to complaints about dog attacks.
- Investigating dog attack reports and taking an appropriate course of action.

7.2 Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

Section 26 (2) Domestic Animals Act 1994: Merri-bek City Council requires dogs to be in effective control in any public place, other than designated off-leash areas, and prohibits dogs from being present in specific areas of the municipality.

Policies and Procedures:

- Collection of stray, abandoned or injured animals
- Capture of dogs at large
- Investigation of dog attacks/rushes
- Regular park patrols
- Recording all dangerous dogs on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry and conducting annual audits of their properties
- Prosecution of serious dog attacks
- Information and education programs on effective control of dogs in public places
- Procedures for dealing with dangerous and/or aggressive dogs.

Compliance Activities:

- Issuing official warnings
- Issuing notice to comply
- Issuing infringement notices
- Declaring dogs as menacing or dangerous
- Court prosecution
- Seeking an order for the destruction of a dog/s.

7.3 Our Plan

Table 15 shows the activities, timeframe and method of evaluation to meet DAMP objectives relating to dog attacks.

Table 15: Activities contributing to managing dog attacks

Objective 7A: Decrease the number of confirmed dog attacks in the community		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Provide proactive and visible patrols at dog off leash parks, creeks and reserves	Ongoing	No. official warnings/infringements issued
Analyse dog attack data to gain an understanding of trends relating to dog attacks. Implement strategies to address trends	Ongoing	No. strategies implemented.
Educate dog owners on responsibilities to keep dogs under effective control	Year 2	No. educational materials developed
Objective 7B: Increase community awareness of how to report dog attacks		
Activity	When	Evaluation

Develop a community education campaign of what a dog attack is, how to report it and the potential penalty	Year 2	Education campaign developed No. of reports pre and post awareness campaign
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8 Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs

The community's understanding of what constitutes a dangerous or restricted dog may not broadly align with the classifications as per the Act, however it was clear from the community engagement program that there was some community concern about dogs being off leash where they shouldn't be and poor management by owners.

8.1 Context and Current Situation

Table 16 shows there are currently 42 dogs with restrictions in the City of Merri-bek. This is an increase from 2020/21 where there were 14.

Council administers and enforces provisions of the Act to identify and control dangerous, menacing and restricted-breed dogs to ensure the safety of the community.

Table 16: Declared dogs in Merri-bek City Council

Information	Number
Dogs declared dangerous/restricted breed	20
Dogs declared menacing	22
Total	42
Prosecutions re: dangerous dogs	0
Audits conducted re: dangerous dogs	Annual

Merri-bek City Council's current education/promotion activities surrounding declared dogs include:

- Providing fact sheets and Animal Welfare Victoria brochures on dangerous/restricted breed dogs.
- Implementing educational activities at local events.
- Providing information via the Council website, social media and traditional media.

8.2 Policies and Procedures

Merri-bek City Council's registration application and renewal forms require all owners to declare if their dog is a restricted breed, has been declared menacing or is a dangerous dog as required by the Act. Council has procedures associated with the declaration of dogs, accessing and updating the Victorian Declared Dog Registry, Enforcement Guidelines and Animal Management Standard Operating Procedures.

Compliance Activities:

- Annual and unscheduled inspections of properties housing declared dangerous, restricted-breed and menacing dogs.
- Patrols by Animal Management Officers of all areas and parks to monitor dog behaviour.
- Maintenance of data on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry.
- Investigation of reports of restricted breed dogs.

8.3 Our Plan

Table 17 shows the activities, timeframe and method of evaluation to meet DAMP objectives relating to dangerous dogs.

Table 17: Activities to reduce risk associated with dangerous dogs

Objective 8A: Managing dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Ensure all declared dogs are recorded on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry (VDDR) and the VDDR is kept up to date	Ongoing	100% recorded
Develop a process to assist decision making regarding refusal of registration/renewal of dangerous and restricted breed dogs	Year 1	Development of process
Conduct random property inspections of registered guard dogs to ensure compliance	Ongoing	No. patrols
Objective 8B: Ensure all declared dogs are compliant to relevant legislation and regulations		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Conduct random property inspections of declared dogs to ensure compliance	Ongoing	No. random property checks

9 Domestic Animal Businesses

All Domestic Animal Businesses must register with their local council. Under Part 4 of the Domestic Animals Act 1994, local councils have the authority (among other things) to:

- Refuse registration of a business if they fail to comply with the legislation and relevant code of practice.
- Set special conditions on the registration of any domestic animal business.

9.1 Context and Current Situation

There are 13 registered Domestic Animal Businesses within Merri-bek as shown in Table 18, These are made up of seven boarding establishments, two pet shops, one dog trainer, one combined pet shop and dog trainer, and two combined boarding establishments and dog trainers.

Table 18: Domestic Animal Businesses in Merri-bek

Domestic Animal Business Statistics	No.
Registered Domestic Animal Businesses	13
Identified non-registered Domestic Animal Businesses	0
Prosecutions related to Domestic Animal Businesses	0
Notices to comply related to Domestic Animal Businesses	0

Current educational, promotional and compliance activities surrounding domestic animal businesses include:

- Providing all Domestic Animal Businesses with the relevant Code of Practice;
- Providing Animal Welfare Victoria fact sheets on Domestic Animal Businesses to registered businesses.
- Registering all Domestic Animal Businesses;
- Conducting annual audits of each Domestic Animal Business
- Follow up any non-compliance as required;
- Regular inspections for new/non-registered Domestic Animal Businesses.

9.2 Policies and Procedures

- Standard Operating Procedures for Animal Management processes.
- Procedure and audit templates for Domestic Animal Businesses

9.3 Our Plan

Table 19 shows the activities, timeframe and method of evaluation to ensure Domestic Animal Businesses are appropriately regulated.

Table 19: Activities relating to Domestic Animal Businesses

Objective 9A: Identify and register all Domestic Animal Businesses in the municipality		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify businesses that should be registered Domestic Animal Businesses in the municipality and determine their registration status. Partner with Planning department to receive notification when a new animal related business is seeking a permit	Ongoing	No. Domestic Animal Businesses registered (100%)
Investigate any report of unregistered Domestic Animal Businesses	As required	No. reports investigated (100%)
Objective 9B: Annually inspect and audit all registered Domestic Animal Businesses		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Conduct annual audits of all Domestic Animal Businesses within Merri-bek	Annually	No. audits conducted (100%)
Where required, act promptly to address matters of non-compliance	As required	No. reports investigated (100%)
Investigate and act upon public complaints about Domestic Animal Businesses	As required	No. reports investigated (100%)

10 Other Matters

10.1 Context and Current Situation

In October 2022, Whittlesea, Merri-bek, and Darebin Councils took joint responsibility for managing the wat djerring Animal Facility (formerly the Epping Animal Welfare Facility) in house. This collaborative approach aims to improve outcomes by reducing euthanasia rates and increasing the reunification of animals with their owners or placement into new homes.

Managed by animal care and welfare experts, the facility focuses on high standards of care without expecting cost savings. The new model provides greater flexibility for Council to respond to community needs, build stronger partnerships within the animal welfare sector, and lead on shared domestic animal management priorities.

Under this approach, most animals are adopted through rescue groups after staying at the facility until foster or shelter spaces become available. The facility was renamed the wat djerring Animal Facility in July 2023.

The wat djerring Animal Facility has partnered with 26 rescue groups and welfare organisations as well as major animal welfare organisations who offer adoption opportunities to the community.

The objectives for the Facility is to:

- achieve the best outcomes possible for the animals in our care
 - reunite every animal possible with their owners or find them loving new homes
 - reduce the current euthanasia rates
- The facility provides the following services:

- provide stray, abandoned and surrendered animals with refuge and a new life
- reunite lost pets with their owners
- facilitate adoptions by finding new homes for unowned cats and dogs
- protect animals from cruelty
- promote pet wellbeing
- provide education regarding responsible pet ownership
- provide veterinary care to animals at the centre

Community sentiment from the community of those that had used the wat djerring Animal Facility's services was positive, with over 80% of respondents being very satisfied or satisfied with the helpfulness, professionalism of staff and the timeliness of service.

Emergency Management

Merri-bek City Council has its own Municipal Emergency Management Plan for managing natural disasters and emergencies at the local level, this may include: structural fires, flood, storms, extreme heat and pandemic. These events may impact community members as well as domestic animals.

10.2 Policies and Procedures

The wat djerring Animal Facility supports partner Councils in meeting their responsibilities under the Domestic Animal Management Act 1994 (VIC) and ensuring compliance with the Code of Practice.

10.3 Our Plan

Table 20 shows the activities, timeframe and method of evaluation to meet objectives relating to these other matters.

Table 20: Activities relating to other matters

Objective 10A: Review the operation of the wat djerring Animal Facility to ensure it is achieving best practice		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Work with the wat djerring Animal Facility to assist its delivery of its objectives to achieve the best outcomes possible for the animals in our care, reunite every animal possible with their owners or find them loving new homes, and reduce the current euthanasia rates	Ongoing	No. animals rehomed or transferred to rescue
Objective 10B: Emergency management planning for domestic animals (as part of Council's Municipal Emergency Management Plan)		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Ensure animal management staff are involved in Council's Municipal Emergency Management Plan	Ongoing	Animal management addressed in the Municipal Emergency Management Plan.

11 Annual Review and Reporting

In line with the Domestic Animals Act, Council must review its DAMP annually and amend the plan as needed. The following activities outline how the Council will meet these requirements.

11.1 Our Plan

Table 21 shows the activities, timeframe and method of evaluation to meet evaluation and reporting requirements of the Domestic Animal Act Section 68A (3).

Table 21: Activities relating to reporting

Objective 11: Comply with Section 68A(3)		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Provide the Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan.	Year 1 and annually	Copy provided to Secretary
Review the Domestic Animal Management Plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan.	Annually	Plan reviewed annually
Publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in Council's Annual Report.	Annually	Evaluation report published
Council will undertake a major review of the plan after four years.	Year 4	Major review undertaken



Merri-bek
City Council

Domestic Animal Management Plan

Stage 2 Engagement Report

November 2025



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Introduction

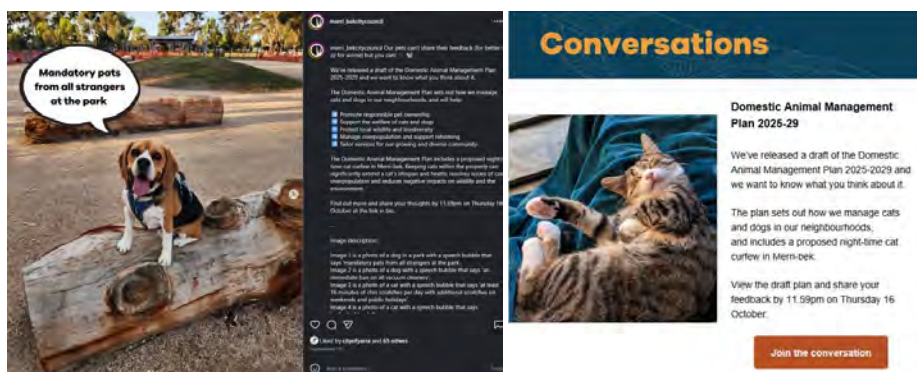
Merri-bek Council is developing a new Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) to help guide how we will manage dogs and cats across the municipality. The aim of the DAMP is to promote responsible pet ownership and the welfare of cats and dogs in the community, whilst protecting the community and environment from nuisance cats and dogs. It also helps to strengthen our partnerships with organisations in the community, such as animal shelters, animal welfare organisations, domestic animal interest groups, community environment groups, and local businesses who are working towards the same goals.

Following a period of consultation in June-July 2025, Council drafted the new DAMP. At its meeting on Wednesday 10 September, Council passed a resolution that:

1. Endorses the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-2029 for public exhibition for the period 15 September to 12 October 2025 with changes noted at point 2, noting that it includes:
 - o An increase in Council's cat desexing program, focused on areas with the highest levels of nuisance cat complaints
 - o Introduction of a nighttime 12-hour cat curfew (7pm to 7am) from 1 July 2026 with an 8-month grace period
2. The above is subject to the following changes being made to the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-2029 before exhibition:
 - o Replacing references to introducing a 24-hour cat curfew with a nighttime cat curfew
 - o Authorising the Chief Executive Officer to have text and actions in the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-2029 amended to reflect this position
 - o Adding a further action under Objective 4A: To decrease the number of stray, abandoned and unwanted cats that states: "Undertake design of a possible grant program for low-income residents to help them transition their cats to containment and put it forward for consideration in the 2026/27 Budget" – to be completed in Year 1, and the measure of achievement to be that information is provided to Councillors before end December 2025.

Between 18 September and 16 October 2025, we were asking people for their overall thoughts on the draft. We were also seeking feedback on a proposed cat curfew, and to gauge what kinds of supports cat owners may require to help confine their cats to their properties.

The submission period was promoted via social media, via My Merri-bek e-news, and to all registered cat owners in Merri-bek.



Executive Summary

Throughout the engagement period we heard from a range of stakeholders, including (but not limited to) people who represent animal rescue/welfare organisations (4.19%), members of wildlife/environmental groups (6.41%), researchers into wildlife/habitat safety and biodiversity (1.97%), residents who do own a cat (60%) and residents who do not own cats (26.17%).

Reasons given by all respondents both for and against a cat curfew were generally well-balanced. Many respondents were concerned about Council's ability to properly enforce a curfew, particularly overnight. It was also felt that a cat curfew would do nothing to address the real issue of stray and community cats, noting that most domestic cats are neutered and are already often kept in at night for their own safety.

There were many comments around the fairness of a cat curfew, particularly on older cats who are used to be outside, with suggestions that the proposed 8-month grace period be extended, or that there be different rules for older cats, with the curfew to only apply to kittens. Several respondents also suggested that setting concrete timeframes for confinement (e.g., 7am to 7pm) was unrealistic for people who work, and during daylight savings, when it's lighter outside for long.

Respondents both for and against a cat curfew were concerned about the financial costs of containing cats, particularly for renters and people on low incomes. Many agreed there would be a need for some financial support and an education campaign on how to keep cats safe and contained. Respondents also saw the need for an education campaign around responsible pet ownership in relation to picking up dog poo, ensure dog owners observe when dogs can and cannot be off-lead, and desexing of pets to reduce over-population.

Other respondents noted the importance of cat ownership on wellbeing and community, as well as cats keep rodent populations under control. There were concerns around the lack of evidence of the effectiveness of a cat curfew in urban areas like Brunswick and Coburg.

Respondents in support of a cat curfew cited the need to keep cats safe from disease, car accidents and other wildlife. Cats causing nuisance by defecating in neighbouring properties, causing neighbouring dogs to bark, and fighting with other cats were also cited as reasons for a curfew. This included the need to protect wildlife and biodiversity areas in Merri-bek.

Many respondents highlighted the need for an education campaign and financial support on cat containment options, such as catios, enclosing yards, and tips for enrichment activities.

The role of council was a theme that came up often, with many respondents calling for Council to put resources towards free and subsidised desexing and cat protection programs. Many respondents felt Council ought to be doing more to combat the problems caused by stray and community cats and should focus on evidence-based strategies rather than punitive rules.

There was minimal feedback on other aspects of the DAMP other than around responsible dog ownership (dogs off-lead in on-lead areas, owners not cleaning up after their dogs, aggressive dogs). The need to control other wildlife such as foxes, possums and rodents are they are also responsible for habitat destruction and damage to biodiversity corridors also came up throughout the consultation.

What we heard

Number of people engaged

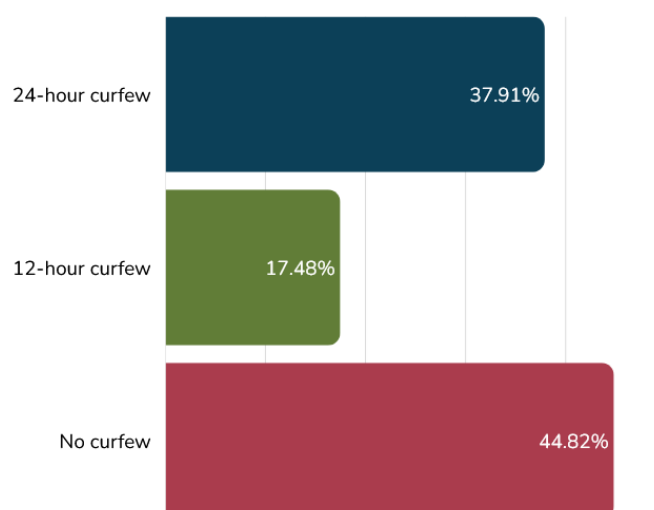
Method	Number of people
Online survey	403
Paper survey	3
Email submissions	32
TOTAL	438

Survey data

The data presented below includes responses gathered from both the online and paper surveys.

Would you prefer a...

For this question, participants were asked to choose between a 24-hour, 12-hour, or no cat curfew. We received 406 responses.



Can you please tell us why you gave this response?

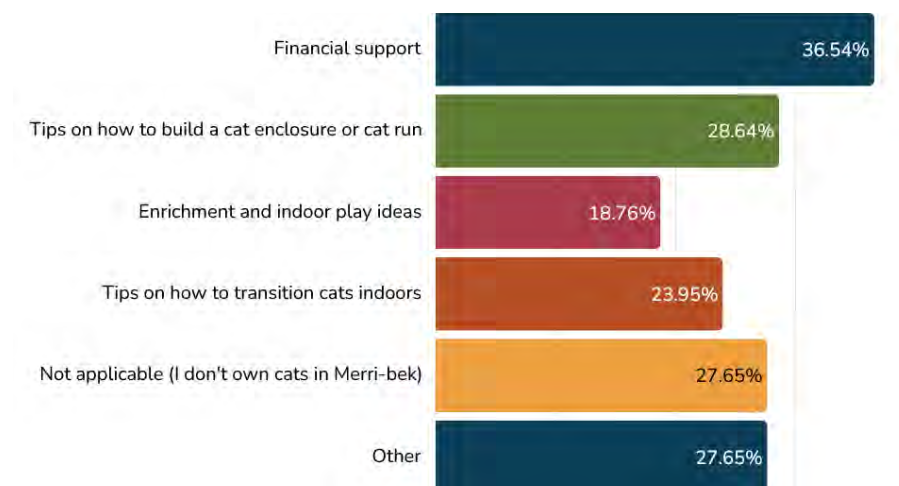
We received 352 comments in response to this question. They are themed below. The details of each theme are available in Appendix 1:

Theme	Number of times mentioned
To support biodiversity/habitat protection	120
Unfair to keep cats confined	84
Safety for cats	69
Concerns around ability to enforce a curfew	56

Concerns around stray cats	51
Role of Council	51
Lack of evidence to support 24-hour curfew	41
Unfair on renters and low-income households	38
Cats causing nuisance	37
Importance of cat ownership on wellbeing and sense of community	25
Concerns around process for trapping and reuniting cats with families	23
Does not support a curfew	23
Need for education campaign	21
Consider different hours for different times/circumstances	20
Need for financial support	18
Support for a curfew (12- or 24-hour)	15
Other	13
Concerns around equity (dogs v cats)	9
Cats controlling rodent populations	2
Reduce over-population of cats	1

What kind of support might you need to help keep your cat/s confined within your property? (select all that apply)

We received 406 responses.



“Other” responses included comments against introducing a cat curfew, exploring other modes of controlling cats, such as free desexing; support for tenants with landlords who oppose pet ownership or who may not be agreeable to tenants installing enclosures/cat runs.

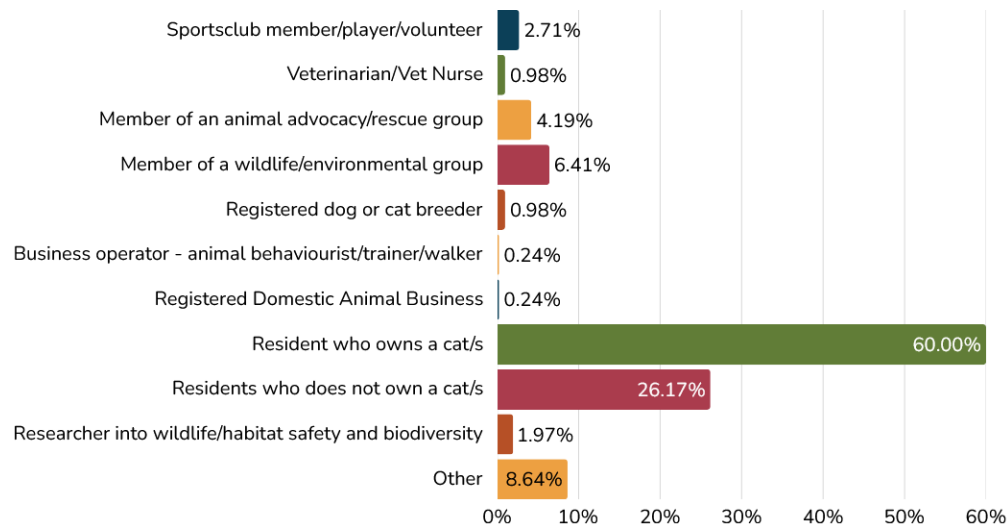
Would you like to make a submission about the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan?

We received 222 comments and 8 uploaded submissions in response to this question. They are themed below. The details of each theme are available in Appendix 1:

Theme	Number of times mentioned
Role of Council	53
Other (includes yes/no as an answer to this question)	51
Concerns around ability to enforce a curfew	42
Concerns around stray cats	34
Lack of evidence to support 24-hour curfew	33
Unfair to keep cats confined	30
Unfair on renters and low-income households	29
Need for education campaign	25
Support for a curfew (12- or 24-hour)	23
Does not support a curfew	23
Importance of cat ownership of wellbeing and sense of community	21
To support habitat protection/biodiversity	20
Consider different hours for different times/circumstances	19
Need for financial support	16
Concerns around process for trapping and reuniting cats with families	13
Responsible dog ownership	11
Safety for cats	8
Cats controlling rodent populations	8
Dogs on-lead	7
Cats causing nuisance	6
Overall support for the draft Plan	6
Concerns around equity (dogs v cats)	6
Limits to number of pets	1

Are you a...

We received 406 responses. Participants could select more than one response.

**Submissions via email**

We received 32 submissions via email. These came from residents of Merri-bek and organisations such as the RSPCA and AdvoCats. 26 of these submissions were against any kind of curfew; 6 were for a curfew. These submissions have been themed below.

Theme	Number of times mentioned
Lack of evidence	20
Unfair on cats	16
Concern around ability to enforce	15
Concern around strays	14
Role of Council	12
Unfair on renters and low-income households	8
Importance of cat ownership on wellbeing and sense of community	4
Need for education	4
Safety for cats	2
Need for financial support	1
Concerns around ability to enforce	1
Responsible pet ownership	1
To support biodiversity/habitat protection	1

Appendix

Appendix 1: Theme details

Theme	Details of theme
Concerns around equity (dogs v cats)	• Rates go towards dog parks but nothing for cats. • Dog owners aren't forced to control their dogs creating nuisance, so why should cat owners. • Dogs aren't allowed to roam freely so why should cats.
Concerns around process for trapping and reuniting cats with families	• Cats who are impounded and destroyed by accident.
Concerns around stray cats	• Curfew won't do anything to reduce the number of stray cats. • People who feed stray cats.
Reduce over-population of cats	• Curfew will help to reduce breeding and over-population
Safety for cats	• Cats being confined to properties keep them safe from disease and car accidents. • Better health outcomes for cats.
To support biodiversity/habitat protection	• Cats being confined helps to keep other animals like birds and smaller mammals safe and protects their habitats. • Dogs having a negative impact on biodiversity and habitat, particularly in wetlands.
Lack of evidence to support 24-hour curfew	• External research and Council's own engagement. • Other issues that impact on biodiversity and habitat e.g. dogs, foxes, over-development, humans etc. • External research presented during consultation is not local and often uses overseas examples, so not comparable to Merri-bek.
Unfair to keep cats confined	• Unfair for cats who naturally roam or who are older and have spent most of their lives being able to roam outside. • Unfair of owners who must keep their cats confined and build cat containment structures on their properties. • Can lead to health issues such as obesity and increased stress/anxiety in cats. • Most owned cats are desexed.
Need for an education campaign	• Education on responsible pet ownership, such as picking up after your dog, dogs off-lead, confinement, enrichment and desexing.

Support for a curfew	• Education around stray cats. • Education on how to keep their pets safe. • Education on how to behave around dogs e.g., children who approach dogs without caution. • Calls for Council to “stay strong” and implement a curfew.
Does not support a curfew	• Council overstepping. • Too bureaucratic. • Won't do anything to deliver conservation outcomes. • Demonises cats and cat owners. • No suitable for highly urbanised areas like Coburg and Brunswick.
Need for financial support	• Council to provide cheaper desexing. • Council to provide support for people who need to construct cat containment structures. • Reduced registration costs to keep cats indoors.
Unfair on renters and low-income households	• Too costly to build enclosures and the have to move them if lease is up. • Too costly for those who cannot afford them.
Concerns around ability to enforce	• Too costly to enforce or staff. • Doesn't alleviate the issue of stray cats. • Will lead to excessive calls about nuisance cats, cat impoundments etc. • Extra strain and pressure on rescue services and organisations.
Importance of cat ownership on wellbeing and sense of community	• Neighbours engage with each other over their cats. • Community members enjoy interacting with cats. • Conversely, a curfew could cause a rift between neighbours and towards cats.
Role of Council	• Council should put resources towards free or subsidised desexing and cat protection programs. • Council should do more about stray cats and over-population, rather than policing cat owners. • Council should focus on evidence-based strategies rather than punitive rules. • Council should provide more cat traps for the community to borrow. • Council needs to do more about dog poo not being picked up by owners. • Council should focus on roads, rates and rubbish. • Council needs to provide more bins for dog waste. • Council should follow the model used by Banyule for cat control.

Cats causing nuisance	• Defecating in neighbouring properties/on the street, and the impact on public health. • Fighting with other cats. • Destruction of property. • Disturbing dogs.
Consider different hours for different times/circumstances	• Extended hours for daylight savings. • A phased approach to roll out – allow older cats who are used to roaming more grace and start confinement from kitten age. • Different curfews/restrictions in different areas e.g., biodiversity corridors versus high-density areas.
Dogs on lead	• Should be on lead when not in off-leash parks. • Need for more signage and better enforcement, particularly in biodiversity areas. • Dogs off-lead and dog attacks.
Responsible dog ownership	• Not picking up after dogs. • Barking dogs. • Dog attacks.
Overall supportive of the DAMP	• Supports our approach
Limits on number of pets	• Should be based on square metres rather than property types.
Cat controlling rodent populations	• Curfew would mean cats aren't able to hunt and kill mice and rats. • Will result in an increase of rodents in Merri-bek.
Other	• Why should indoor cats be registered if they don't leave the property. • Other issues not related to anything.

Appendix 2: Survey tool**Share your comments about the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan**

01. Would you prefer a.... Required

At its meeting on 10 September, Council endorsed, as part of the draft DAMP, the introduction of a nighttime cat curfew from 1 July 2026, with an 8-month grace period. This would mean that owners will need to keep their cats contained within their property between 7pm and 7am each day.

We're keen to understand how the community feel about this or if there is another preferred option.

Select one answer only
☐ 24-hour cat curfew
☐ 12-hour cat curfew
☐ No cat curfew

02. Can you please tell us why you gave that response?

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03.What kind of support might you need to help keep your cat/s confined within your property? Required

Another inclusion for consideration in the draft DAMP is for Council to "undertake design of a possible grant program for low-income residents to help them transition their cats to containment and put it forward for consideration in the 2026/27 Budget".

Some examples of cat containment are: constructing a catio or cat run on your property or installing nets along your fence line to keep your cats within your yard.

Select one answer only
☐ Financial support
☐ Tips on how to build a cat enclosure or cat run
☐ Enrichment and indoor play ideas
☐ Tips on how to transition cats to indoors
☐ Not applicable (I don't own cats in Merri-bek)
☐ Other

04.Would like to make a submission about the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan? Alternatively, you can upload your submission.



DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2025–2029

Engagement Summary
Merri-bek City Council
August 2025

Conversation Co.

Conversation Co. proudly acknowledges and celebrates First Peoples of Australia and their ongoing strength in upholding some of the world's oldest living cultures. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands throughout what is now Victoria – where we live, conduct pop-ups, and engage with our communities – and pay our respects to their Elders, past and present. Conversation Co. acknowledges First People's sovereignty has never been ceded. The strength, resilience and pride of First Peoples, their cultures, communities and identities continue to grow and thrive today despite the impact of colonisation and ongoing experiences of racism.

Executive Summary

Overview

Conversation Co was engaged by Merri-bek City Council to analyse and report on community and stakeholder feedback and support the development of their Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) 2025-29.

The purpose of the engagement was to:

- Inform a new DAMP
- Understand the evidenced needs and understood needs of the community regarding animal management
- Understand the competing community priorities regarding animal management
- Identify potential solutions/activities for the DAMP
- Identify potential partners for delivery of DAMP actions

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

- **Stage 1:** June - July 2025: Broader community engagement
- **Stage 2:** June - July 2025: Interviews with key stakeholders
- **Stage 3:** September - October 2025: Test draft DAMP with the wider community

This report summarises data collected from Stage 1 and Stage 2 only. Public Exhibition of the DAMP In stage 3 will be undertaken by Merri-bek City Council. The findings from this report will be used to inform the development of Merri-bek City Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) 2025-29.

Methodology

Engagement activities consisted of an online community survey, 3 community place-based pops and 10 phone interviews with key stakeholders. The following table shows participation by engagement activity:

Table 1. Participation by Engagement Activity

Engagement Activity	No.	%
General online/hardcopy surveys	131	70.4
Pop ups	42	22.6
Stakeholder interviews	10	5.4
Email submissions to Council	3	1.6
Total	186	100%

Key Findings

The Merri-bek community was engaged on a variety of issues surrounding domestic animal management.

Conversation around the DAMP focused on the key themes of the Domestic Animal Act, with the key findings across the engagement outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Key themes across the engagement program

DAMP Theme	Key sub-theme
Responsible pet ownership	- Improving owner behaviours and control of animals - Increasing community education and communications about responsible dog and cat ownership
Dog attacks	- Education around dog behaviour, selecting the 'right' dog and effects of dog attacks - Improving safety at dog parks - Increased patrol and enforcement of on and off leash dog areas
Overpopulation of cats and dogs	- Providing free cat desexing program or increasing and continuing to provide low cost and subsidised desexing - Increasing re homing efforts - Reducing illegal and irresponsible backyard breeding - Reducing stray cats - Provide education to the community about the benefits of desexing animals
Registration and identification of cats and dogs	- Reducing registration fees - Educating about the purpose and benefits of registration
Protection from nuisance	- Addressing dog waste in public places - Addressing roaming cats, especially at night - Addressing cats preying on wildlife - Addressing dogs off-leash when they shouldn't be - Consider the introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew - Availability of cat traps - Having dog free nature reserves
Dangerous and restricted dogs	- Addressing aggressive dogs in off-leash parks - Stricter rules specifically for dangerous breeds
Review of Council services	- Increasing patrols and officer visibility - Increasing community education - Reviewing dog off/on-leash areas to include areas for specific breeds (e.g. greyhounds) - Increasing fines for people doing the wrong thing

Training for authorised officers	• Providing training to encourage positive interactions with the community
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Recommendations

Based on the feedback in this report, it is recommended that Merri-bek City Council:

- Analyse best practice programs and services that address the feedback outlined by the community.
- Explore opportunities to work with the key stakeholders to address identified issues.
- Identify partnership opportunities with surrounding Council's, City of Darebin and Whittlesea City Council.
- Introduce a 24 hour cat curfew and an implementation plan which includes a curfew commencement date of 1 July 2026 and an education and support program to assist residents transition their cats to indoor cats.
- Keep the general community and key stakeholders updated in the development of the DAMP and their respective actions.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Project background

Conversation Co was engaged by Merri-bek City Council to analyse and report on community and stakeholder feedback and support the development of their Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) 2025-29.

1.2 Engagement Purpose and scope

The purpose of the engagement was to:

- Inform a new DAMP
- Understand the evidenced needs and understood needs of the community regarding animal management
- Understand the competing community priorities regarding animal management
- Identify potential solutions/activities for the DAMP
- Identify potential partners for delivery of DAMP actions

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

- **Stage 1:** June - July 2025: Broader community engagement
- **Stage 2:** June - July 2025: Interviews with key stakeholders
- **Stage 3:** September - October 2025: Test draft DAMP with the wider community

This report summarises data collected from Stage 1 and Stage 2 only. Public Exhibition of the DAMP In stage 3 will be undertaken by Merri-bek City Council. The findings from this report will be used to inform the development of Merri-bek City Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) 2025-29.

2.Methodology

2.1 Engagement objectives:

- Gather data and high-level community themes to inform the development of the DAMP.
- Raise awareness within the community of domestic animal management and the role of the DAMP.
- Gather expert and key stakeholder feedback to inform the development of the DAMPs.
- Explore potential partnership opportunities to help deliver DAMP objectives.

Key engagement questions

Participants were asked their connection to the project and surveyed on key topics related to animal management including:

Broad community

- Do you support the introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew in your local area?
- Do you know that dogs need to be registered in Merri-bek?
- Do you know anyone who lives locally, who has an unregistered dog or cat?
- Priorities for Council services
- Priorities for actions on pet ownership: microchipping, registration, responsible pet ownership, cat containment, desexing, lost pets, effective control
- How can Council improve its animal management services for pet owners and general community members?
- Satisfaction with pound service

Targeted stakeholders:

- In your experience, what are the main animal management issues of concern for dogs and cats?
- What services or programs could Council provide to promote responsible pet ownership, minimise dog attacks, address overpopulation of animals and support registration?
- Are there any partnership opportunities for animal management programs or services?

A full list of engagement questions is available in Appendix 1 and 2.

2.2 Engagement methods

Community engagement was conducted from 25 June - 23 July 2025. Engagement activities consisted of online surveys, community pop ups and stakeholder interviews.

Table 2: Engagement Activities

Activity	Description	Dates
Online survey and project information <i>via Conversations Merri-bek</i>	Participants responded to a series of questions, in line with the survey questions either through an online intercept.	June to July 2025
Key stakeholder interviews	Phone interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, who were asked 10 questions about domestic animal management from the perspective of their organisation.	June to July 2025
Community pop up sessions	- Community pop-ups were held across the municipality, at different locations and times. - Participants responded to a series of questions, in line with the online survey questions by engaging with posters at pop-up events.	Brunswick Town Hall, Brunswick July 12 2025 Glenroy Library, Glenroy July 16 2025 Coburg Farmers Market, Coburg July 19 2025
Direct submissions to Council	Community members were able to email submissions to the project team to provide feedback on the DAMP	June - July 2025

Survey

A survey was provided online and promoted via the project's webpage and also made available in hard copy format. The survey focused on the key engagement questions outlined above. Respondents were also asked to provide demographic information including their age, postcode, household type, gender, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status, languages spoken at home, disability status, and their connection to Merri-bek. For the Community Survey questionnaire, refer to Appendix 1.

Community Pop-ups

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

- Brunswick Town Hall, Brunswick, Saturday July 12 11am - 2pm
- Glenroy Library, Glenroy, Wednesday 16 July 11am - 2pm
- Coburg Farmers Market, Coburg Saturday 19 July 8am - 1pm

Participants responded to a series of questions, in line with the survey questions either through an online intercept or by engaging with posters at pop-up events. For the Community Survey questionnaire, refer to Appendix 1.

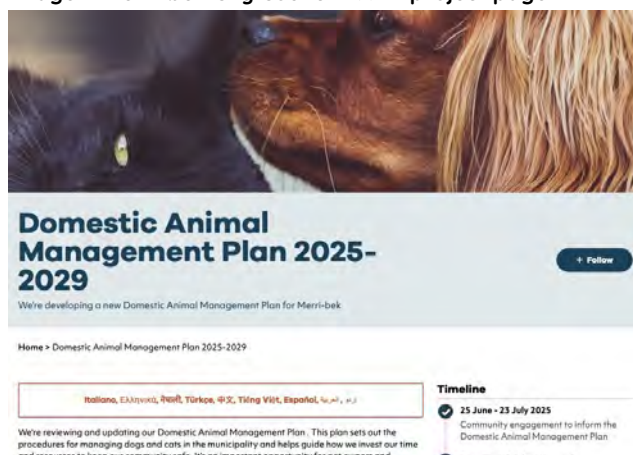
Interviews with Key Stakeholders

10 phone interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, who were asked 10 questions about domestic animal management from the perspective of their organisation. These one-hour interviews sought to gather expertise from key organisations across Merri-bek, Darebin and Whittlesea Councils. The interviewees were selected by Councils in collaboration and were based on a detailed stakeholder analysis that was completed as part of the engagement plan.

Phone interviews were conducted with the following key stakeholders:

- Rescue Rehabilitate Release
- Reservoir Vet Clinic
- RSPCA Victoria
- Petbarn Preston
- Cat Protection Society
- Second Chance Animal Rescue
- Bundoora Veterinary Clinic and Hospital
- Friends of Merri Creek
- Pascoe Vale Veterinary Clinic
- Project Underdog Rescue

Image 1: Merri-bek City Council DAMP project page



Source: [Project Page](#)

2.3 Communications strategies

Community engagement activities were supported by a communication campaign undertaken by Merri-bek City Council. The campaign had multiple touch points including the Council's website, social media, e-newsletters, and internal communications.

- Project page: The project page encouraged readers to provide feedback on the plan through an online survey. It also advertised the dates for three in-person community consultation pop-up locations.
- Social media: Posts were made on the Council's Facebook and Instagram pages, inviting feedback for the development of the plan.

Image 2: Merri-bek City Council's DAMP social media content



source: [Facebook Post](#)

3. Who Participated?

Demographic data such as gender, age, communities of interest and place of residency was obtained across pop ups and the survey engagement activities.

3.1 Participation by engagement activity

Table 3 shows a summary of the engagement activities by involvement. A total of 186 participants were involved in the broad engagement. It is important to note some participants may have participated in more than one activity, for example they may have completed an online survey and also attended a community pop up.

Table 3. Participation by Engagement Activity

Engagement Activity	No.	%
General online/hardcopy surveys	131	70.4
Pop ups	42	22.6
Stakeholder interviews	10	5.4
Email submissions to Council	3	1.6
Total	186	100%

Throughout this report, the abbreviation “n=” is used to indicate the number of participants or responses. Percentages are rounded to one decimal place and as such may be subject to rounding errors (sum to 99.9% or 100.1%).

3.2 Characteristics of participants

The demographic characteristics of engagement participants are shown in Table 4 . Percentages shown in Table 3 are of all responses received (excludes participants who did not provide this information).

Table 4. Characteristics of participants

Selected characteristics	No.*	%	2021 Census %
Gender			
Woman/girl	88	52%	51.3%
Man/boy	63	37%	48.7%
Gender diverse	5	3%	-
Prefer not to say	11	6%	-

Selected characteristics	No.*	%	2021 Census %
Use a different term	3	2%	-
Total respondents	170	100%	100%
Age Group			
Under 18	0	0%	19.6%
18-24	2	5%	7.3%
26-34	11	26%	21.7%
35-44	10	24%	16.7%
45-54	8	19%	12.1%
55-64	7	16%	9.2%
65-74	4	10%	6.2%
75+	0	0%	7.2%
Total respondents	42	100%	100%
Communities of interest			
Identifies as someone with a disability (responses)	6	9%	6.5%
Carer of a person with a disability (responses)	7	10%	-
Parent/guardian of children (responses)	18	27%	36.4%
A person experiencing homelessness (responses)	1	1%	0.6%
Part of the LGBTQIA+ community (responses)	6	9%	-
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders (responses)	0	0%	0.6%
Prefer not to say	3	4%	-
None of the above	9	13%	-
Born overseas	17	25%	32.9%
Total respondents	67	100%	-

Data sources: Survey, pop ups

Source for 2021 Census data is

Disability approximated by Need for Assistance variable

This engagement program had greater representation from women than other genders (n=88, 52%), which aligns with patterns often seen in community engagement activities. Representation of men was slightly lower than the population proportion (n=63, 37% compared to 48.7% in the Census), while a small proportion of participants identified as gender diverse (n=5, 3%), used a different term (n=3, 2%), or preferred not to say (n=11, 6%).

Young adults aged 18-24 were underrepresented (n=2, 5%) in comparison to their makeup of the population (7.3%). The engagement had stronger representation among adults aged 26-59 years (n=29, 69%) compared to the Census (48.5%), particularly those aged 26-44 years. Participants aged 65 and over were underrepresented (n=4, 10%) compared to the population proportion (13.4%).

Among participants who responded to the communities of interest question (n=67), 9% identified as someone with a disability (slightly above the Census proxy of 6.5%), and 10% were carers of a person with a disability. Just over a quarter (27%) were parents or guardians of children, lower than the population proportion (36.4%). No respondents identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, despite making up 0.6% of the population. A quarter of respondents (25%) were born overseas, slightly lower than the population proportion of 32.9%.

Participants were also asked the open-ended questions; 'What language(s) do you speak at home?' and 'What language(s) do you speak other than English?' There were a total of 40 responses to these questions. A total of 21 indicated they spoke English at home. The top community languages other than English participants spoke were:

- Arabic
- Urdu
- Mandarin
- Greek
- Italian
- Chinese
- Auslan

3.3 Residential location

Community survey and pop up participants were asked to provide their residential location. There were a total of 159 responses to this question, with the bulk of participants residing in the Merri-bek municipality. Table 5. shows the breakdown of participation by residential location in comparison to census data.

Table 5. Participation by residential location

Residential location	No.*	%	2021 Census %
Brunswick / Brunswick East	56	35.2%	26.0%
Brunswick West	9	5.7%	9.0%

Residential location	No.*	%	2021 Census %
Coburg / Coburg North	47	29.6%	20.2%
Fawkner	10	6.3%	8.0%
Glenroy	14	8.8%	13.6%
Hadfield	2	1.3%	3.6%
Oak Park	4	2.5%	3.9%
Pascoe Vale / Pascoe Vale South	17	10.7%	16.2%
Total	159	100%	100%

Source: Survey, pop ups

A total of 11 (3.6%) participants lived in locations outside our Merri-bek. Locations included:

- Moonee Vale (n=5)
- Outside Australia (n=2)
- Banyule (n=1)
- Broadmeadows (n= 1)
- Gladstone Park (n=1)
- St Albans (n=1)

3.4 Connection to the project

Participants were asked about their connection to Merri-bek. There were a total of 126 respondents to this question, in which (n=124) were residents and (n=2) were students.

3.4.1 Interest in the project

Participants were asked about their interest in this topic and able to select all that apply from a list of options. The most common interest in the project was dog/cat owners (n=120) followed by community members who use local parks, reserve and playground (n=108) and members of a wildlife or environmental group (n=23). Table 6. shows the breakdown of interest in the project.

Table 6. Participants' interest in the project

Residential location	No.
Dog/cat owner	120
Use local parks, reserves or playgrounds	108
Sportsclub member/player/volunteer	13
Veterinarian/Vet Nurse	0

Residential location	No.
Member of animal advocacy/rescue group	12
Member of a dog club	2
Member of a wildlife/environmental group	23
Registered dog or cat breeder	0
Business operator - animal behaviourist/trainer/walker	2
Registered Domestic Animal Business	0
Other	28

Source: survey, pop ups

Of the participants who gave an 'other' interest in the project, the bulk of responses indicated that they did not own a pet (n=11), were planning on getting a pet (n=4) or had concerns about parkland and natural areas (n=3).

3.4.2 Community groups represented in this engagement

Participants who were a member of a group or club provided the names of the organisations that they represented and are listed below:

- Friends of Merri Creek
- Gardens for Wildlife Merri-bek
- AdvoCats
- Urban Guerrillas
- WIRES
- Inner North Greyhounds
- Coburg Harriers
- Upfield Urban Forest
- Urban cat welfare collective
- German Shepherd Dog club of Victoria
- Greys Rescue
- Little Athletics
- Volunteer at Zoos Victoria
- Member of FoMC but not representing that group here
- Electrify Yarra
- Alley Katz Australia Org
- Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek
- Forever Friends Animal Rescue

4.Findings

The Merri-bek community was engaged on a variety of issues surrounding domestic animal management. Findings for community members across engagement activities are reported by theme in the following sections:

- 4.1 Pet ownership
- 4.2 Cat management
- 4.3 Dog management
- 4.4 Priorities for domestic animal management and Council services

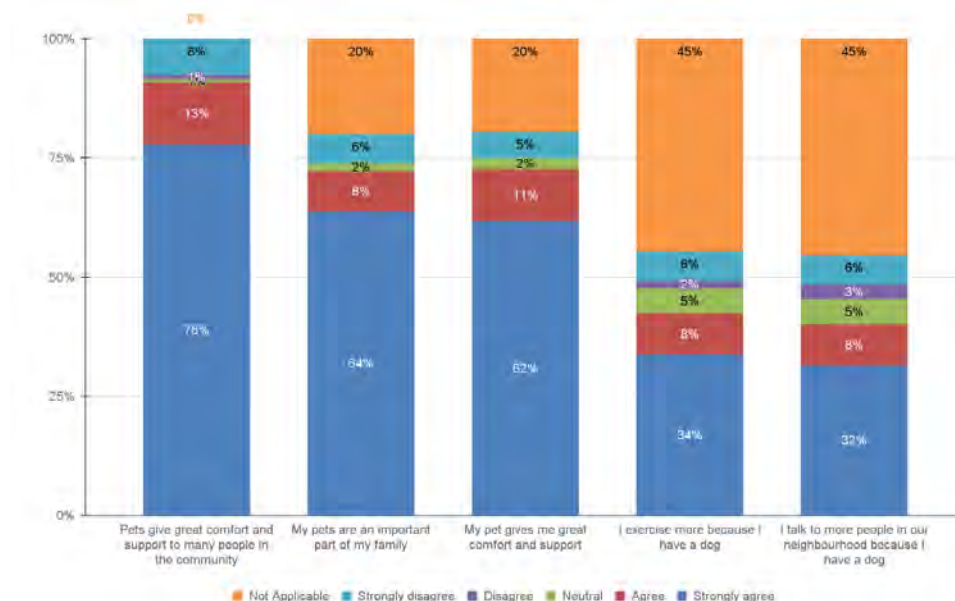
Findings from key stakeholders and submissions to Council have been reported separately in sections:

- 4.5 Submissions to Council
- 4.6 Key stakeholder interviews

4.1 Pet ownership

The benefits of pet ownership for people's health and wellbeing are well established. Whilst Domestic Animal Management Plans are concerned primarily with the management of dogs and cats within the community, it is important to note that pet ownership has a range of positive outcomes for the ongoing physical and mental health of community members. Survey participants were asked the following question - '*To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?*' Figure 1. is a breakdown of how they responded.

Figure 1. Community attitudes to pets



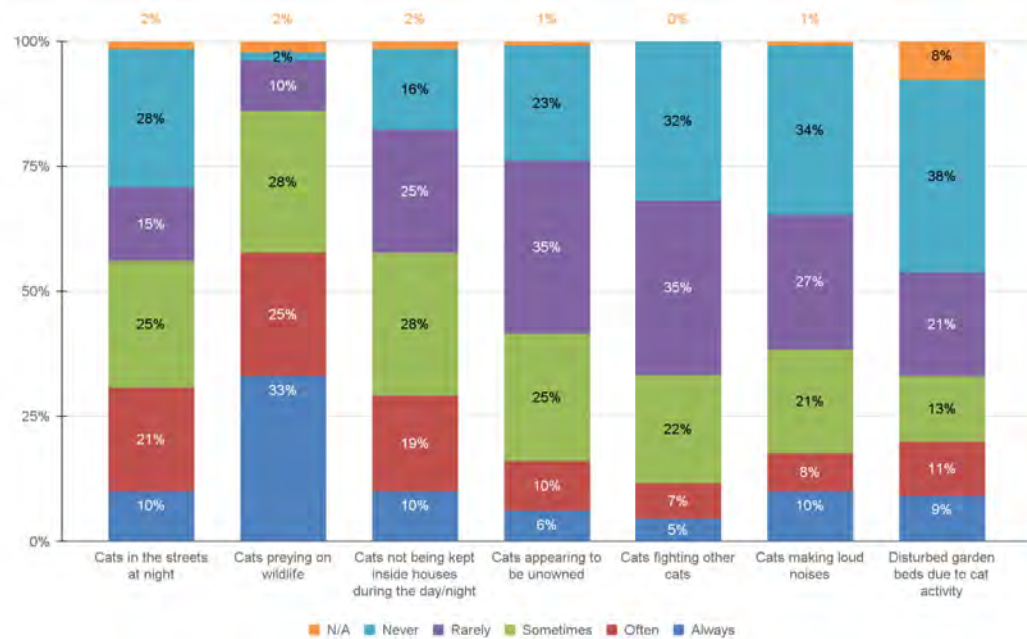
Data source: surveys, pop ups.

As seen in the above graph, the statement with the highest percentage of 'strongly agree' was - '*Pets give great comfort and support to many people in the community*' (n=102, 78%). The statements with the lowest percentages of 'strongly agree' were '*I talk to more people in our neighbourhood because I have a dog*' (n=41, 32%) followed closely by '*I exercise more because I have a dog*' (n=44, 34%). This could show a general trend of participants' feelings towards pets as providing more of an emotional support rather than functional purpose for exercise and socialising.

4.2 Cat management

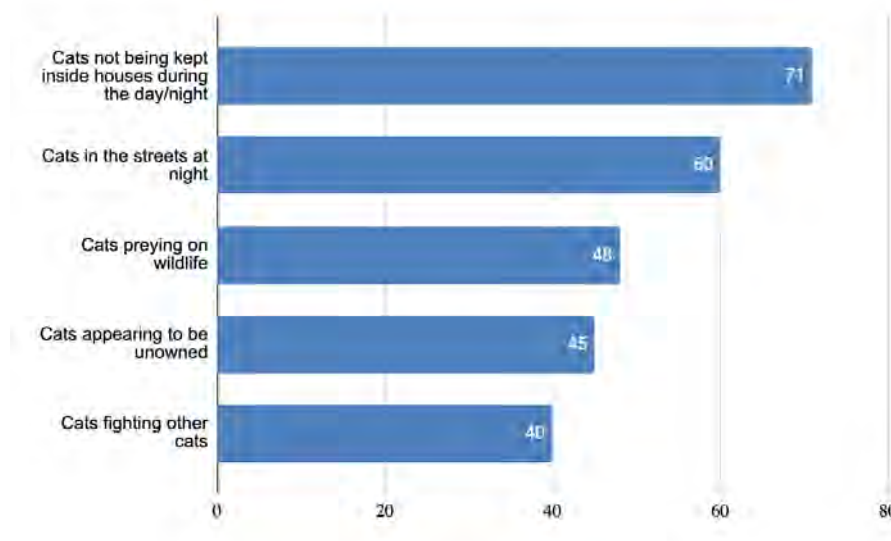
Participants were asked the question - '*In the last year, have you noticed any of the following things about cats when out and about in your local area?*'. Survey participants were asked to indicate the level of frequency for each item on a list provided as shown in Figure 2 and pop-up participants were asked to select the items they noticed, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 2. Cats in the community



Data source: online survey

As seen in Figure 2., the statement with the largest number of participants' who selected 'always' (n=43, 33%) and 'often' (n=32, 25%) was '*cats preying on wildlife*'. The statement with the least number of participants who selected 'always' (n=6, 5%) was '*cats fighting other cats*'. This statement also had the total most selections for 'rarely' (n=45, 35%) and 'never' (n=41, 32%).

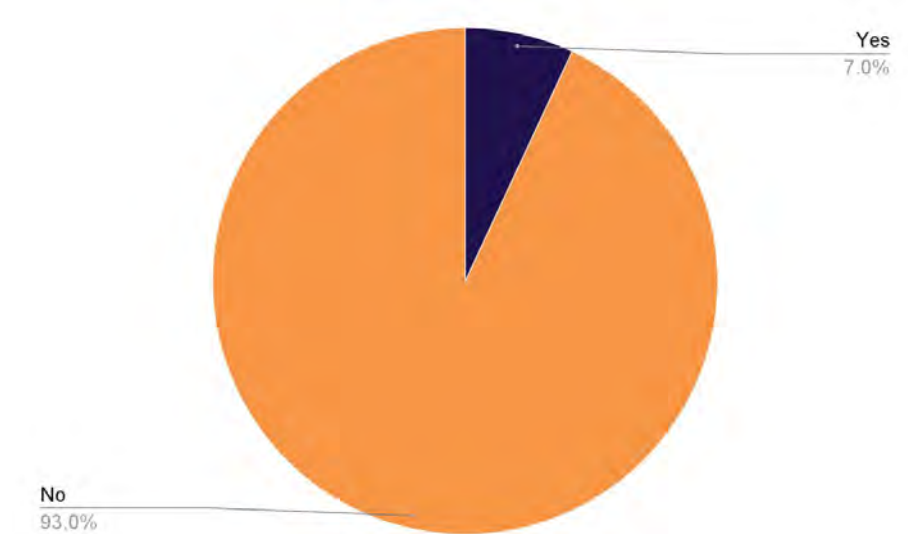
Figure 3. Observations about cats in the local area in the last year

Data source: survey.

As seen in the above graph, the most commonly observed issue by participants was *'Cats not being kept inside houses during the day/night'*, selected by 71 respondents. This was followed by *'Cats in the streets at night'* (60), indicating strong concern around cats roaming unsupervised. *'Cats preying on wildlife'* (48) and *'Cats appearing to be unowned'* (45) were also frequently selected, highlighting community awareness of the environmental and welfare risks posed by uncontained or stray cats. The least commonly selected issue was *'Cats fighting other cats'* (40), though still notable. These findings suggest a clear public perception that better containment and management of cats is needed, particularly in relation to nighttime roaming and associated impacts on wildlife and safety.

Figure 4. provides a breakdown of the responses to the survey question - *'Do you occasionally feed (or look after) any other neighbourhood cats who come to your house?'* There were 129 participants who responded to this question.

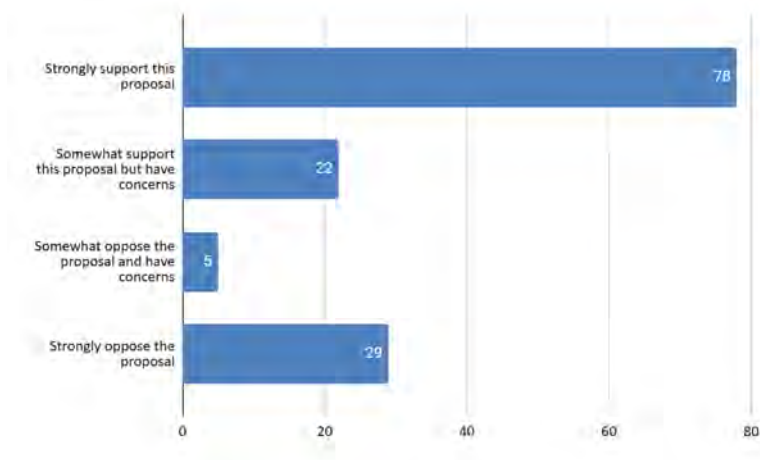
Figure 4. 'Do you occasionally feed (or look after) any other neighbourhood cats who come to your house?'



Data source: survey.

As shown in the above graph, the overwhelming majority of respondents (n=120, 93.0%) reported that they do not occasionally feed or look after neighbourhood cats who come to their house. Only 9 (7.0%) participants indicated that they do. This suggests that informal care of roaming or stray cats by residents is relatively uncommon within the community, and that most people do not engage in feeding or supporting cats that are not their own.

Figure 5. (below) gives a breakdown of how participants responded to the survey question - 'Do you support the introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew in your local area?'

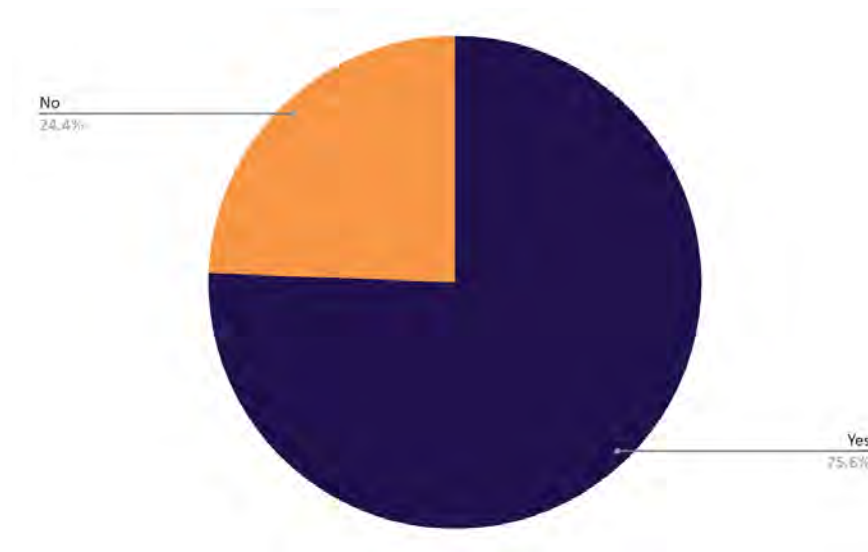
Figure 5. Community sentiment on introducing a 24-Hour Cat Curfew

Data source: survey.

As shown in the graph above, the majority of respondents strongly support the introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew, with 78 individuals selecting this option. An additional 22 respondents somewhat support the proposal but have concerns, indicating that over half of participants are generally supportive of the curfew. Conversely, only 5 people somewhat oppose the proposal, while 29 strongly oppose it. Notably, 38 participants used the free-text field to specify concerns, suggesting that while support is high, there are a range of perspectives and potentially nuanced views about implementation. This data indicates strong overall support for the cat curfew, though community consultation should consider the nature of concerns raised.

At the community pop-ups, participants were asked the question - 'Do you support the introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew?', and provided with the options yes or no as shown in Figure 6, below.

Figure 6: Level of support for the introduction of 24-hour cat curfew



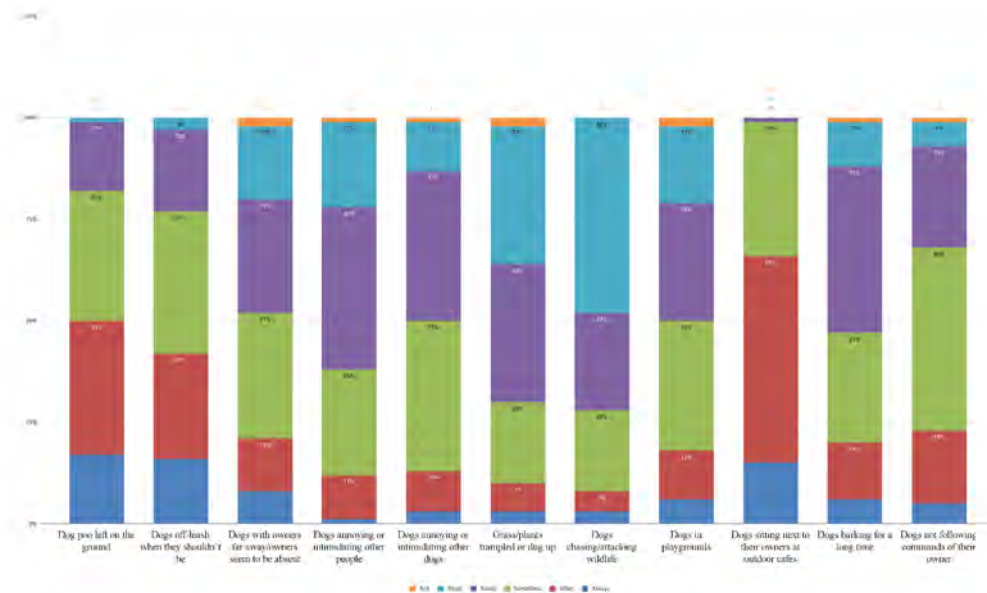
A total of 75.6% of pop-up participants support the introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew, with only 24.4% selecting no.

Overall, between the community survey and pop-up responses, there is strong support for the introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew in the City of Merri-bek.

4.3 Dog management

Participants were asked the question - *'In the last year, have you noticed any of the following things about cats when out and about in your local area?'* Survey participants were asked to indicate the level of frequency for each item on a list provided as shown in Figure 7 and pop-up participants were asked to select the items they noticed as shown in Figure 8.

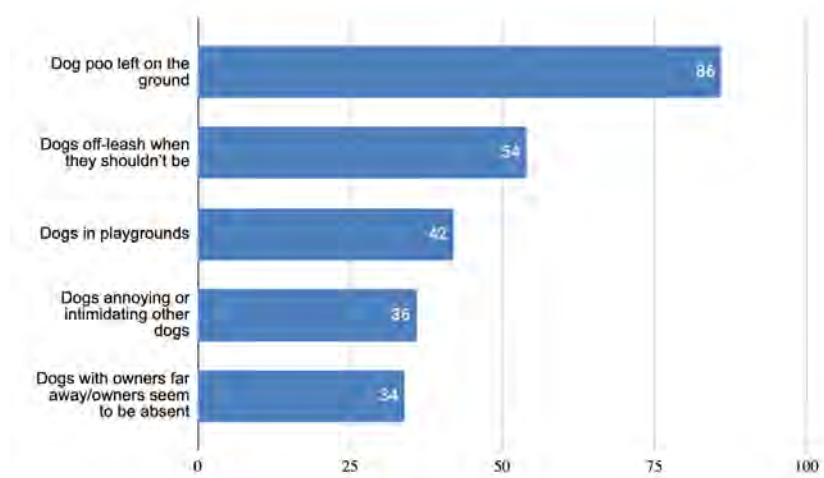
Figure 7. Dogs in the community



Data source: online survey

As shown in Figure 7, the statement with the largest number of participants' who selected 'always' (n=20, 15%) and 'often' (n=67, 51%) was *'dogs sitting next to their owners at outdoor cafes'*. This was followed by *'dog poo left on the ground'*. The statement with the least number of participants who selected 'always' (n=4, 3%) was *'dogs chasing and attacking wildlife'*.

Figure 8. Observations about dogs in the local area in the last year



Data source: pop-ups.

As seen in the above graph, the statement that was most noticed by pop-up participants was 'dog poo left on the ground' (n=86) followed by 'dogs off leash when they shouldn't be' (n=54).

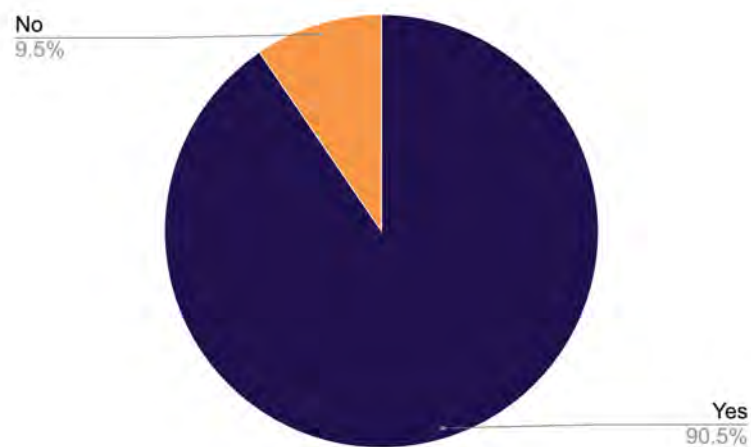
4.4 Priorities for domestic animal management and Council services

The following section is an analysis of engagement findings on priorities for domestic animal management and Council services.

4.4.1 Registration

Participants were asked the following question - 'Do you know that dogs need to be registered in Merri-bek?' Of the 115 participants who answered this question, only 10 participants (9.5%) answered 'no' to this question. As seen in Figure 9. (below), the vast majority of participants (n=95, 90.5%) are aware dogs need to be registered.

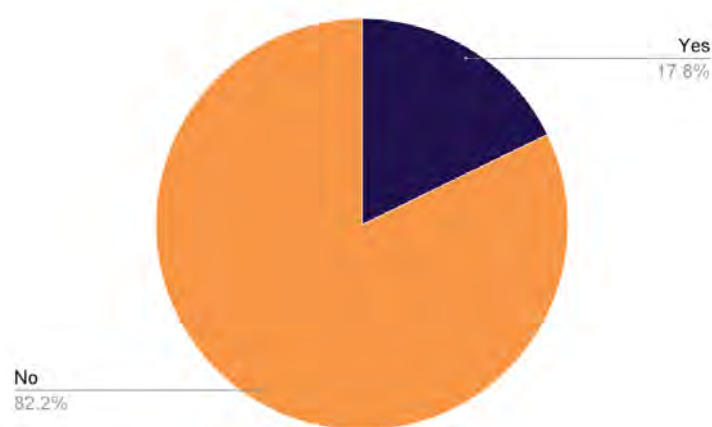
Figure 9. Do you know that dogs need to be registered in Merri-bek?



Data source: pop-ups, online survey.

Participants were then asked whether they know anyone who has an unregistered dog or cat. As seen in Figure 10 (below) the majority of participants who answered the question (n=106, 82.2%) did not know anyone locally who had an unregistered dog or cat. Along with the previous graph (Figure 9), this confirms that the majority of dog/cat owners in Merri-bek have good awareness and responsibility when it comes to registration.

Figure 10. Do you know anyone who lives locally, who has an unregistered dog or cat?



Data source: pop-ups, online survey.

Participants were asked the following question - *'Why do you think people do not register their pet, once the pet reaches the appropriate age?'* There were 102 participants who responded to this free text question. The following table presents their

feedback according to the main themes - numbered and in descending order. Examples of verbatim quotes from participants are used in the table to support each theme.

Table 6. Pet registration

Theme and no. of comments	Verbatim quotes
Cost of registration (n=64)	• <i>'Cost is the main barrier to desexing and registration.'</i> • <i>'Feels like an added expense that should be included in rates.'</i> • <i>'Presume they don't want to pay the fee and would rather risk getting a fine.'</i> • <i>'Affordability and / or lack of knowledge about the benefits.'</i>
Suspicious of/anti-authority (n=38)	• <i>'The pet owner gets nothing out of the registration (a benefit), folk figure their pet is never going to go missing, so why bother? Plus no visible presence of enforcement (unlike, say, police) so no apparent pressure to register their pet.'</i> • <i>'...dislike authority.'</i> • <i>'Lack of awareness, lack of consequences.'</i>
Lack of awareness (n=27)	• <i>'They don't know they are meant to.'</i> • <i>'There are many new residents each year in Merri-bek. Many of these new residents do not know the rules.'</i> • <i>'...unaware of laws...'</i>
No value for money (n=14)	• <i>'No benefits for cat-owners.'</i> • <i>'Registration only gives benefits to dog owners - such as dog-parks and social events. Cat owners only register for if a cat gets lost.'</i>
Inconvenience (n=11)	• <i>'Cost, inconvenience.'</i> • <i>'They see it as an unnecessary hassle.'</i>
Lazy (n=11)	• <i>'Unaware of requirements, or can't be bothered.'</i> • <i>'Lazy and believe they are above the conditions that have been set by council. These are the same people who totally disregard on leash areas.'</i>
Language/cultural barriers (n=2)	• <i>'Possibly language or cultural barriers.'</i>

As seen in the table above, 'cost of registration' (n=64) was by far the most frequently mentioned theme. There was an overall sentiment that there was a lack of awareness about the benefits of desexing your pet so residents were less likely to be inclined to pay for the service.

4.4.2 Preferences for key council services

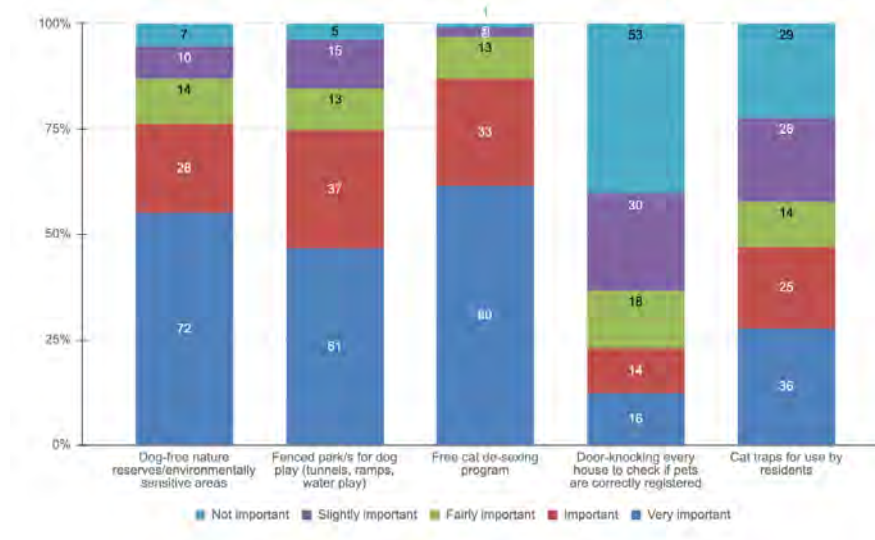
Key services

Participants were asked the following question - 'How important do you think it is for councils to provide the following services for the community?' They were asked to indicate importance from 'not important at all' to 'very important'. The areas were:

- Dog-free nature reserves/environmentally sensitive areas
- Fenced park/s for dog play (tunnels, ramps, water play)
- Free cat de-sexing program
- Door-knocking every house to check if pets are correctly registered
- Cat traps for use by residents

The following graph shows a breakdown of how participants' preference was distributed according to these five key areas.

Figure 11. Preferences for key services



Data source: survey.

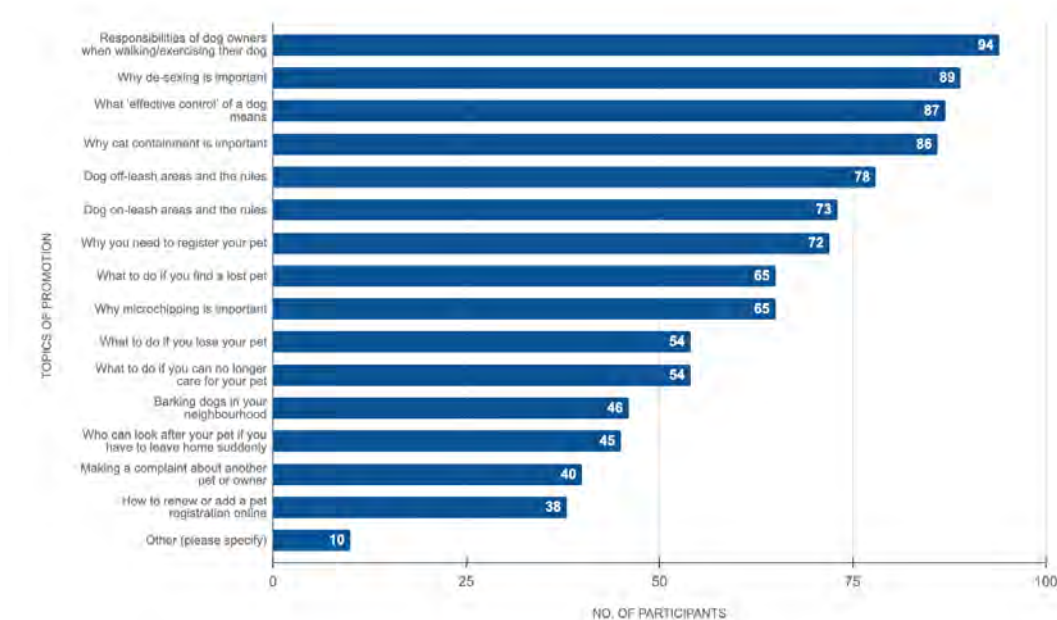
As seen in Figure 11 (above), the statement with the highest total of 'very important' (n=80, 61.5%) and 'important' (n=33, 25.4%) was 'free cat de-sexing program'. The statement with the least amount of 'very important' (n=16, 12.2%) selections as well as largest total of 'not important' (53, 40.5%) and slightly important (30, 22.9%) was 'door-knocking every house to check if pets are correctly registered'.

Communications

The following multi-choice question was asked to participants - 'Council provides written and online information for residents and visitors, about the rules for owning a pet. Which of the following topics need more promotion in the general community?'

Figure 12. (below) provides a breakdown of how participants responded according to what topics they thought needed better promotion.

Figure 12. Preferences for topics of promotion



Data source: survey.

As seen in the above graph, 'responsibilities of dog owners when walking/exercising their dog' (n=94) had the highest number of selections followed by 'why de-sexing is important' (n=89); 'what 'effective control' of a dog means' (n=87) and 'why cat containment is important' (n=86).

There were 10 participants who selected 'other' and gave a free text response for their answer. The following points are a summary of how they responded:

- **Feral and roaming cats:** Major threat to native wildlife; need better control and public education.
- **Cat ownership:** Encourage containment; many owners unaware it's safe and responsible to keep cats indoors.
- **Public education:** Improve awareness of pet ownership responsibilities, with resources (e.g. translated material) to meet CALD communities.
- **Pet registration:** Clearly explain its purpose and benefits.
- **Injured wildlife:** Educate the public on what to do and who is responsible.
- **Dog safety:** Address dangers of certain breeds and keep dogs out of playgrounds.

- **Local concerns:** Highlighted by an example - cat killed on Pallett St.

Animal management services for pet owners

Participants were asked the following question - 'How can Council improve its animal management services for pet owners?' There were 78 participants who provided free text responses.

Table 7. Animal management services for pet owners

Theme and no. of comments	Verbatim quotes
Infrastructure (n=15)	• 'Provide safe off leash area for greyhounds/ sighthounds. Please consider making dog parks more inclusive and create spaces accessible for all breeds.' • 'More poo bags and bins around parks.' • 'Well designed dog parks that includes swimming ponds.'
Responsible pet ownership education (n=15)	• 'Running pet ownership workshops. I think many people are new to pet ownership and aren't sure where to start with the responsibilities (e.g. vaccination, registration, desexing, basic training etc).' • 'More up to date, evidence based education.' • 'Promote responsible pet ownership and make that easy for people experiencing disadvantage.'
Communications (n=11)	• 'Chase up desexing for all pet owners, even just a regular text to nudge them. Regular reminders of behaviour standards for dogs off and on lead, with penalties.' • 'A flyer with the information listed above sent out to all residents with the Council newsletter (especially the importance of cat desexing, registration and containment for the animals sake).'
Concessions (n=9)	• 'Continue providing reduced cost desexing for low income earners.' • 'Lower registration fees.'
Enforcement (n=9)	• 'I believe enforcement to be the best course of action as well as subsidising pet registration and making desexing free. 24 hour curfew to keep cats safe.' • 'Enforcing dog on leash areas. It is very dangerous when I'm riding my bike in the creek.'
Cat curfew/cat programs (n=7)	• 'Implement a Community Cat Program with intensive, targeted desexing in hotspots, and helping carers and rescuers with Council resources.' • 'Introduce a 24 hour cat curfew to keep cats and other animals living in Merri-bek safe'
Traps (n=6)	• 'Better information and greater ease of gaining a trap or an animal officer when there is a problem animal/animal in need.'

Desexing (n=6)	• <i>'Support (e.g. cat desexing) and clear rules as well as enforcement.'</i>
Support instead of punishment (n=5)	• <i>'Provide support not punishment or cost.'</i>
Strengthen local laws dogs (n=1)	• <i>'Strict rules specifically for pitbulls/dangerous breeds (muzzle, always leashed, etc.).'</i>

There were 9 participants whose comments were not related to the above themes. They highlighted the fact they weren't pet owners; commented on the survey/engagement process and some were supportive comments to Council to say they were doing a good job and to keep it up.

Animal management services for the community

Participants were asked the same question as the previous, but taking a community lens - *'How can Council improve its animal management services for the benefit of the general community?'* There were 86 participants who provided free text responses.

Table 8. Animal management services for the community

Theme and no. of comments	Verbatim quotes
Enforcement (dogs) (n=24)	• <i>'Policing of playgrounds on weekends when dogs are frequently off-lead. Some that I cannot take my kids to any more.'</i> • <i>'More enforcement in off leash and on leash areas.'</i> • <i>'Larger focus on fining people for not picking up their dog poo.'</i> • <i>'Be proactive patrol at peak times after work 4pm weekdays and weekends and fine people for not following requirements.'</i> • <i>'Greater enforcement of regulations for irresponsible pet owners.'</i>
Education: responsible pet ownership (n=23)	• <i>'Public education program.'</i> • <i>'Dog training courses and advice.'</i> • <i>'More clarity on information around pet ownership and what's allowed in Merri Bek'</i> • <i>'More information about keeping cats inside and picking up after your dog.'</i>
Infrastructure (n=14)	• <i>'Provide safe off leash area for greyhounds/sighthounds.'</i> • <i>'Provide dog parks that don't have children's play equipment in them. Consider spaces where people would like to spend time with their pets.'</i> • <i>'Provide rubbish bins at park entrances for disposal of dog poo.'</i>

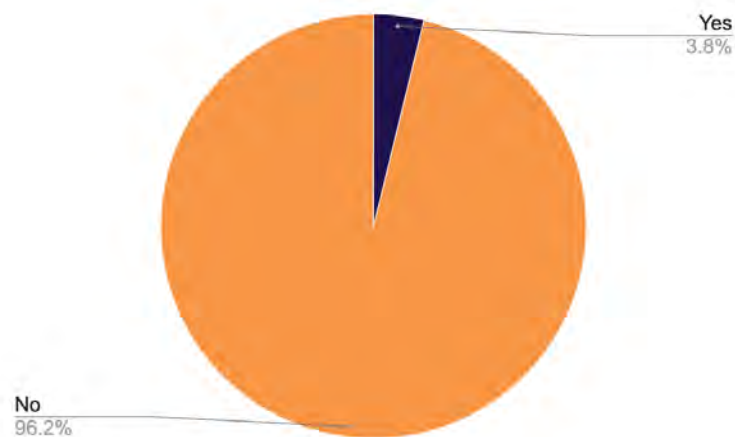
Trapping (n=9)	• <i>'Cat trapping is a must. Simply unacceptable to have so many cats roaming and killing wildlife.'</i> • <i>'Feral cat trapping.'</i> • <i>'More support for residents to deal with having other people's cats on their property.'</i>
Enforcement (cats) (n=9)	• <i>'Enforce local laws relating to cat curfews...'</i> • <i>'Cat rules and reduction.'</i> • <i>'Introduce and enforce a cat curfew = less disturbance from cats due to trespass and fighting...'</i>
Support rather than penalise (n=7)	• <i>'Do not over-police, but provide guidance for correct behaviour.'</i> • <i>'Introduce incentives for pet owners who do the right thing, rather than introducing more laws to punish them.'</i>
Concessions: desexing/ rego, cat programs (n=6)	• <i>'Greater share of the DAMP budget towards cat desexing and cat containment education and programs.'</i> • <i>'Work with the Australian Pet Welfare Foundation to run an effective, and low-cost, Community Cat Program.'</i>
Environment protection (n=5)	• <i>'Better protection of sensitive environmental spaces.'</i> • <i>'Humans and their associated impact including pets should not be the only stakeholders in our environment.'</i>

There were 6 participants' comments who had comments that were considered to be 'other' (outside the above categories). Some of these were supportive of Council's current efforts; one was around providing Councillors with correct and updated information on the Domestic Animals Act and some were not relevant to the question.

Facilities

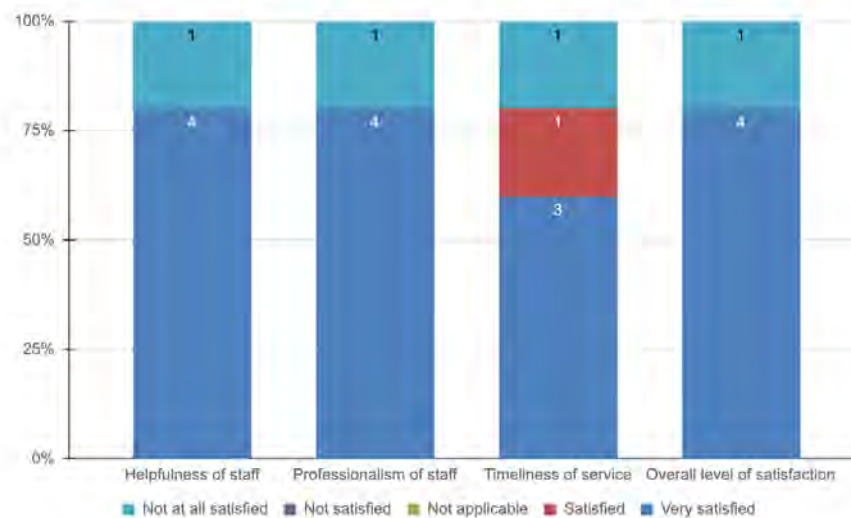
Participants were asked if they had visited the Epping Pound (wat djerring Animal Facility) to adopt a pet in the last year. There were 136 participants who answered this question, with only 5 participants selecting 'yes' and the other 126 selecting 'no'. The following graph shows a breakdown of how participants responded in percentages.

Figure 13. 'In the last 12 months have you visited the wat djerring Animal Facility (Epping Pound) to retrieve a lost pet or adopt a pet?'



The 5 participants who answered 'yes' to the above question were given an opportunity to rate their level of satisfaction with the following statements of the Epping Pound service, as seen in Figure 14. (below).

Figure 14. Satisfaction levels with the wat djerring Animal Facility (Epping Pound).



Data source: survey.

While there was only a small number of participants who responded to this question (n=5), all statements had 3 or 4 participants who were 'very satisfied' with the service.

Additional comments

Participants were asked the following free text question - *'Do you have any further comments to make about pet ownership or Council's animal management services in Merri-bek?'* There were 27 participants who responded to the question. The following table is a summary of their responses, themed and with supporting verbatim quotes.

Table 9. Additional comments

Theme and no. of comments	Verbatim quotes
DAMP/Council processes (n=19)	• <i>'Thank you for inviting the public including non pet owners to have some input.'</i> • <i>'Database and registration management.'</i> • <i>'More information around pet ownership that isn't dogs or cats, e.g. rabbits, guinea pigs, lizards, fish, chickens, birds.'</i>
Animal facility (n=3)	• <i>'Much preferred it when RSPCA were servicing our pets. The quality of care has dropped exponentially.'</i>
Positive feedback (n=2)	• <i>'Overall, I think Merri-Bek does a solid job with animal management.'</i>

In addition to the above comments, there were also 3 participants who made comments that were either out of scope or irrelevant to the project.

4.5 Submissions to Council

The Council received three submissions from residents, each highlighting a variety of views, concerns, and suggestions for the Merri-bek Council to consider during the development of their new Domestic Animal Management Plan for 2025-2029.

The following is an overview of each submission, highlighting key points and the reasoning behind them:

Submission One

This submission is mainly concerned with the use and transparency of registration revenue. The key points outlined include:

- **Questioning value for money from pet registration fees:** Based on 2020-21 data, the resident estimates that Merri-bek receives around \$800,000 annually from the 14,000 registered dogs. They point out that only a small proportion of these dogs require management by Council intervention (around 6%), suggesting

that only a fraction of the registration revenue is needed to manage “problem” cases (e.g. dog attacks or nuisance behaviour).

- **Advocacy for better use of funds:** The submitter argues that registration revenue from responsible pet owners should be reinvested into services that benefit all pet owners, such as dog parks, off-leash areas, free microchipping, desexing, and community education programs.

“If income is \$800K less cost of managing registered dogs who don’t have responsible owners, ie through fines, \$800K is available for dog parks, off leash areas, free microchipping, desexing and other resources like community education.”

- **Lack of follow-through on previous plans:** The submitter notes that the previous DAMP referenced the creation of a “Top of the Class” video, which they were unable to locate on Council’s website, suggesting a need for clearer follow-up or communication on DAMP initiatives.
- **Emphasis on education and equitable responsibility:** The submission proposes that all ratepayers should contribute to managing stray animals, but irresponsible owners should bear additional costs through fines. They encourage positive community education that highlights the benefits of pet ownership on physical and mental health, especially through programs in schools and bush kinders.

Submission Two

This submission raises concerns about the lack of a cat curfew in Merri-bek and criticises the current approach to community consultation, particularly the survey format, which the submitter felt was too simplistic and did not allow for detailed feedback. Key points include:

- **Strong support for a 24/7 cat curfew:** The submitter believes it is well-established that free-ranging cats pose a significant threat to native wildlife and also cause nuisance issues by entering private property to fight, defecate, or breed

“Free-ranging cats also intrude onto non-cat owning properties to fight, defecate, and copulate.”

- **Calls for policy alignment with other councils:** The submission notes that many other Victorian councils have already implemented cat confinement (e.g. Darebin, Knox, and Whittlesea) and urges Merri-bek to reconsider its position and implement a full-time curfew in the next DAMP.

“Whittlesea has a 24/7 curfew; Knox City Council has a 24-hour curfew... Darebin has a night-time cat curfew (from 7 pm to 7 am) which, while better than no curfew, ignores the reality that cats cause the same problems alluded to above during daylight hours.”

- **Critique of current Council messaging:** The response provided in the existing DAMP, which suggests residents try deterrents like citrus peels or motion-activated sprinklers, is described as unrealistic and unreasonable, placing the burden of responsibility onto neighbours rather than cat owners

Submission Three

This detailed submission raises concerns about the environmental impacts of domestic animals and advocates for a more balanced and inclusive Domestic Animal Management Plan, one that considers the needs of non-pet owners, environmental restoration, and wildlife protection, alongside pet owner responsibilities. Key points include:

- **Expand the scope of the DAMP:** The submitter recommends broadening the Plan's purpose to include protecting wildlife from domestic predators and recognising the rights of non-dog owners to access open spaces without interference from off-leash dogs. The DAMP should align more clearly with open space and environmental restoration goals, such as those along the Merri Creek.
- **Critique of off-leash dog areas and non-compliance:** The submitter highlights that many off-leash areas are located in environmentally sensitive areas and notes poor compliance and enforcement, with reports of dog owners being aggressive when asked to follow rules. They argue that dog-free areas should be preserved, especially those supported by decades of volunteer restoration work.
- **Call for greater accountability through pet registration:** The submission questions the purpose and accountability of pet registration, suggesting that pet owners should be required to sign a behavioural agreement, and that registration should be linked to evidence of training and responsible ownership.
- **Support for a 24/7 cat curfew:** They strongly advocate for full-time cat confinement to protect wildlife, citing personal experiences of property damage and impacts on native birds due to roaming cats. He notes that night-time curfews are insufficient.
- **Need for better reporting mechanisms and stricter enforcement:** They suggest easier online reporting tools, including drop-down categories for nuisance, DNA testing for dog waste enforcement, and more visible registration tags. They also recommend enforcing on-leash rules near paths and waterways, banning off-leash use near sensitive areas.
- **Ensure pet owners bear the cost of pet-related services:** The submission calls for pet registration fees to cover all related Council services, including enforcement, fencing, and facilities. It also proposes setting limits on pet ownership per household in high-density areas to prevent overpopulation and community disruption.
- **Regulate domestic animal businesses:** They suggest expanding the DAMP to cover dog walking and dog training businesses, with specific bans on their

operation in natural parklands like Merri Creek, unless licensed and regulated. He emphasises the need to protect these public spaces from commercial misuse.

4.6 Key Stakeholder Interviews

Phone interviews were conducted with 10 key stakeholders, who were asked 10 questions about domestic animal management from the perspective of their organisation. These interviews sought to gather expertise from key organisations across three Council areas about domestic animal management across Merri-bek, Darebin and Whittlesea.

Phone interviews were conducted with the following key stakeholders:

- Rescue Rehabilitate Release
- Reservoir Vet Clinic
- RSPCA Victoria
- Petbarn Preston
- Cat Protection Society
- Second Chance Animal Rescue
- Bundoora Veterinary Clinic and Hospital
- Friends of Merri Creek
- Pascoe Vale Veterinary Clinic
- Project Underdog Rescue

.For the Stakeholder Interview Questionnaire, refer to Appendix 2.

"People willingly take their dogs into wildlife habitats. They chase kangaroos, cause stress injuries, and get them hit by cars. There's a 98% euthanasia rate if we're able to contain them."

"More messages in vet clinics, dog parks, and on social media linking to the 'why', explaining the positive impacts of human behaviour on animal outcomes."

"Even if we pool our resources, we can probably reach a larger audience than just doing it by ourselves separately."

"You could use council social media and flyers at local shops, we've got a brochure station. Just need approval through head office."

"Dogs off leash is a constant issue. From what I've read on the local Facebook page, some aren't controlled and are quite aggressive... I think it's in every area."

"Have a more approachable local laws team, people with a keen interest in keeping people and pets together. That really makes a difference."

"It was a cost-cutting decision, but it hurt the community. RSPCA provided great support and knowledge, we haven't had a partnership like that since."

"When the right person is in the role, local laws officers become part of the community rather than someone that's feared. That's when behaviour starts to change."

"I get worried when aggressive or dangerous dogs are in the community and the Council is potentially not aware of them. Imagine if the fence backs onto a school."

"Our Fear Free certified team would welcome opportunities to collaborate with Council on education, community welfare, and responsible pet ownership campaigns."

Animal management issues of concern regarding dogs

Key stakeholder groups reported the following issues of concern regarding the management of dogs:

- A lack of education among dog owners regarding responsible ownership, including dog behaviour, training, and appropriate confinement. Several stakeholders linked behavioural issues to dogs being poorly socialised, particularly following COVID-19, when many owners did not attend puppy school or obedience classes.
- Dogs off-leash in on-leash areas, particularly in parks and natural reserves. This was frequently cited as a cause of distress for on-lead dogs and their owners, with reports of repeated dog-on-dog incidents and attacks.
- Dog attacks on wildlife, including birds and kangaroos, with some stakeholders reporting a high euthanasia rate for native animals injured by dogs. Concerns were raised about dogs being exercised off-lead in areas with known wildlife habitats, including creeks and revegetation zones.
- Poor understanding or enforcement of on-leash rules, with signage often ignored and community members reluctant to confront non-compliant dog owners. Several stakeholders emphasised the importance of visible local laws officers during peak times.
- Ongoing issues with unregistered dogs and backyard breeders, including concerns about breeding practices, lack of vaccinations, and dogs not being microchipped. Some stakeholders expressed concern about low registration rates in Darebin overall.
- Aggressive dogs not being adequately confined, with some stakeholders worried about the proximity of aggressive dogs to schools or other sensitive areas.
- Stray dogs being brought to vet clinics without Council support. Stakeholders reported that delayed pick-up or lack of after-hours services created a financial and emotional burden, especially when animals had no clinical history or were fearful.
- Barking complaints linked to poor dog management, such as a lack of enrichment or inappropriate dog selection for the owner's lifestyle. Some

stakeholders felt that Council advice in these cases could be outdated or ineffective.

- Dog waste in parks and open spaces continues to be a problem, impacting amenity and causing frustration for staff and volunteers working in the community.
- A need for greater support for vulnerable community members, including access to low-cost desexing, vaccinations, and surrender pathways during times of crisis.

Some stakeholders suggested that holding Council events in dog parks could be an opportunity to model and promote responsible pet behaviour. Others noted that while dog ownership has increased significantly since COVID, the support and infrastructure to educate new owners has not kept pace.

Animal management issues of concern regarding cats

Key stakeholder groups reported the following issues of concern regarding the management of cats:

- Large numbers of stray, roaming, and semi-owned cats across the municipality, particularly in areas like Reservoir
- Low desexing rates and a need for greater awareness and enforcement of mandatory desexing requirements
- Community misunderstanding around cat ownership responsibility, particularly in cases where people feed but do not formally claim cats
- Inadequate enforcement of cat containment and a lack of penalties for roaming cats
- Roaming cats contributing to wildlife predation, nuisance behaviour, cat fights, and disease spread
- Lack of awareness of existing containment rules or cat curfews
- Difficulties accessing low-cost desexing and the need for targeted support in lower-income communities
- Delays or inconsistencies in Council response to reports of stray cats, including limited after-hours support
- Poor reclaim rates and low registration levels for cats, often due to out of date microchip details or lack of owner engagement
- Concern from veterinary clinic and shelters around caring for cats outside of council processes.

Services and programs to promote responsible pet ownership

Key stakeholder groups nominated the following services or programs to promote responsible pet ownership:

A focus on community education as the main tool, including:

- Educational seminars or online sessions led by vets or certified trainers, available via Council websites or hosted at local venues such as parks or community halls

- Increased visibility of Council officers through pop-up events at dog parks, offering free giveaways (e.g. leads, doggy bags), chip scanning, and one-on-one conversations about pet responsibilities
- Education targeting children and youth through school partnerships or scout group visits, to encourage early understanding of responsible pet care
- Greater promotion via mainstream and digital media around the costs of pet ownership, vaccination importance, and preventing impulse pet purchases
- Materials in Council rate notices and pet registration mailouts reminding residents of wildlife protection laws and the impact of domestic pets
- Encouraging the use of collars with visible ID tags alongside microchips, particularly for dogs and puppies that may not have updated chip details
- Awareness campaigns about curfews and containment, especially for cats, and the benefits of enrichment for indoor pets
- Supporting residents to understand and manage community cats, including clearer guidance around when and how to take responsibility

Low-cost and accessible services to reduce financial barriers, including:

- Free or low-cost desexing, microchipping, and vaccination days, particularly for low-income or vulnerable households
- Discounted or free registration events and clearer information on how to access concessions
- Emergency pet boarding for residents experiencing crisis
- Promotion and support for DIY cat enclosures, such as instructional materials, in-person workshops, or grants to assist with building

Improved communication and partnerships, including:

- Clear, consistent communication between Council and vet clinics, with up-to-date guidance on containment laws, cat curfews, and registration requirements
- Dedicated efforts to reach multicultural communities with translated information and culturally sensitive messaging
- Partnerships between Council, local vets, and animal behaviour experts to co-deliver programs and ensure enforcement advice aligns with best-practice welfare standards

One vet clinic noted that clients often don't know the difference between microchipping and registration, and many dogs remain registered under breeders well after rehoming. Improved education around chip transfers and visibility of Council programs through vet clinics was considered essential.

The success of other Council-led models was raised as a potential guide for Merri-bek. For example, stakeholders praised Whittlesea's cat desexing and curfew approach, and Banyule's free cat desexing program. These were seen as scalable options that combine regulation with meaningful community support.

Services and programs to minimise dog attacks on people and animals

The following suggestions were made for services or programs to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals:

- Greater community education on recognising dog stress signals, including signage with visual guides in off-leash areas to help owners identify when a dog is fearful or reactive (e.g. ears back, rigid body)
- Public seminars and workshops run by force-free, qualified animal behaviour professionals focusing on dog behaviour, body language, and safe human-dog and dog-dog interactions
- Promotion of humane, evidence-based training methods, with caution around aversive or punishment-based training approaches that may increase risk of aggression
- More low-cost or free access to puppy school, ongoing training, and behavioural support, particularly in communities experiencing financial hardship
- Public education campaigns (e.g. letterbox flyers, social media) featuring real stories from victims of dog attacks to raise awareness of their long-term impacts and promote responsible ownership
- Clearer education at the point of adoption or purchase around matching dogs to appropriate homes and lifestyles, with guidance on breed traits and behavioural needs
- Stricter requirements around the registration and monitoring of high-risk or restricted breed dogs, including education on muzzle use and containment
- More consistent fencing and containment advice for all owners, and stronger enforcement around secure confinement of dogs to properties
- Increased Council presence in off-leash parks and more frequent ranger patrols during peak times (e.g. mornings and evenings)
- Stronger enforcement of on-leash rules, particularly in areas with sensitive wildlife or high foot traffic
- Improved behaviour and risk screening at Council-operated pounds to ensure suitability of dogs for rehoming
- Use of colour-coded leads or harnesses to indicate reactive or nervous dogs, aligned with international conventions
- Support for accessible training options beyond puppyhood, with emphasis on behavioural development through adolescence (up to 18 months)
- Council support for or partnerships with ethical training providers, including promotion of accredited force-free training programs
- More educational materials at dog parks, in registration packs, and online explaining the links between poor socialisation and aggression
- Better data collection and sharing of dog attack statistics to understand risk factors, including whether dogs were off-leash, escaped, or unsupervised

Some stakeholders suggested Council involvement in promoting best practice training programs and supporting participation through subsidised fees. Others emphasised that education campaigns should extend beyond rules and enforcement, and instead empower owners to understand and manage their dogs' emotional and behavioural needs.

Services and programs to address over-population and high euthanasia rates

The following suggestions were made for services or programs to address over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats. These are in addition to several raised previously in the sections *"Animal management issues of concern regarding dogs"* and *"Animal management issues of concern regarding cats"*. Suggestions included:

- Free or low-cost desexing days coordinated across multiple local vet clinics, including clinics with high capacity to perform bulk procedures
- Greater promotion and uptake of desexing vouchers, particularly for vulnerable residents, healthcare card holders, or pensioners
- Mandatory desexing for cats, alongside better education about when animals can begin to reproduce and common misconceptions (e.g. that siblings cannot breed)
- Stronger enforcement around excess animal numbers and backyard breeding, including better regulation of online pet sales and increased oversight of unregistered breeders
- Clearer public education on the responsibilities associated with stray or semi-owned pets, including defining ownership and the role of Council versus community members
- Built-in registration and microchipping services at vet clinics to streamline the process and reduce barriers to compliance
- Public information campaigns to explain why microchipping, desexing, and registration matter, and what outcomes they help achieve
- Behavioural support programs to reduce pet surrenders, including free seminars, vouchers for force-free trainers, and support for owners struggling with dog behavioural issues
- Programs to support aged care residents and people with disabilities to retain companion animals, recognising the emotional and health benefits of pet ownership
- Improved after-hours response for stray dogs to prevent further stress on rescue volunteers and reduce wildlife harm

Stakeholders emphasised that addressing over-population and reducing euthanasia rates requires a coordinated effort between Councils, vet clinics, and rescue organisations. Funding and collaboration were seen as critical enablers, both for desexing programs and to strengthen rehoming pathways. Education was also identified as key to addressing community misunderstandings about pet care responsibilities and to encourage preventative action before animals end up in the pound system.

Services and programs to encourage registration and identification

Key stakeholder groups suggested the following services or programs to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats:

- Free or discounted registration for residents experiencing financial hardship, such as those on Centrelink or students, with a simple application process
- Free microchipping and registration events, promoted through Council's website, social media, and local partners such as vet clinics or pet stores
- Incentives for newly registered pets, such as discounts on desexing, behaviour training, or pet products
- Education campaigns about the benefits of registration, not just the legal requirement, such as the role it plays in reuniting lost pets, and the real-world outcomes for animals
- Clear and accessible messaging explaining where registration fees go, and how they support services like rangers, shelter care, and community safety
- Use of posters, pamphlets and QR codes in public spaces (e.g. dog parks, vet clinics, pet stores) to simplify registration and chip-checking processes
- On-the-spot registration support in parks or at events, using Council officers with chip scanners and digital registration tools
- Promotion of microchip checks during routine vet visits, to ensure chip details are accurate and linked to current owners
- Review and reform of fee structures, particularly for desexed dogs whose procedures are now being delayed for behavioural and health reasons so owners aren't unfairly penalised
- Messaging that explains the 'why' behind registration from the pet's perspective, helping owners understand how identification keeps their animals safer

Stakeholders highlighted that many community members view registration as a tax, and recommended campaigns that shift the narrative from compliance to care. Council visibility in public spaces, use of engaging media formats (e.g. short videos or animations), and a positive, outcomes-based messaging approach were all recommended to build trust and increase registration rates.

Services and programs to effectively identify dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs

The following suggestions were made for services or programs to effectively identify dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with the Domestic Animals Act:

- A need for stricter registration and clearer identification of aggressive or dangerous dogs, with Council maintaining updated records of where such dogs are located
- Consideration of additional physical inspections to confirm secure confinement of dangerous or menacing dogs, particularly in proximity to schools or other sensitive areas
- Education for the community on recognising early signs of aggression or stress in dogs and how to respond appropriately
- Increased enforcement of leash requirements and clearer signage in on-lead and off-lead areas, to reduce risk in public spaces

- Greater visibility of local laws officers and more patrols in parks, especially during peak times, to monitor compliance and intervene where unsafe behaviour is observed
- Education campaigns that promote responsible ownership, regardless of breed, with emphasis on the importance of socialisation, training and secure confinement
- Promotion of reporting pathways for the public to raise concerns about aggressive or non-compliant dogs, with reassurance around privacy and follow-up processes
- Support for behaviour training programs, particularly in cases where reactivity or aggression is identified early, to prevent escalation

Stakeholders noted that aggressive or dangerous dogs are not always on Council's radar due to lack of registration or failure to update details. Vet clinics and rescue groups identified a potential role for clinics to help flag concerning behaviours, but expressed uncertainty about privacy constraints and what follow-up action Council could or would take. There was a call for stronger partnerships between Council and vets to ensure information sharing is effective and responsible.

Overall, a shift toward risk-based monitoring, focusing on individual behaviour rather than breed was seen as preferable by some, provided it is backed by clear procedures, consistent enforcement, and support for owners to take preventative action.

Improving Councils' animal management services for the benefit of pet owners and/or the general community

Key stakeholder groups suggested the following improvements to Council's animal management services for the benefit of pet owners and the wider community:

- Creating a more visible and approachable presence of Council officers at community events and in parks, with a focus on education and support rather than enforcement
- Providing multilingual education resources and targeting information through schools to reach a broader cross-section of the community
- Re-establishing or building partnerships with reputable animal welfare organisations to increase service capacity and deliver community support programs
- Offering grants or support to volunteer wildlife rescue groups, and recognising the contribution of these groups through collaboration and improved communication
- Ensuring that community education emphasises practical, compassionate pet care and builds understanding around dog behaviour, body language, and respectful interaction

- Improving responsiveness to community enquiries and increasing local laws staffing to meet demand, particularly in complex cases involving hoarding or multiple animals
- Delivering free or discounted pet care initiatives such as registration, microchipping, desexing, or pet food assistance for residents experiencing financial hardship
- Clearly communicating what Council's animal management team does, why they do it, and how their work benefits the broader community and animal welfare
- Including wildlife messaging in pet communications, such as reminder notices or pamphlets, to raise awareness about the impact of domestic pets on native species
- Enhancing customer service processes and streamlining animal pick-up procedures from vet clinics and members of the public

Several stakeholders expressed a desire for Council to be seen less as an enforcement body and more as a helpful resource for pet owners. Stakeholders recommended reframing public messaging to emphasise care, support, and shared responsibility between Council and the community in promoting responsible pet ownership.

Key topics requiring greater promotion in the community

Stakeholders were asked to identify the top three topics that require stronger promotion through Council's written and online communications. While views varied, several consistent themes emerged across the responses:

- Understanding pet behaviour and safe interaction, including how to read dog body language, interact with dogs respectfully, and promote safe greetings between pets and people
- Pet ownership responsibilities, such as desexing, registration, microchipping, and secure confinement, with an emphasis on the 'why' behind these requirements
- The impact of pets on wildlife, including the need to keep dogs on-lead in sensitive areas and the importance of keeping cats contained to reduce harm to native species

Additional suggestions included making educational materials more accessible, particularly by using plain language, multiple formats (e.g. pamphlets, social media, signage), and translated resources for non-English speaking communities. Schools were also identified as key settings for early education, with children acting as messengers to their families.

Partnership opportunities for animal management programs and services

Stakeholders expressed strong interest in partnering with Council on animal management programs, particularly those that are humane, evidence based and community focused.

Key themes included:

- Willingness to collaborate - several organisations showed enthusiasm for partnerships, especially in outreach, education and event participation. Suggestions included working in schools, libraries, shelters and local events to deliver accessible education.
- Support for education and outreach - Groups highlighted the importance of ongoing education and preventive programs, such as wildlife talks and behavioural sessions for pet owners. There was also interest in delivering low-cost or free training to improve pet outcomes.
- Existing partnerships - some stakeholders confirmed existing partnerships with Council, such as involvement in desexing programs.
- Specialist support - one stakeholder offered certified trainers and expressed a keen interest in delivering welfare and education initiatives.

5. Next Steps

Engagement on this project has created significant interest and aspirations for the Domestic Animal Management Plan, for those who participated, walked past a pop up or read a post online.

Keeping people updated

Issue a statement and update each Council project page thanking participants for participating in the project and for sharing their ideas. As we move into the next phase of the project we need to keep the wider community updated about the progress of this project.

Share the data

Even after this initial stage we have collected a large level of data that can be used by other agencies and organisations to plan the delivery of services. Consider ways you can share this data such as creating a snapshot of the engagement data, to bring the data to life with infographics to help participants digest the information in an easy form.

Adherence to the Local Government Act 2020

Keeping participants informed in engagement and the project is called 'closing the loop' - the information loop is currently open. Participants have shared their ideas and their feedback through the engagement process and are waiting to see what happens next. A new requirement of the Act requires councils to share the information that has been collected and inform the community as to how this will shape thinking.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Community Survey Questions

1. What is your interest in this topic? (Select one or more)

- Dog/cat owner
- Use local parks, reserves or playgrounds
- Sports club member/player/volunteer
- Veterinarian/Vet Nurse
- Member of animal advocacy/rescue group
- Member of a dog club
- Member of a wildlife/environmental group
- Registered dog or cat breeder
- Business operator – animal behaviourist/trainer/walker
- Registered Domestic Animal Business
- Other

2. Name of group/organisation/other connection

(Please specify)

3. Pet ownership

- How many dogs owned by your household?
- How many cats owned by your household?

4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- Pets give great comfort and support to many people in the community
- My/our pet/s are an important part of my/our family
- My/our pet gives me/us great comfort and support
- I/we exercise more because I/we have a dog
- I/we talk to more people in our neighbourhood because I/we have a dog

5. In the last year, have you noticed any of the following about dogs in your local area?

- Dog poo left on the ground
- Dogs off-leash when they shouldn't be
- Dogs with owners far away/owners seem to be absent
- Dogs annoying or intimidating other people
- Dogs annoying or intimidating other dogs
- Grass/plants trampled or dug up
- Dogs chasing/attacking wildlife
- Dogs in playgrounds
- Dogs sitting next to their owners at outdoor cafes
- Dogs barking for a long time
- Dogs not following commands of their owner

6. In the last year, have you noticed any of the following about cats in your local area?

- Cats in the streets at night
- Cats preying on wildlife
- Cats not being kept inside houses during the day/night
- Cats appearing to be unowned
- Cats fighting other cats
- Cats making loud noises
- Disturbed garden beds due to cat activity
- Cats living in sensitive environmental areas or reserves

7. Do you occasionally feed (or look after) any neighbourhood cats who come to your house?

- Yes
- No

8. Do you support the introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew in your local area?

- Strongly support this proposal
- Somewhat support this proposal but have concerns
- Somewhat oppose the proposal and have concerns
- Strongly oppose the proposal
- Please specify any concerns: (Open text)

9. Do you support the introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew?

- Yes
- No

10. Do you know that dogs need to be registered in Merri-bek?

- Yes
- No

11. Do you know anyone who lives locally, who has an unregistered dog or cat?

- Yes
- No

12. Why do you think people do not register their pet once it reaches the appropriate age?

(Open text response)

13. How important do you think it is for councils to provide the following services for the community?

- Dog-free nature reserves/environmentally sensitive areas
- Fenced park/s for dog play (tunnels, ramps, water play)
- Free cat de-sexing program
- Door-knocking every house to check if pets are correctly registered
- Cat traps for use by residents

14. Which of the following topics need more promotion in the general community?
(Select one or more)

- Why microchipping is important
- Why you need to register your pet
- Responsibilities of dog owners when walking/exercising their dog
- What 'effective control' of a dog means
- Why cat containment is important
- Why de-sexing is important
- How to renew or add a pet registration online
- Dog on-leash areas and the rules
- Dog off-leash areas and the rules
- Who can look after your pet if you have to leave home suddenly
- What to do if you can no longer care for your pet
- What to do if you find a lost pet
- What to do if you lose your pet
- Barking dogs in your neighbourhood
- Making a complaint about another pet or owner
- Other (please specify)

15. How can Council improve its animal management services for pet owners?

(Open text response)

16. How can Council improve its animal management services for the benefit of the general community?

(Open text response)

17. In the last 12 months, have you visited the Wat Djerring Animal Facility to retrieve a lost pet or adopt a pet?

- Yes
- No

18. Please rate your level of satisfaction with the following aspects of the Epping Pound service:

- Helpfulness of staff
 - Professionalism of staff
 - Timeliness of service
 - Overall level of satisfaction
- (Scale responses – e.g., Very satisfied to Very dissatisfied)

19. Do you have any further comments to make about pet ownership or Council's animal management services in Merri-bek?

(Open text response)

20. My gender is...

- Woman/girl
- Man/boy
- Gender diverse
- Prefer not to say
- Prefer to self-identify (please specify)

21. What suburb do you live in?

(Open text or dropdown list)

22. Connection to Merri-bek

(Open text or predefined options such as resident, worker, student, etc.)

23. Were you born overseas?

- Yes
- No

24. I was born in:

(Open text)

25. What language(s) do you speak at home?

(Open text or multiple choice)

26. What languages do you speak other than English?

"I speak: ____" (Open text)

27. My age

(Select one)

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 26-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75+

28. I am: (Select all that apply)

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- A person living with a disability
- Carer of a person living with a disability
- Parent/guardian of children
- A member of the LGBTIQ+ community

- A person experiencing homelessness
- Prefer not to say
- None of these

Appendix 2. Stakeholder Interview Questionnaire

- In your experience, what are the main animal management issues of concern for dogs?
- In your experience, what are the main animal management issues of concern for cats?
- What services or programs could Council provide to promote responsible pet ownership?
- What services or programs could Council provide to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals?
- What services or programs could Council provide to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats?
- What services or programs could Council provide to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats?
- What services or programs could Council provide to effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in that district and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act
- How could Council improve its animal management services for the benefit of pet owners and/or the general community?
- Council provides written and on-line information for residents and visitors, about the rules for owning a pet. What do you believe are the top three topics that need more promotion in the general community?
- Are there any partnership opportunities for animal management programs or services?

DOMESTIC ANIMALS ACT 1994**COUNCIL ORDER****Cat confinement**

1. On (insert date) Merri-bek City Council resolved to make an Order pursuant to Section 25(2) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* regarding cat confinement.
2. In accordance with this Order, an owner of a cat that is kept within the municipal district, must ensure that the cat is securely confined to the owner's premises at all times.
3. If a cat is found at large outside the owner's premises or not securely confined to the owner's premises, the owner is guilty of an offence.
4. This Order is effective from 1 February 2027.
5. In this Order, the term 'Owner' has the same meaning as used in the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

Dated:

Eammon Fennessy

Acting Chief Executive Officer

7.2 MELBOURNE WATER STORMWATER (FLOOD) MAP - COUNCIL SUBMISSION

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade
City Design and Economy

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Endorses the draft submission at Attachment 1, as Council's response to Melbourne Water, for its stormwater (flood) mapping program.
2. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer, to finalise the submission, including any minor administrative or grammatical updates and changes arising from new information received through Melbourne Water's ongoing engagement process, and submit it to Melbourne Water.
3. Provide a copy of the final submission to the Minister for Planning, the Minister for Water, and other councils participating in Melbourne Water's mapping program.

REPORT

Executive summary

Melbourne Water (MW) manages rivers, creeks, and main stormwater drains across metropolitan Melbourne and is responsible for regional floodplain management. In this role, MW periodically reviews and updates both urban stormwater and riverine flood maps.

MW has recently commenced the process of updating its stormwater flood maps, as applied to its drainage areas, to better identify locations at risk of flooding. The first stage of its new Greater Melbourne Flood Information Program (the Program) covers the municipalities of Yarra, Darebin, Glen Eira and Merri-bek.

To confirm the accuracy of their mapping, MW is currently seeking feedback from the community about past flooding events and any changes to the built environment, such as new fences, landscaping, or structures, that may influence stormwater flows. As part of this process, MW released draft urban stormwater (flood) maps for Merri-bek on 13 October 2025, inviting public feedback until 5 December 2025.

Council has already undertaken community consultation and adopted its own stormwater map for areas where it manages local drainage. MW's current consultation on the Program relates only to main drainage areas in Merri-bek, which fall under MW's management.

This initial stage of community engagement precedes a future State Government-led process to introduce the final MW maps into the Merri-bek Planning Scheme, as well as the schemes of other participating councils.

Council officers welcome the opportunity to contribute to MW's approach to floodplain management and has prepared a submission to proactively represent Merri-bek's interests. The draft submission:

- Supports MW's community consultation and a future State-led planning scheme amendment process.
- Advocates for greater collaboration, transparency, and local consideration in MW's floodplain management approach.
- Asks that MW:
 - o Confirm its process for affected landowners to seek a review of MW's mapping.
 - o Outline its long-term drainage upgrade and investment priorities in Merri-bek.

- o Undertake strategic floodplain management for Merri-bek's activity centres, where MW mapping impacts redevelopment potential.

This report seeks Council's endorsement of the draft submission at **Attachment 1** and authorisation for the Director, Place and Environment, to finalise and submit it to MW and relevant stakeholders.

Previous Council decisions

There is no previous Council report on this matter. Any previous reporting relates to work done for Council's separate stormwater map for its local drainage areas, which was adopted by Council on 13 August 2025.

1. Policy Context

Merri-bek 2025-29 Community Vision and Council Plan

The *Merri-bek Council Plan 2025–2029* (Plan), guided by the *Community Vision 2025–2035* and prepared under the *Local Government Act 2020*, sets Council's priorities for the next four years across five key themes:

1. *Care for nature and climate resilience*
2. *Healthy and inclusive communities*
3. *A beautiful and liveable city*
4. *A thriving economy and culture*
5. *An engaging and responsible Council*

The Plan highlights the need to respond to the climate emergency by building community resilience to extreme weather, including severe storms, through sustainable infrastructure such as stormwater harvesting, rain gardens, and water quality projects that reduce flood risks and conserve water.

Floodplain and stormwater policy framework

Melbourne Water's [*Flood Management Strategy: Port Phillip and Westernport \(2021\)*](#) outlines the regional approach to drainage and floodplain management. The Strategy emphasises the need for accurate, fit-for-purpose mapping that uses the best available data and accounts for climate change.

The [*Managing Urban Stormwater: Improving Arrangements \(MUSIA\) – Closing the Loop*](#) (2021) report, jointly prepared by the State Government, Melbourne Water, and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), clarified stormwater management roles. Under this framework, Melbourne Water manages main drainage systems with catchments greater than 60 hectares, while Council is responsible for local drainage systems below that threshold.

Planning policy framework

Clause 13.03-1S of the *Merri-bek Planning Scheme* seeks to identify land affected by the one per cent Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) event (commonly known as the 1-in-100-year storm) to guide appropriate land use and development.

The *Merri-bek Planning Scheme* currently includes the Special Building Overlay – Schedule 1 (SBO1), which applies to areas where Melbourne Water is the main drainage authority. In contrast, Special Building Overlay – Schedule 2 (SBO2), proposed to be introduced through Amendment C196more to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme, applies to properties located within areas where Council is the local drainage authority. The Amendment was adopted by Council on 13 August 2025 and is currently awaiting approval from the Minister for Planning.

In areas covered by Melbourne Water's flood mapping, Melbourne Water acts as a Referral Authority for planning permit applications. Council, as the Responsible Authority, must consider Melbourne Water's advice and apply any recommended conditions when assessing and issuing permits. This process ensures that planning decisions appropriately reflect both Council's local drainage responsibilities and Melbourne Water's regional floodplain management role.

Council's local drainage and flood management program

Within the City's local drainage areas, Council uses a [Drainage Improvement Plan](#) to guide its capital works program for reduced stormwater overland flow risks. Examples for three completed projects are listed in the Table 1. Between 2023 and 2026, Council is investing \$60 million in its road and drainage program.

Table 1. Local drainage and flood management program

location	Summary	Completed Project
1. Lonsdale Street, Coburg	Council has completed a \$452,000 road reconstruction and upgrade works. The project delivered a new road and upgraded stormwater infrastructure. Passive irrigation collects runoff from the road and directs it to nearby trees.	
2. Kaumple Street, Pascoe Vale	Council has completed a \$670,000 drainage upgrade. These works addressed flooding issues by building a drainage detention system. A new pedestrian threshold prevents stormwater flowing into Kaumple Street.	
3. Clyde Court, Oak Park	Council has completed a \$261,000 drainage upgrade. These works extended the end of Clyde Court to Pascoe Vale Road. The works enhance the stormwater capacity of Clyde Street.	

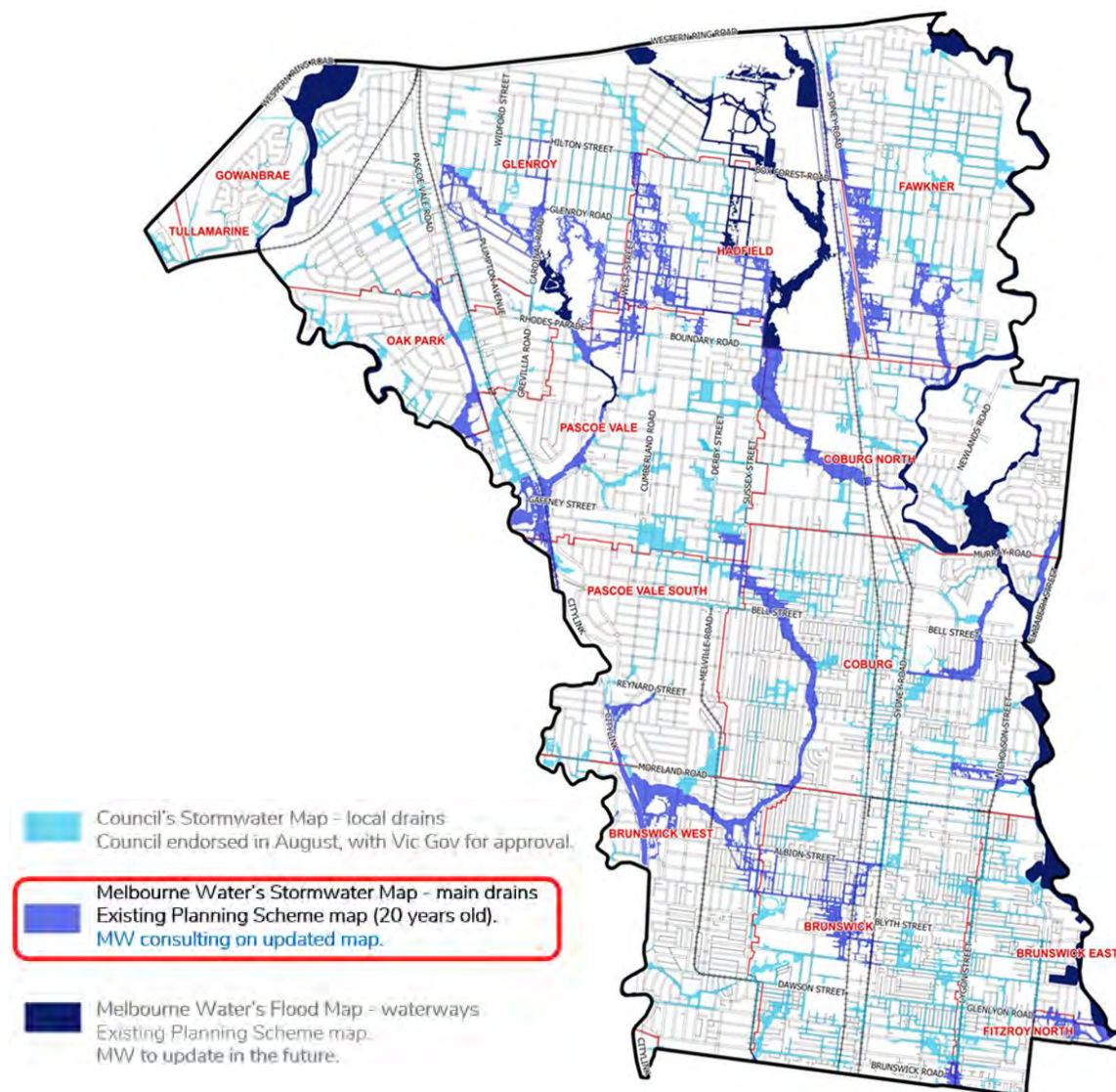
2. Background

Starting in 2021 and concluding in August 2025, Council undertook extensive work to prepare an urban stormwater map for its local drainage areas (SBO2). This work involved technical experts and MW to ensure a 'whole of catchment' modelling and mapping approach took place.

Several stages of community consultation were undertaken with affected landowners, including during the Amendment C196 more process, where an independent Planning Panel supported Council's methodology and outcomes.

Arising from Council's mapping, an integrated urban stormwater map now exists for the City's regional (SBO1) and local (SBO2) drainage areas. This municipal map is shown below (Figure 1.).

Figure 1: Combined Council and MW Merri-bek Map



Melbourne Flood Information Program

Melbourne Water has commenced a metropolitan-wide update of its stormwater maps to improve the identification of flood-prone areas. The first stage of the Greater Melbourne Flood Information Program (the Program) includes the municipalities of Yarra, Darebin, Glen Eira and Merri-bek.

To validate the accuracy of its mapping, Melbourne Water is inviting community feedback on past flooding events and recent changes to the built environment (such as new fences, landscaping, or structures) that may affect stormwater flows.

This initial stage of community engagement precedes a future State Government-led process to introduce the final MW maps into the Merri-bek Planning Scheme, as well as the schemes of other participating councils.

As part of this process, on 13 October 2025, Melbourne Water released draft stormwater maps for its main drainage areas within Merri-bek. These include:

- **Year 2100 flooding map** – the final version of this map is intended for the Merri-bek Planning Scheme. MW is currently working with the State Government to draft the accompanying planning controls.
- **Current flooding map** – this map is designed to inform emergency management planning by the Victoria State Emergency Service (VicSES).

Both maps include hazard mapping, showing where stormwater is deeper and/or moving faster. Higher hazard areas generally have less potential for development. The proposed planning controls that inform development in different hazard areas are yet to be released.

MW's current consultation on the Program relates only to main drainage areas in Merri-bek, which fall under MW's management. See Section 4 of this report for more about MW's consultation approach. MW will consider submissions before finalising the maps and starting a planning scheme amendment process.

State Government approach to flood mapping implementation

On 3 October 2025, the State Government announced a new State-led approach to facilitate the introduction of Melbourne Water's updated flood mapping into planning schemes across metropolitan Melbourne. This approach is intended to ensure consistency and coordination between floodplain management authorities, local governments, and the State.

While the announcement outlines the State's intention to lead the process, neither Melbourne Water nor the State Government has yet provided details on how the Planning Scheme amendment process will operate in practice. Key aspects such as timelines, governance arrangements, and consultation mechanisms remain unclear.

Melbourne Water's current consultation therefore provides an opportunity for Council to give feedback on the draft mapping and also on broader matters relating to Melbourne Water's main drainage responsibilities, floodplain management role, and the integration of the updated mapping into the Merri-bek Planning Scheme.

3. Draft submission

Council officers have prepared a submission in response to MW's consultation on the updated flood mapping program. The submission outlines key matters of importance to Merri-bek and provides recommendations to support a coordinated, transparent, and evidence-based approach to floodplain management.

A summary of the draft submission's main themes and recommendations is provided below, with the full submission included in **Attachment 1**.

Table 2. Summary of key themes and requests

No.	Theme	Summary requests
1	Community consultation	Council asks MW to visit all landowner-nominated sites and release its technical flood study to ensure the final <i>Year 2100 Flooding</i> map is accurate and its methodology is transparent.
2	Planning scheme amendment process	Council supports a ministerial-led planning scheme amendment process, underpinned by transparency and opportunities for public input before any final decision is made.
3	Drainage upgrades	Council seeks further information from MW about its long-term investment priorities for main drainage upgrades in Merri-bek to reduce flood hazards.

No.	Theme	Summary requests
4	Developer contributions	Council asks MW to provide details on how contributions collected in Merri-bek are allocated towards main drainage upgrade works that reduce flood risk.
5	Future map reviews	Council seeks clarity from MW on the timing, frequency, and funding arrangements for future flood map updates.
6	Local floodplain development plans	Council suggests that MW establish a proactive floodplain development planning program to provide land developers with clear guidance for achieving place-based outcomes that address flood hazards.
7	Plan for centres	Council suggests that MW prioritise the preparation of proactive floodplain development plans for the Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres.
8	Statutory planning	Council invites MW to clarify any proposed improvements to its referral processes for planning permits, including consideration of heritage implications.
9	Public open space upgrades	Council asks MW to clarify how its hazard mapping will inform floodplain management decisions for the design and delivery of new and upgraded parks in flood-affected areas.
10	Government and other authority land	Council asks MW to clarify how its hazard mapping is being shared and discussed with other public land managers and government agencies where their land is affected.

Community impact

MW has an existing urban stormwater map in the Merri-bek Planning Scheme (Planning Scheme). This map is shown by the mid-range **blue-coloured** area in Figure 1, and is known as the Special Building Overlay – Schedule 1 (SBO1) in the Planning Scheme. MW's current community engagement is for an updated version of this map. The updated map is affecting more properties and showing varying hazards.

MW will be introducing its updated map into the Planning Scheme via a [State Government-led process](#). Council's draft submission supports this approach and advocates for affected landowners to participate in this process.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

Council's submission to the MW mapping program supports the consideration of climate change impacts in the preparation of updated urban stormwater maps. This ensures that future flood modelling and management approaches reflect the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events.

Economic sustainability implications

Council's submission to the MW mapping program is enabling Merri-bek's efforts to ensure the City's future land use and development addresses urban stormwater hazards.

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

4. Community consultation

MW is facilitating community consultation and engagement for a draft urban stormwater map associated with its main drainage areas in Merri-bek.

This consultation includes MW:

- Using its social media platform to raise awareness.
- Mailing a brochure to affected properties.
- Publishing maps and supporting information on MW's [website](#).
- Hosting a webinar and information sessions to explain its maps and answer questions.
- Conducting door knocking for higher-hazard affected properties.
- Receiving telephone calls and emails.

This consultation gives an opportunity for affected landowners to comment on the maps and seek a map review if they have any concerns for their affected property.

Council is also invited to make a submission to MW as part of this process. Details of the submission are outlined in Section 3 of this report, and the draft submission is included in **Attachment 1**.

Public feedback is open until 5 December 2025.

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

MW is leading communication with the community about its stormwater (flood) mapping program. Information about this other authority-led consultation has been included on Council's website and social media platform, encouraging Merri-bek's affected landowners to participate in MW's process.

5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

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

6. Financial and resources implications

The 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 given to MW. The submission will be supported by a cover letter that seeks discussion on the matters contained in the submission.

Council officers will continue to monitor MW's progress and participate in briefings to ensure an understanding of MW's ongoing work. This includes:

- Any further community consultation with affected Merri-bek landowners.
- The development of planning scheme provisions to accompany the final map.
- The future State-led planning scheme amendment process.

Attachment/s

- 1** [↓](#) Draft Council Submission D25/362031

Council submission



Melbourne Water's mapping program for its main drainage areas in Merri-bek

November 2025



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.

Introduction

Council acknowledges Melbourne Water's (MW's) leadership as the regional drainage and floodplain management authority for metropolitan Melbourne. We support MW's work to update its stormwater (flood) map for Merri-bek's main drainage areas and welcome the chance to provide feedback on MW's Mapping Program.

Mapping 1-in-100-year storm events is essential. This information must be clear, shared, and used by the community, councils, and other authorities.

This submission supports MW's work in producing updated stormwater maps for its main drainage areas in Merri-bek and outlines our key asks – which primarily relate to transparency, community engagement, funding commitments, and clarity on how these maps will be maintained. A summary of these asks is in **Appendix 1**.

Background

In Merri-bek, MW's 2025 consultation is for its main drainage areas only. Council has separately completed consultation for its separate drainage areas, where it is the local drainage authority.

Council's own mapping was supported by MW and independent experts, with staged community engagement from 2021 to 2025. Figure 1 gives our engagement metrics.

Council's map is now designated under the *Building Regulations 2018* and will become part of the Merri-bek Planning Scheme (Planning Scheme) through Amendment C196, as Special Building Overlay Schedule 2 (SBO2). Council adopted C196 in August 2025 and has referred it to the State Government for final approval. Council has given its local catchment mapping data to MW.

Engagement Activities	
Time spent doing engagement	28 weeks
Letters and brochures sent	42,500
Visits to the council's website	2,500
Information sessions hosted	6
Telephone conversations	350
Face-to-face meetings	80
Email and website contributions	300
Site visits and walking tours	220

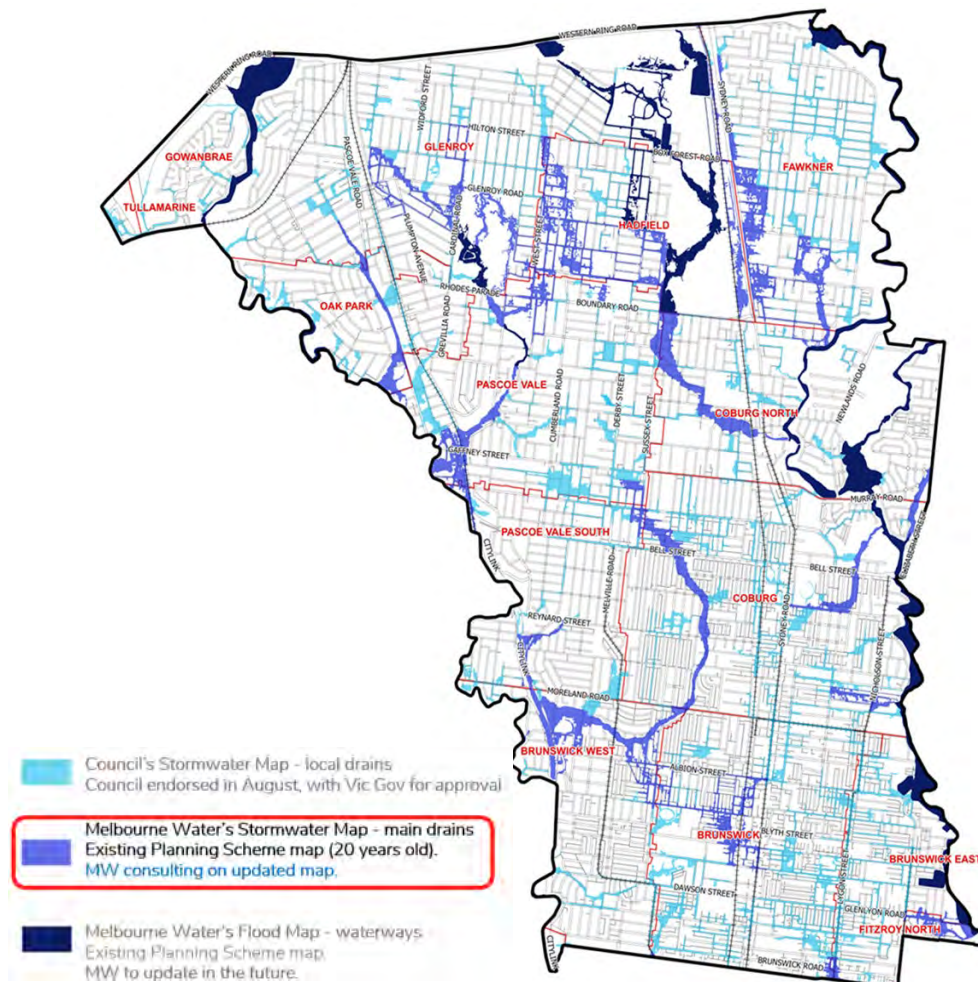
Figure 1: Merri-bek's Engagement Metrics

Map 1 shows combined Council and MW mapping in Merri-bek. It has three components:

- Council local drainage areas – local drainage mapping completed, adopted via Amendment C196 (SBO2), and now being used for building permits.
- MW main drainage areas – current community consultation ahead of replacing Special Building Overlay Schedule 1 (SBO1), first introduced 20 years ago.
- MW waterway floodplain areas – mapping in the Planning Scheme via a Land Subject to Inundation Overlay, which MW intends to review in the future.

Merri-bek City Council Submission | November 2025

Council also has a Drainage Improvement Plan guiding upgrades to its local drainage network. This plan reduces stormwater flood hazards where the Council is the drainage authority. Council uses this plan to inform its budgeting and capital works program for drainage works to be done.



1. Community consultation

Council's 2025 stormwater map was developed from staged community consultation over several years. Landowners had multiple opportunities to provide map input. We found that affected landowners valued Council's map review process for their nominated locations, especially along map edges where only small parts of properties were affected. In these cases, features like retaining walls or landscaping could only be confirmed through site visits, photographs, or survey plans. This review approach was also supported by an independent Planning Panel in 2025.

We encourage MW to continue working with affected landowners so the 'Year 2100 flooding' map can be checked at nominated locations. Doing this would facilitate improved community awareness for the map version, intended for future statutory use for land development decision-making.

Currently, it appears MW's consultation is geared to the 'Current flooding' map. Whilst we welcome MW's engagement approach, we recommend that all landowner-nominated sites be visited to confirm on-the-ground features that may refine the final 'Year 2100 flooding' map.

During Council's community engagement, we found it useful to release the technical flood study. Doing this helped affected landowners to understand the technical processes and decision-making that informed the map's creation.

Key asks

1. MW provides a written response that:

- o Indicates it will pursue a robust map review process so any affected Merri-bek landowner can have their property checked before the final 'Year 2100 flooding' map is used for land development decision-making.
- o Considers publicly releasing any technical flood study report that underpins its 'Year 2100 flooding' map.

2. Planning scheme amendment

Council has completed extensive engagement for its local drainage areas, leading to Amendment C196 (SBO2). With this done, we welcome MW's leadership in updating stormwater mapping for its main drainage areas.

On 3 October 2025, the State Government announced a new State-led approach to facilitate planning scheme amendments for MW's flood studies, stating that:

"We'll be working closely with floodplain management authorities and local governments to translate flood risk information into planning controls through a planning scheme amendment process."

Source: www.planning.vic.gov.au | [Updating maps and development controls to better manage flood risk](#)

Council supports the Minister for Planning acting as the Planning Authority for MW's program. A Minister-led process, backed by the Flood-related Amendments Standing Advisory Committee, has the potential to enable timely and transparent updates across metropolitan Melbourne.

However, to make this process equitable and inclusive, it should:

- Allow property owners, occupiers, councils, and authorities, to make submissions and present at a public hearing, using powers under section 20(5) of the Act.
- Require the committee's report to be published before the Minister for Planning decides.

Key asks**2. MW provides a written response that:**

- o Acknowledges Council's support for a Minister-led Planning Scheme amendment, with transparent hearings and reporting.
- o Allows councils to give input to any drafted Planning Scheme amendment.

3. Drainage upgrades

MW's mapping highlights higher hazard areas where land development could be more significantly affected. Council addresses "hot spots" in its own drainage area through a Drainage Improvement Plan. For MW's regional drainage area, we request more information on long-term upgrades to help reduce the mapped hazards. To this end, Council would support MW's advocacy for increased State Government investment in a more significant long-term drainage upgrade program for metropolitan Melbourne.

Key asks**3. MW provides a written response that:**

- o Informs Council of its drainage upgrade program, including locations, timing, and description of 'hazard reduction' works planned over the next 10 years in Merri-bek.
- o Advises how it might enhance its drainage upgrade program, to achieve more upgrades for greater 'hazard reduction' at more locations across metropolitan Melbourne.

4. Developer contributions

Council seeks transparency on how MW uses development contributions collected from Merri-bek subdivisions. To date, little information has been shared about how these funds support drainage upgrades for hazard reduction in Merri-bek's main drainage areas where MW is the drainage authority.

Key asks**4. MW provides a written response that informs how it:**

- o Allocates development contributions across metropolitan Melbourne.
- o Invests collected contributions from Merri-bek subdivisions back into local upgrades.

5. Future map reviews

Urban stormwater mapping needs regular updates to reflect changing land levels, guidelines, specifications, and data. MW is best placed to lead and fund this work, with support from the State

Government. Council believes MW and the State Government should fully fund future map reviews for all Merri-bek drainage areas, because:

- MW's floodplain management role covers all catchments in Merri-bek.
- Flood mapping should be the responsibility of the floodplain management authority.
- MW is both the statutory referral authority and the owner of 100-year flood maps, making it the floodplain management decision-maker for development in flood-affected areas.

With government support, MW should deliver and fully fund metropolitan flood mapping. Councils need to focus on their local drainage infrastructure responsibilities.

Key asks

5. MW provides a written response for its commitment to a regular map review and planning scheme amendment cycle for all maps, including clarity for:

- o Frequency and timing of reviews.
- o Funding commitments for future reviews for all Merri-bek catchments.

6. Local floodplain development plans

At present, flood risk is usually managed on a site-by-site basis at the planning permit stage, typically by requiring elevated finished floor levels. While this addresses individual applications, it results in a piecemeal approach that does not provide a forward-thinking, precinct-level floodplain management framework to support broader housing growth and development.

Unfortunately, the generic [Guidelines for Development in Flood Affected Areas \(Vic Gov. 2019\)](#) do not give enough place-based clarity for priority housing growth areas (including activity centres), where urban stormwater hazard needs to be carefully resolved for land development. In these areas, MW should lead the preparation of local floodplain development plans in collaboration with the State Government and with councils involved.

Key asks

6. MW provides a written response to it:

- o Exploring the scope (i.e. business case) of a local floodplain development plan program.
- o Advocating for State Government funding to support this program.

7. Floodplain development plan for Centres

The State Government is progressing a program to facilitate housing growth in areas close to transport and services. The Brunswick and Coburg Train and Tram Activity Centres, included in this program, are priority growth locations but are also significantly affected by floodplain management implications.

A tailored floodplain development plan would give clear direction for:

- Siting new or extended buildings to resolve any adverse floodplain management concerns, in locations where there are already many existing buildings.

- Any preferred locations and preferred cross-sectional design for basement entries, and their ramps from streets, to manage flood hazards.
- Achieving raised ground floor levels, whilst managing associated implications for building heights, which might otherwise impinge on other planning or building controls for development.
- Exploring the scope of transitional shopfront/commercial spaces to enable easy access between the public realm and raised building floors, in shopping streets and railway station precincts, where there are flood hazards at the public/private realm interface.

Key asks

7. MW provides a written response to it:

- o Leading the creation of a floodplain development plan for the Brunswick and Coburg Train and Tram Activity Centres.
- o If unable to lead for timely progress, provide clarity on how it will apply the State Government floodplain management guidelines for the listed topics in this submission, for managing the flood hazards in these Centres.

8. Statutory planning

Council, as the Responsible Authority for the Planning Scheme, regularly works with MW, which is a Referral Authority for considering planning permit applications on flood-affected land. This involves Council receiving applications for proposals affected by a floodplain management control in the Planning Scheme and giving them to MW. MW's decision-making and turnaround times influence Council's ability to issue permits and work constructively with applicants. Council has noticed some issues with:

- Applicants needing to contact MW for clarification.
- Inconsistent MW referral responses.
- MW's appearance at VCAT, when its conditions are challenged.

Council understands the final 'Yr 2100 flooding' map will be added to the Planning Scheme, with new provisions still to come. The map is expected to overlap with other overlays, such as the Heritage Overlay. Protecting heritage significance during development is important, including floors and features that could be affected by flooding. Council asks MW to advise how heritage affects its floodplain assessments, for a balanced approach that's consistent with the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* objective to conserve and enhance places of historic interest.

Key asks

8. MW provides a written response that explains how it is:

- o Improving customer contact for permit applicants.
- o Improving consistency of advice to councils and applicants.
- o Enabling its participation in VCAT hearings.
- o Considering floodplain management implications for heritage places.

9. Public open space

Council is a public land manager for the city's open space network. Some of this network is affected by the MW map. Council wants to know how MW's hazard mapping affects its floodplain management input to public works projects that aim to improve the city's open space network.

Key asks

9. MW provide a written response to explain how its hazard mapping relates to Council's public open space networks, with a focus on intended floodplain management decision-making for public works.

10. Government and other authority land

MW's hazard mapping shows that higher hazards exist for the central section of the stormwater overland flow paths within MW's main drainage catchments. Existing land uses in and near these locations may include schools, public housing, and other publicly used buildings.

Council appreciates that MW is sharing its hazard mapping with landowners. Some affected land will be managed by a government department or another authority. More information about 'hazard awareness raising' and the need for new/updated site emergency management planning for these publicly affected properties would be appreciated.

Key asks

10. MW provide a written response to clarify how its hazard mapping is being shared and discussed with government departments and other authorities, where their land is affected by the map.

Conclusion

Council supports MW's program and 2025 community engagement. We ask that MW provide a written response to the key asks described in this submission, which are summarised in **Appendix 1**.

Merri-bek City Council Submission | November 2025

Appendix 1 – Summary of Key Asks

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Merri-bek City Council Submission | November 2025

Merri-bek City Council – Summary of Key Asks	
Theme	Key Asks
1. Community consultation	MW provides a written response that: - Indicates it will pursue a robust map review process so any affected Merri-bek landowner can have their property checked before the final 'Year 2100 Flooding' map is used for land development decision-making. - Considers publicly releasing any technical flood study report that underpins its 'Year 2100 Flooding' map.
2. Planning scheme amendment	MW provides a written response that: - Acknowledges Council's support for a Minister-led Planning Scheme Amendment, with transparent hearings and reporting. - Allows councils to give input to any drafted Planning Scheme Amendment.
3. Drainage upgrades	MW provides a written response that: - Informs Council of its drainage upgrade program, including locations, timing, and description of 'hazard reduction' works planned over the next 10 years in Merri-bek. - Advises how it might enhance its drainage upgrade program, to achieve more upgrades for greater 'hazard reduction' at more locations across metropolitan Melbourne.
4. Developer contributions	MW provides a written response that informs how it: - Allocates development contributions across metropolitan Melbourne. - Invests collected contributions from Merri-bek subdivisions back into local upgrades.
5. Future map reviews	MW provides a written response for its commitment to a regular map review and planning scheme amendment cycle for all maps, including clarity for: - Frequency and timing of reviews. - Funding commitments for future reviews for all Merri-bek catchments.
6. Local floodplain development plans	MW provides a written response to it: - Exploring the scope (i.e. business case) of a local floodplain development plan program. - Advocating for State Government funding to support this program.
7. Floodplain development plan for Centres	MW provides a written response to it: - Leading the creation of a floodplain development plan for the Brunswick and Coburg Train and Tram Activity Centres. - If unable to lead for timely progress, provide clarity on how it will apply the State Government floodplain management guidelines for the listed topics in this submission, in the Centres.
8. Statutory planning	MW provides a written response that explains how it is: - Improving customer contact for permit applicants. - Improving consistency of advice to councils and applicants. - Enabling its participation in VCAT hearings. - Considering floodplain management implications for heritage places.
9. Public open space	MW provide a written response to explain how its hazard mapping relates to Council's public open space networks, with a focus on floodplain management decision-making implications for public works.
10. Government and other authority land	MW provide a written response to clarify how its hazard mapping is being shared and discussed with government departments and other authorities, where their land is affected by the map.

7.3 AMENDMENT C235MBEK - REVISED PUBLIC OPEN SPACE CONTRIBUTION RATE FOR THE PLANNING SCHEME - GATEWAY 2

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade
City Design and Economy

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the significant impact of the open space reserve in facilitating the delivery of critical open spaces to meet the needs of a rapidly growing Merri-bek population.
2. Considers all submissions made on or before the last date of exhibition of Amendment C235mbek to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme (Amendment), relating to a revised public open space contribution rate, in accordance with section 22(1) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (Vic) (Act).
3. Considers any late submissions received after the last date of exhibition but on or before the Council meeting date (12 November 2025), in accordance with section 22(2) of the Act.
4. In relation to all submissions which were considered by Council:
 - a) Using its powers as a Planning Authority under section 23 of Act, refers those submissions to an independent Planning Panel appointed by the Minister under Part 8 of the Act.
 - b) Requests that the Minister for Planning appoint an independent Planning Panel under Part 8 of the Act to consider all submissions received in relation to Amendment C235mbek.
5. Endorses the responses to submissions in Attachment 2 to this report to form the basis of Council's submission to the independent Planning Panel.
6. Authorises the Director, Place and Environment to:
 - a) Present submissions to the Planning Panel, adopting a position of advocacy for the Amendment, generally in accordance with this report and Attachment 2.
 - b) Make minor changes to Amendment C235mbek and to give direction on issues that arise during the future panel hearing in response to expert evidence, submissions, and the planning panel.

REPORT

Executive summary

Merri-bek is growing, with its population forecast to increase by approximately 49,000 residents (a 28.5 per cent growth rate) between 2021 and 2036. Recent Victorian Government planning reforms are expected to facilitate further development and further increase population growth across the municipality. This growth will place greater demand on Council's existing public open space network.

Council's *Merri-bek Open Space Strategy* (MOSS) identifies the need for more high-quality, safe, and inclusive public open spaces to meet the needs of the growing community. A key implementation action of MOSS is to update the public open space contribution rate to ensure new development helps fund the creation and upgrades of open spaces across Merri-bek.

Amendment C235mbek (the Amendment), authorised by the Minister for Planning under delegation on 1 August 2025, proposes to introduce an updated city-wide public open space contribution rate of 8.68 per cent.

The updated rate is supported by detailed technical analysis demonstrating its strategic and economic justification. Incorporating the new rate into the Merri-bek Planning Scheme will ensure developers apply the updated rate at subdivision (for developments of more than two dwellings), providing essential funding to expand and improve Merri-bek's open space network.

The Amendment was publicly exhibited from 4 September to 13 October 2025, with seven submissions received. Two of these submissions raised concerns, and five supported the proposal or expressed no concerns.

Key themes in submissions were about housing impacts, changing the levy rate, analysis for the levy rate, planning permits, enabling open space, enabling community benefits, consistency with other councils, strategic alignment, specific sites, and transitional provisions. The themes for each submission are shown in **Attachment 1**.

This report recommends that Council consider all submissions received on Amendment C235mbek, refer them to an Independent Planning Panel appointed by the Minister for Planning, and endorse the proposed responses in Attachment 2 to form the basis of Council's submission.

A successful outcome for Amendment C235mbek will enable Council's ability to meet community expectations for the City's evolving open space network and its infrastructure.

Previous Council Decisions

Build-To-Rent Exemptions from Open Space Contributions – 9 July 2025

That the City of Merri-bek Mayor writes to Premier Jacinta Allan and Minister for Planning Sonya Kilkenny, outlining Council's strong opposition to the current exemption from public open space contributions enjoyed by Built to Rent developments and to request immediate review of the State Planning controls to ensure all developments contribute to open space.

Amendment C235mbek – Revised Public Open Space Contribution Rate for the Planning Scheme – Decision Gateway 1 – 12 March 2025

That Council:

- 1. Endorses the report Merri-bek Public Open Space Contributions Refresh: Open Space Contributions Schedule (HillPDA, 4 February 2025), as shown in Attachment 1 as part of Amendment C235mbek.*
- 2. Seeks authorisation from the Minister for Planning to prepare Merri-bek Planning Scheme Amendment C235mek in accordance with Section 8A of the Planning and Environment Act 1987.*
- 3. Subject to the Minister's authorisation, prepares Amendment C235mbek, generally in accordance with the documentation provided at Attachment 1.*
- 4. Exhibits Amendment C235mbek in accordance with Section 19 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and as outlined in the Consultation section of this report.*
- 5. Authorises the Director Place and Environment to make changes to the Amendment prior to exhibition based on any conditions imposed in the authorisation granted by the Minister for Planning and to make administrative changes to correct errors and grammatical changes.*

Amendment C231mbek – Introduction of the Moving Around Merri-bek Transport Strategy and Merri-bek Open Space Strategy – Decision Gateway 3 – Consideration of Panel Report and Decision on the Amendment – 12 February 2025

That Council:

1. *Notes the findings and recommendations of the C231mbek Panel included at Attachment 1 to this report.*
2. *Adopts Amendment C231mbek to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme pursuant to Section 29(1) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987, as exhibited and with the changes recommended by the planning panel and discussed at Section 3 of this report and shown at Attachment 2.*
3. *Submits Amendment C231mbek to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme to the Minister for Planning for approval, pursuant to section 31 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987.*
4. *Endorses the updated Open Space Technical Report and 20-Year Open Space Projects List as shown at Attachments 2 and 3 to support the open space contribution rate review.*
5. *Notes that the Open Space Strategy will be updated with the corrected Open Space Framework Plan as shown at Attachment 2.*

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

That Council:

1. *Endorses as final the Merri-bek Open Space Strategy (Attachment 1) and associated Action Plan (Attachment 2), with the following changes to the Action Plan:*
 - a) *Insert a new action for 2024/25 in the Action Plan under Direction 1: Providing parks close to home and enhancing existing open spaces after action 1.9 to “Prepare a municipal-wide view of priority of gap areas in addition to the suburb by suburb view, in preparation for the refresh of the Park Close to Home Framework”*
 - b) *Amend action 1.10 listed for 2025 to 2029 under Direction 1: Providing parks close to home and enhancing existing open spaces so that it reads “Refresh the Park Close to Home Framework to guide land acquisition and prioritisation of projects across Merri-bek, taking into account the Open Space Background Technical Report, the Merri-bek Strategic Property Framework, consideration of the Merri-bek Planning Scheme and ensuring the framework is practical to apply.”*
 - c) *Amend action 4.13 listed for 2024/25 in the Action Plan under Direction 4: Providing open space for everyone to add “d) consideration of whether additional land is required under the Park Close to Home Framework for new sporting facilities.”*
 - d) *Insert a new action for 2024/25 in the Action Plan under Enabling Actions after action 6.8 to “Develop and present to Council principles and a procedure to govern the management of the Public Resort and Recreation Land Fund so that it holds adequate funding to support significant strategic property purchases.”*
2. *Authorises the Director City Infrastructure to make minor editorial changes in finalising the documents for publication, including graphical design and numbering of actions, that do not change the meaning of the Strategy or Action Plan.*
3. *Notes the Community Engagement Report (Attachment 3) detailing the methodology and findings of community engagement, including from the Hearing of Submissions, on the Merri-bek Open Space Strategy and Action Plan and thanks the community for their participation throughout the process of preparing the Open Space Strategy.*

4. *Endorses the approach to open space planning represented in the Open Space Technical Background Report (Attachment 4) and 20-year Project List (Attachment 5), noting that these documents align with the Open Space Strategy and Action Plan.*

...

1. Policy context

Council Plan

The previous *Council Plan 2021-2025* had a major initiative to implement a new *Merri-bek Open Space Strategy* (MOSS). This included preparing a revised open space levy. This initiative was supported by the *Council Action Plan 2024-2025*, which had Action 223 to start a planning scheme amendment for a new open space levy.

The continuing need for a revised open space levy was taken into the *Council Plan 2025-2029*, which has a major initiative to prioritise sustainable, climate resilient, equitable, finance management to ensure financial sustainability and effective use of resources and robust decision making. This initiative is supported by the *Council Action Plan 2025-2026*, which has Action 76 to update Merri-bek's open space developer contribution model.

The Merri-bek Open Space Strategy (MOSS)

In 2024, the Council endorsed the new MOSS to give direction for developing the local open space network. The MOSS was accompanied by a technical report with data and analysis for open space gap areas. The report also has a suite of projects to service the City's residential and worker population growth for the next 20 years.

Amendment C231mbek

Amendment C231mbek, endorsed by Council on 12 February 2025 and approved by the Minister for Planning on 7 August 2025, implements the strategic directions of the MOSS into the Merri-bek Planning Scheme. The Amendment came into effect on 2 October 2025, following publication of the notice of approval in the Victorian Government Gazette.

The Merri-bek Planning Scheme (Scheme)

At Clause 02.04 (Strategic Framework Plans) of the Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) within the Scheme, an Open Space Framework Plan identifies the hierarchy of open spaces and highlights gaps in network coverage across the municipality.

At the State Planning Policy Framework level, Clause 19.02-6R (Open space – Metropolitan Melbourne) seeks to:

“Develop a network of local open spaces that are accessible and of high-quality and include opportunities for new local open spaces through planning for urban redevelopment projects.”

Clause 53.01 (Public Open Space Contribution and Subdivision) specifies when a public open space contribution is required and allows the Planning Scheme to set the applicable contribution rate through a local schedule.

Amendment C235mbek proposes only to update the contribution rate specified in the Schedule to Clause 53.01. All other provisions determining when and how contributions are collected remain unchanged and are established by the Victorian Government through the Victoria Planning Provisions (VPPs).

The Subdivision Act 1988

The *Subdivision Act 1988* provides that a council may require a public open space contribution where the need for additional open space can be demonstrated, having regard to the existing supply of open space and the anticipated demand generated by new development.

Public open space contributions can only be collected at the subdivision stage. In most residential redevelopment scenarios, subdivision occurs after the development has been approved for construction.

Application

In Victoria, when a single dwelling is redeveloped into three or more dwellings, a public open space contribution is required. This contribution is determined during the subdivision approval process and is paid before a Statement of Compliance is issued. The amount payable is based on the contribution rate and the land's site value.

Built-to-Rent (BTR) developments, which remain under single ownership, are not subject to public open space contributions. Although BTR developments increase population density and demand for public open space, they do not trigger a subdivision and therefore do not generate an open space contribution. This represents a State Government policy gap and is a separate matter from progress for C235mbek.

2. Background

Council currently collects open space contributions from new development as set out in the Schedule to Clause 53.01 (Public Open Space Contribution and Subdivision) of the Planning Scheme. Existing contribution rates in the Scheme vary by suburb, ranging from 2.5 per cent in Brunswick West to 6.8 per cent in Coburg. These contributions are collected at the time land is subdivided. and are used to fund new and improved public open spaces across the City.

Open space contributions go into a city-wide fund, which supports projects that create new parks, upgrade existing open spaces, and enhance local amenity. These collected contributions enable Council to deliver an expanded and improved open space network for a rapidly growing community.

Examples of projects delivered through this funding are shown in Images 1 to 3.

Image 1. Bulleke-bek Park. West Street, Brunswick



Image 2. Citadel Park. Glenroy



Size: 1,390 sqm. Properties acquired: 1. Components: Playground, picnic facilities and BBQs, open grass area, landscaping, water play, exercise station.

Image 3. Garrong Park. Tinning Street, Brunswick



Size: 2,000 sqm. Properties acquired: 1. Components: Playground, public toilet, picnic facilities and BBQs, open grass area, landscaping.

The existing public open space contribution rates were established more than 10 years ago. During this time, Merri-bek has grown rapidly, with its population forecast to increase by approximately 49,000 residents (a 28.5% growth rate) between 2021 and 2036. Recent State Government planning reforms are expected to facilitate further development and accelerate population growth across the municipality. This growth will place a greater demand on Council's existing public open space network.

In response, Council prepared the Merri-bek Open Space Strategy (MOSS), which was endorsed in April 2024 following extensive community engagement. The MOSS provides the strategic basis and justification for reviewing the Planning Scheme's existing public open space contribution rates. A key implementation action of the MOSS is to update the contribution rate to ensure new development helps fund the creation and improvement of open spaces across Merri-bek.

To support this process, technical experts were engaged to undertake the review and recommend an updated city-wide contribution rate.

It is noted that there is currently no Victorian Government guidance for determining or reviewing public open space contribution rates. Councils are instead guided by the *Subdivision Act 1988*, the Victoria Planning Provisions, and recommendations of Planning Panels when developing or updating contribution rates.

Amendment C235mbek

In March 2025, Council resolved to seek authorisation from the Minister for Planning to prepare and exhibit an amendment to update the open space contribution rate.

The Amendment proposes to introduce a new city-wide contribution rate of 8.68%, implementing a key action of the Merri-bek Open Space Strategy. The Strategy and its accompanying technical report (including a project list) provided the evidence base to inform the updated rate at Clause 53.01 of the Merri-bek Planning Scheme.

The new rate supports housing and population growth by ensuring adequate funding for an expanded, high-quality open space network. The importance of strengthening this network has been further reinforced by recent Victorian Government housing reforms.

On 1 August 2025, the Minister for Planning (under delegation) authorised Council to prepare and exhibit Amendment C235mbek. The Amendment was publicly exhibited from 4 September to 13 October 2025, with seven submissions received. Further details of this process are discussed in Section 4 of this report.

3. Issues

Submission themes and recommended responses

Seven submissions were received. Two submissions raised concerns, and five supported the proposal or expressed no concerns. The redacted submissions are available from Council's website at the [C235mbek webpage](#).

Attachment 1 gives a matrix showing the themes for each submission. **Attachment 2** gives a summary of each submission, with recommended responses. The recommended response for each theme is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Responses to themes in submissions

Theme no. & name	Description of the issue raised	Proposed response
1. Housing impacts	The relationship between the new rate and housing needs.	The proposal will lead to an enhanced public open space network, enabling positive effects on liveability. The Victorian government is delivering a suite of changes to the planning system. The government has said these changes aim to make it faster and easier to build more homes. Refer to a planning panel.
2. Change to the levy rate	The new rate is greater than the existing rates.	Technical exports did an analysis that informed the proposal. The city-wide rate is associated with a city-wide public open space network. The current levy rates will continue until a new rate is in the Planning Scheme. Refer to a planning panel.
3. Analysis for the levy rate	The relationship between the new rate and the proposed open space needs.	Technical exports did a robust analysis to inform the proposed levy rate. The HillPDA P/L report describes the analysis and shows how the levy rate was determined. The Mesh P/L report describes the apportionment method. The results of this method are in the HillPDA P/L report. Refer to a planning panel
4. Planning Permits	Permit application fees should be reduced, and some permits should be fast-tracked.	Permit application and MPL fees are established by Victorian legislation. Many factors, including the quality, quantity, and complexity, inform the timeliness of the Council's planning permit decision-making. In 2024-25, the Council's average time for permit decision-making was better than the metro average. More information about planning permit reporting is on a Victorian Government webpage. Council manages eligible applications through a VicSmart process and has its own fast-track mechanism for some other proposals that do not qualify for VicSmart. Refer to a planning panel.
5. Enabling open space	The new rate needs to enable more and better open space.	The proposal is enabling an appropriate contribution rate and has been prepared to enable the delivery of open space. Refer to a planning panel.
6. Enabling community benefits	The new rate needs to enable benefits for open space users.	The proposal is enabling an appropriate contribution rate and has been prepared to enable various community benefits. Refer to a planning panel.

Theme no. & name	Description of the issue raised	Proposed response
7. Consistency with other councils	The new rate needs to be consistent with other councils who have done similar.	The proposal is for a new contribution rate that is comparable to updated rates established by other councils, including Yarra (8.65 per cent), Glen Eira (8.3 per cent), and Monash (7.61 per cent). Refer to a planning panel.
8. Strategic alignment	The new rate needs to be informed by a current open space strategy.	The proposal is aligned with the Council's new Open Space Strategy, which highlights the need for a new levy rate to help improve the City's public open space network. Refer to a planning panel.
9. Specific Site	The new rate needs to be reasonable for specific sites.	The proposal is for a city-wide rate that applies to all sites being subdivided. This includes large infill/opportunity sites that are being subdivided.
10. Transitional provisions	The need for transition provisions in the planning scheme should be considered.	Any new rate only comes into effect after the proposal has been endorsed by Council and approved by the Victorian Government.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

The proposed contribution rate does not generate adverse climate and environmental sustainability implications. Instead, the proposed rate will enable Council to more effectively fund public open space acquisitions and infrastructure works, which help to improve stormwater quality, enable urban greening and sustain local parklands for a changing community.

Legal and risk considerations

The proposed contribution rate will replace existing rates in the Merri-bek Planning Scheme. The existing rates will stay in the Scheme and continue to be used until they are replaced.

The Planning Scheme is a legal instrument that prompts action by land developers when a planning permit is required or issued. Including the proposed contribution rate in the Planning Scheme will retain a statutory obligation for land subdividers to make a fair contribution to Merri-bek's public open space network.

Human rights consideration

The implications of this report have been assessed against the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. Notice for Amendment C235mbek has been done. The proposed change to the public open space contribution rate will not limit or interfere with any Human Rights, including 'Section 13: The right to privacy and reputation', 'Section 18: The right to take part in public life', and 'Section 20: Property rights', because Amendment C235:

- Is changing the public open space contribution rate Council's ability to service the needs of landowners, workers and visitors to Merri-bek.
- Is not depriving any legal or proprietary interest in land, or the ability to use and develop land.
- It is not introducing any new provisions into the Planning Scheme. Instead, it is updating an existing provision for the payment of developer contributions when land is subdivided.

- Has enabled public exhibition of the proposal. Submitters can express their concerns at a future independent planning panel.

Notwithstanding the above, the proposed contribution rate is implementing the MOSS. A rigorous engagement process was done to inform the development of the draft Open Space Strategy and draft Action Plan. The community consultation on these draft documents provided further opportunity for people to give feedback before Council endorsed the MOSS in 2024.

Gender impact consideration

The change proposed by the amendment is revising an existing public open space contribution rate in the Planning Scheme and implementing Council's endorsed MOSS. In this way, Amendment C235mbek is improving the Council's ability to fund future open space land acquisitions and infrastructure works for all genders.

4. Community consultation and engagement

Public exhibition of Amendment C235mbek occurred following conditional authorisation from the Minister for Planning, which delegated authority to Council to exhibit the proposed 8.68 per cent public open space contribution rate. The Amendment was publicly exhibited from 4 September to 13 October 2025.

Following Section 19 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (the Act), notice of the amendment was given to the relevant:

- Ministers
- Victorian Government departments
- Public authorities
- Abutting councils.

To comply with other notice requirements in Section 19 of the Act and to reach the wider community and relevant stakeholders, the following was also done.

- Public notice in the Government Gazette.
- Public notice in the Herald Sun and The Age newspapers.
- Public notice on the Council's website as a news item.
- Public notice on the Council's social media platform.
- Direct notice to peak land development industry bodies.
- Direct notice to land surveying firms.
- Direct notice to other land development consultants.
- Direct notice to consultants acting for recent planning permit applicants or involved in pre-application discussions.
- Giving all relevant information on Council's [C235mbek webpage](#). Information was also available from a [Victorian Government webpage](#).

Under section 19(1A) of the Act, it was impractical to individually notify owners and occupiers throughout the municipality of changes proposed under Section 3 of this report.

6. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

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

7. Financial and resources implications

Financial

Administrative costs associated with the processing of the amendment will be met within the base budget of the Strategic Planning Unit.

Resources

The amendment will have minimal impact on Council's resources because Council already has processes in place to administer the collection and use of developer contributions for public open space.

8. Implementation

C235mbek Amendment process

Now that C235mbek's public exhibition is complete, Council can now consider the received submissions and request the appointment of a planning panel by the Minister for unresolved submissions.

A Council decision to consider adopting Amendment C235mbek happens after the panel's report has been released and considered. This is known as Gateway 3. Then, only after adopting the final C235mbek proposal can Council pursue the Minister's approval to include a new levy rate in the Planning Scheme.

The Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) oversees the amendment process on behalf of the Minister. This means DTP must also be satisfied if the amendment is to be approved by the Minister in the future.

Given the technical complexity of reviewing and updating the levy rate, it will be important for Council's developer-contribution expert witnesses to participate in the independent planning panel process. Doing this ensures the panel can hear from these experts and their responses to submitter concerns.

The following timeline is anticipated for the ongoing C235mbek process. It is approximate only and subject to scheduling after the panel has been appointed by the Minister:

- Directions Hearing: week starting 26 January 2026
- Panel Hearing: week starting 23 February 2026
- Gateway 3 Council Report: mid 2026.

Attachment/s

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|------------|
| 1 | Submission Themes Matrix | D25/483511 |
| 2 | Summary of Submissions | D25/473843 |

Submission Number	Submission Themes											Supportive / No Concerns	Not supportive
	1. Housing impacts	2. Changing the levy rate	3. Analysis for the levy rate	4. Planning Permits	5. Enabling open space	6. Enabling community benefits	7. Consistency with other councils	8. Strategic alignment	9. Specific sites	10. Transitional provisions	No specified themes		
1	X	X	X	X									X
2					X	X						X	
3		X	X				X	X				X	
4											X	X	
5											X	X	
6					X							X	
7		X	X						X	X			X

Merri-bek Planning Scheme Amendment C235mbek | Summary of Submissions | October 2025

Introduction

This document gives a summary of submissions. Most column headings are self-explanatory. The following is for those columns where more information helps to explain the column's content.

SUBMISSION TYPE	SUMMARY OF SUBMISSION	THEMES	RESPONSE	RECOMMENDATION
This column gives the type of submission, using the following options: Supportive / No concerns (Submission gives general support for the amendment, and no specific change is requested.) or Supportive, and a change is requested (Submission gives general support for the amendment, and requests a specific change) or Not supportive (Submission does not support the amendment, and no specific change is requested.) or Not supportive, and a change is requested (Submission does not support the amendment, and requests a specific change)	This column gives a concise summary of each submission, including any requests for changes to the amendment. The summaries highlight the themes in each submission. Each theme represents a main topic of commentary. Refer to individual submissions for more details.	This column gives the name of each theme for each submission. Below is a list of all the themes for all the submissions:	This column gives a summary response to each submission.	This column gives a recommended Council response to each submission.

Summary of Submissions

SUB NO.	AFFECTED PROPERTY	SUBMISSION TYPE	SUMMARY OF SUBMISSION	THEMES	RESPONSE	RECOMMENDATION
1	N/A	Not supportive	1. Changing the levy rate The new levy rate is greater than the existing rates and is an impost on the development industry. 2. Analysis for the levy rate The provision of services that benefit those who pay has not been considered. 3. Housing impacts Analysis for the new rate has not considered market impacts. 4. Planning Permits Planning permit application fees and the Metropolitan Planning Levy (MPL) need to be reviewed. Also, consider fast-tracking development proposals in locations where the contribution is proposed.	Changing the levy rate Analysis for the levy rate Housing impacts Planning Permits	Changing the levy rate Not agreed. Technical experts did an analysis that informed the proposal. The city-wide rate is associated with a city-wide public open space network. The current levy rates will continue until a new rate is in the Planning Scheme. Analysis for the levy rate Not agreed. Technical experts did a robust analysis to inform the proposed levy rate. The HillPDA P/L report describes the analysis and shows how the levy rate was determined. The Mesh P/L report describes the apportionment method. The results of this method are in the HillPDA P/L report. These reports were available when the proposal was exhibited. Housing impacts Not agreed. The proposal will lead to an enhanced public open space network, enabling positive effects on liveability. The Victorian government is delivering a suite of changes to the planning system. The government has said these changes aim to make it faster and easier to build more homes. Planning Permits Not agreed. Permit application and MPL fees are established by Victorian legislation. Many factors, including the quality, quantity, and complexity, inform the timeliness of Council's planning permit decision-making. In 2024/25, Council's average time for permit decision-making was better than the metro average. More information about planning permit reporting is on a Victorian Government webpage. Council manages eligible applications through a VicSmart process and has its own fast-track mechanism for some other proposals that do not qualify for VicSmart.	No change proposed. Refer submission to an independent planning panel.

Merri-bek Planning Scheme Amendment C235mbek | Summary of Submissions | October 2025

SUB NO.	AFFECTED PROPERTY	SUBMISSION TYPE	SUMMARY OF SUBMISSION	THEMES	RESPONSE	RECOMMENDATION
2	N/A	Supportive / No concerns	1. Enable open space An appropriate contribution rate can deliver adequate open space in the face of population growth and housing targets. 2. Enable community benefits An appropriate contribution rate secures meaningful community benefits for urban amenity, mitigating the urban heat island effect, enhancing biodiversity, and strengthening opportunities for connection to nature. Also, formal and passive recreational opportunities for improving health, well-being, and overall liveability.	Enable open space Enable community benefit	Enable open space Agreed. The proposal is enabling an appropriate contribution rate and has been prepared to enable the delivery of open space. Enable community benefit Agreed. The proposal is enabling an appropriate contribution rate and has been prepared to enable various community benefits.	No change proposed. Refer submission to an independent planning panel.
3	N/A	Supportive / No concerns	1. Consistent with other councils The proposed rate is consistent with recent updates to comparable metro councils. 2. Analysis for the levy rate The proposed rate is supported by a robust evidence base, informed by population growth data, worker forecasts and a well-constructed apportionment method. 3. Strategic Alignment The proposed rate is aligned with the Council's Open Space Strategy. 4. Changing the levy rate By replacing outdated rates, the proposal will enable the Council to better plan, fund, and deliver open space improvements	Consistent with other councils Analysis for the levy rate Strategic alignment Changing the levy rate	Consistent with other councils Agreed. The proposal is comparable to updated rates established by other councils, including Yarra (8.65%), Glen Eira (8.3%), and Monash (7.61%). Analysis for the levy rate Agreed. Technical exports did a robust analysis to inform the proposed levy rate. The HillPDA P/L report describes the analysis and shows how the levy rate was determined. The Mesh P/L report describes the apportionment method. The results of this method are in the HillPDA P/L report. Strategic Alignment Agreed. The proposal is aligned with the Council's new Open Space Strategy, which highlights the need for a new levy rate to help improve the city's public open space network. Change the levy rate Agreed. Technical exports did an analysis that informed the proposal. The city-wide rate is associated with a city-wide public open space network. The current levy rates will continue until a new rate is in the Planning Scheme.	No change proposed. Refer submission to an independent planning panel.
4	N/A	Supportive / No concerns	The submission was brief and expressed no concerns	No specified themes	Acknowledgement provided	No change proposed. Refer submission to an independent planning panel.
5	N/A	Supportive / No concerns	The submission was brief and expressed no concerns	No specified themes	Acknowledgement provided	No change proposed. Refer submission to an independent planning panel.
6	N/A	Supportive / No concerns	1. Enable open space The initiative will assist in the provision of improvements to open space.	Enable open space	Enable open space Agreed. The proposal is enabling an appropriate contribution rate and has been prepared to enable the delivery of open space.	No change proposed. Refer submission to an independent planning panel.
7	N/A	Not supportive	1. Changing the levy rate The new rate is excessive. 2. Analysis for the levy rate The amendment material does not provide adequate justification for the proposed rate. 3. Specific sites The new rate is especially excessive for a large infill/opportunity site. 4. Transitional provisions Transitional provisions should be included.	Changing the levy rate Analysis for the levy rate Specific sites Transitional provisions	Changing the levy rate Not agreed. Technical exports did an analysis that informed the proposal. The city-wide rate is associated with a city-wide public open space network.	

Merri-bek Planning Scheme Amendment C235mbek | Summary of Submissions | October 2025

Analysis for the levy rate Not agreed. Technical exports did a robust analysis to inform the proposed levy rate. The HillPDA P/L report describes the analysis and shows how the levy rate was determined. The Mesh P/L report describes the apportionment method. The results of this method are in the HillPDA P/L report. These reports were available when the proposal was exhibited. Specific sites Not agreed. The proposal is aligned with the Council's new Open Space Strategy, which highlights the need for a new levy rate to help improve the city's public open space network. Transitional provisions Not agreed. The current levy rates will continue until a new rate is in the Planning Scheme.	No change proposed. Refer submission to an independent planning panel.
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7.4 PROPOSED SALE OF COUNCIL LAND - 10 MURRELL STREET, GLENROY

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade

Property

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the five submissions received in relation to the proposed sale of Council land at 10 Murrell Street, Glenroy, and the advice set out in this report.
2. Endorses the proposed sale of the land by a public process.
3. Writes to all submitters thanking them for their submissions and informing them of Council's decision.
4. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to effect the sale.
5. Directs the net proceeds of the sale to the Significant Projects Reserve.

REPORT

Executive summary

The sale of the former kindergarten site at 10 Murrell Street, Glenroy, was endorsed as a funding source to contribute to the cost of constructing the new Glenroy Community Hub in 2018.

On 12 December 2018, Council declared 10 Murrell Street surplus to its needs and resolved to commence a statutory process regarding Council's intention to sell the site following completion of the Hub, which occurred in 2022.

At its meeting in September 2024, Council requested a further report be prepared detailing specific alternative uses be explored including food relief, crisis housing, social housing, a Glenroy Men's Shed.

The relevant report was presented to Council at its meeting on 9 July 2025, where Council resolved to consult the community on its intention to sell the land, in accordance with its requirements under the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Notice was published on Council's website of the proposal to sell the land, with physical copies of the notice also distributed to nearby stakeholders. The notice provided parties with the opportunity to lodge a written submission and to speak to their submission should they wish to do so.

Submissions were heard by Council on 16 October 2025. Five written submissions were tabled, and one submitter spoke to the hearing.

Having received and considered submissions from those wishing to do so, Council is now in a position to make a decision regarding the proposed sale of 10 Murrell St, Glenroy.

Submissions varied, with several submitters proposing alternative uses for the site, one expressing support for the sale provided a tree is protected, one strongly opposed, and one organisation expressing a desire to lease the site or, failing that, to purchase the land.

Officers are recommending that Council endorse the sale to deliver on its original decision on funding the Glenroy Community Hub. If the funds are not returned to the Significant Projects Reserve, this will reduce Council's capacity to deliver planned future significant community infrastructure projects. Alternative uses of the site have been considered, including the uses proposed by community submitters, some of which would not be possible under current zoning. In this instance officers advise that retaining the site would negatively impact Council's significant project investments as well as requiring potentially significant additional expenditure to make the site fit for purpose.

Previous Council decisions

10 Murrell Street, Glenroy – 9 July 2025

That Council:

- 1. In accordance with section 114 of the Local Government Act 2020 to authorise that a public notice be given of its intention to sell the site.*
- 2. Appoints the Mayor and all Councillors to a Committee to hear any submitters requesting to be heard in support of their written submission in relation to the proposed sale of land.*
- 3. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to set the time, date and place of the meeting of the committee to hear submissions in relation to Council's intention to sell 10 Murrell Street, Glenroy.*
- 4. Receives a report outlining any submissions received, including a summary of proceedings of the Hearing of Submissions Committee and presenting a recommendation regarding whether to proceed with the proposed sale of the site.*

Proposed sale of Land - 10 Murrell Street Glenroy – 11 September 2024

That Council:

- 1. Notes that the kindergarten at 10 Murrell Street has been moved into the new purpose-built Glenroy Hub as planned.*
- 2. Retains the site in Council ownership while Council investigates alternative uses for the site including potential uses such as a site for the distribution of emergency relief, crisis housing or social housing, or a Glenroy Men's Shed.*
- 3. Receives a report on this by April 2025, alongside the feasibility study that is underway to determine the accommodation needs of food relief organisations in Merri-bek.*

Wheatsheaf Community Hub Project - Council Action Plan Item -12 December 2018

That Council: (excerpt)

- 1. Declares surplus to Council's needs the sites at 737 Pascoe Vale Road, Glenroy and 10 Murrell Street, Glenroy.*
- 2. In accordance with section 189 of the Local Government Act 1989, gives public notice of its intention to sell the sites at 737 Pascoe Vale Road, Glenroy and 10 Murrell Street, Glenroy in the Moreland and Northern Leader newspapers and on Council's website and invites written submissions. The public notice will state that Council intends to sell the sites by a public process.*
- 3. Appoints Councillor Kavanagh as Chair, and all North West Councillors to a Committee to hear any submitters requesting to be heard in support of their written submission.*
- 4. Holds the Hearing of Submissions Committee be held at a date and time to be determined by Council at the Moreland Civic Centre, 90 Bell Street, Coburg.*

5. *Receives a report following the consultation process outlining any submissions received in relation to the proposed sale of the sites at 737 Pascoe Vale Road, Glenroy and 10 Murrell Street, Glenroy with a recommendation whether to proceed.*
6. *Notes if the properties at 737 Pascoe Vale Road and 10 Murrell Street, Glenroy are sold, the net proceeds of the sale will be allocated to the construction of the Wheatsheaf Community Hub.*

1. Policy Context

Council Plan 2025-2029

The Council Plan 2025-2029 outlines our strategic objectives, and the initiatives needed to achieve the Community Vision, along with clear indicators to measure our progress over the next 4 years. The Council Plan also highlights Council's commitment to protecting, improving and promoting the health and wellbeing of all individuals in Merri-bek.

Council Plan Priority 5.6 affirms that Council will:

Prioritise sustainable, climate resilient, equitable, finance management to ensure financial sustainability and effective use of resources and robust decision making.

Ensuring that decisions regarding the sale, purchase or retention of Council assets are made in a sustainable way, reflecting current and future needs of the community, will ensure that this priority can be achieved.

Community Engagement Policy

Community consultation regarding the proposed sale was undertaken in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy 2024.

2. Background

Site History

The property at 10 Murrell Street, Glenroy, was the site of the former Glenroy Memorial Kindergarten.

At its meeting on 13 June 2018, the sale of 10 Murrell Street was highlighted as a funding source for the construction of the new Glenroy Community Hub, with the intention that the early years' service provider be relocated to the Hub.

On 12 December 2018, Council declared the site surplus to its needs and resolved to commence a statutory process regarding Council's intention to sell the site, to commence after the construction of the Glenroy Hub was completed and the provider had been relocated. The Hub was completed in 2022, and the kindergarten now operates from this new state of the art facility situated in Wheatsheaf Road, Glenroy.

Due to the time elapsed since Council's decision in 2018, Council was asked at the 11 September 2024 meeting if it still supported the declaration that the site is surplus to its needs, prior to officers commencing the public notice process. Council resolved at that meeting that a report be brought to Council in April 2025 detailing investigations into alternative uses for 10 Murrell Street.

At its meeting on 9 July 2025, Council resolved to undertake the required statutory engagement process in accordance with section 114 of the Local Government Act 2020. Council authorised a public notice be given of its intention to sell the site and to receive submissions in relation to the sale.

Alternative Uses

In accordance with the 11 September 2024 resolution, the below uses were explored for the site and reported on at the 9 July 2025 Council meeting:

Use	Assessment
Social housing	• Council has identified a number of sites for a pipeline for Merri-bek Affordable Housing to undertake feasibility studies for potential future use for social and affordable housing. • 10 Murrell Street, Glenroy presents a better opportunity to replenish Council's unrestricted cashflow compared to all the other properties being considered for future use by Merri-bek Affordable Housing.
Crisis housing	• Key homelessness service providers who indicated this site would not be suitable to consider for crisis accommodation. • Use of this site would require considerable expenditure to either refurbish or expand the current buildings or demolish and construct new fit for purpose buildings. • Provision of crisis services also comes with high ongoing operational costs, with very few available funding sources.
Emergency or food relief	• The current buildings would not easily provide for food/emergency relief service, and food relief operations would be prohibited in the current Residential Growth Zone (RGZ). • Considerable cost and time would be required to re-zone the site (which may not succeed in this location) and either demolish, refurbish or expand the buildings, which is not financially sustainable within Council's current resources. • It is recommended that Council continues to work to support local food and emergency relief needs through advocacy for state and federal government investment and prioritising the use of existing and available Council assets to support these needs, including through co-location opportunities and enabling access to community venues.
Glenroy Men's Shed	• An alternative site is being explored for the Glenroy Men's Shed. They do not require an entire building/site, and there would be a considerable cost implication to provide a fit for use space at this site.

Submissions process

The proposed sale was advertised on Council's official website and on Conversations Merri-bek from 18 August 2025 until 19 September 2025. Over 400 letters were also sent to owners/occupiers in the vicinity of the site regarding the proposal.

Submitters were asked to provide a written submission on the sale, with those who wished to do so also being given the opportunity to speak to their submission at the Hearing of Submissions committee meeting, which was held on 16 October 2025.

Five submissions were received during the consultation period. Copies are attached at **Attachment 1**. One submitter elected to attend the Hearing of Submissions meeting to speak to their submission.

3. Issues

A hearing of submissions committee meeting was held on 16 October 2025. A summary of the proceedings is detailed in **Attachment 2**.

Summary of submissions received

Below is a summary of the common themes raised by members of the community along with additional considerations:

Submission theme	Officer response
Consider alternative uses such as having a men's shed, an art shed or a youth/a refugee centre on the site.	Previous explorations have been undertaken by Council officers to assess how this site could serve alternative uses. Officers also had regard to council's policy context, the size of the land, planning controls, and the current condition of the improvements. Based on these assessments, Council determined that the site was not suitable for alternative uses. Proceeds from the sale were previously committed to fund part of the Glenroy Community Hub. The funds have been expended from the Significant Projects Reserve and if they are not replenished, will delay the delivery of other community infrastructure, such as the planned \$60 million new library and piazza in Coburg.
Council prioritises the site for a community and welfare organisation by: • Leasing (with tenant funding refurbishment); or • Selling to a community and welfare organisation; or • Encouraging the purchaser to explore partnerships with social welfare organisations.	Any lease or sale should be undertaken in accordance with the <i>Local Government Best Practice Guideline for the Sale and Exchange of Land 2009</i> ('Best Practice Guidelines'). This includes favouring a competitive, public process (such as an open EOI) for prospective purchasers/tenants and selling land at its market value. The costs to make the site fit for purpose are significant. This means for any lease to be financially worthwhile for an occupier it would need to be both long-term and at below-market rental rates. This would result in the Significant Projects Reserve not being replenished in line with the original intention and has financial and resource implications. Imposing conditions on the sale may materially impact the sale price which can be achieved.
Retain the site for open space purposes	Council currently has active strategies in place to create more open space and to identify and address gap areas (<i>Open Space Strategy 2025, Park Close to Home 2017</i>) This area has not been identified as a gap due to the existence of nearby parks including Mott Reserve, situated across the road. On this basis, developing the land into a park is not considered an appropriate priority for the allocation of Public Resort and Recreation Land funds. Proceeding with the sale allows funds to be directed to other community priorities and initiatives including future investment in other open spaces, closing priority open space gap areas.

Submission theme	Officer response
Sell the site but ensure protection of the Golden Elm Tree on site	The Golden Elm at 10 Murrell Street is listed on Council's Significant Tree Register and is therefore protected under Council's Local Law. This means that a permit would be required for any pruning, works or removal that could affect the tree, and such proposals would be assessed with reference to its recognised significance and arboricultural advice. As of September 2025 the state planning control at Clause 52.37 (Canopy Trees) applies to residential land. The Golden Elm meets the definition of a canopy tree, so a planning permit would be required before it could be removed, lopped or destroyed. (Clause 52.37 does not guarantee protection, but ensures that any proposal is formally assessed, balancing canopy retention with other planning considerations such as site design and housing outcomes.) Accordingly, if the property were to be developed in future, both the Local Law protections for the Significant Tree and the Clause 52.37 permit requirement would apply, and conditions would typically be imposed to ensure the tree is protected and managed appropriately during any development.

Legal and risk considerations

Section 114 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires that before selling land, Council must –

- a) *at least 4 weeks prior to dealing with the land, publish notice of intention to do so—*
 - i. *on the Council's Internet site; and*
 - ii. *in any other manner prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of this subsection; and*
- b) *undertake a community engagement process in accordance with its community engagement policy; and*
- c) *obtain from a person who holds the qualifications or experience specified under section 13DA(2) of the Valuation of Land Act 1960 a valuation of the land which is made not more than 6 months prior to dealing with the land.*

Notice has been issued and community engagement undertaken in accordance with the requirements of section 114.

Should Council resolve to proceed with the sale, an independent valuation would be obtained. This ensures that the valuation will be current at the time of sale.

Human Rights consideration

Section 8 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities – Right to recognition and equality before the law which means that all Victorians have the right to be recognised as a person, to enjoy their rights without discrimination, to be treated equally under the law and protected from discrimination.

The community engagement process for the proposed sale was undertaken in accordance with Council's policy.

4. Community consultation and engagement

In accordance with its requirements under the *Local Government Act 2020*, community consultation was undertaken in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy.

The public notice was published on Council's official website and on Conversations Merri-bek, with an invitation to provide submissions during the period from 18 August 2025 to 19 September 2025.

Over 400 letters were also sent to owners/occupiers in the vicinity of the site regarding the proposal.

The notice was issued in both online and physical format to ensure accessibility in the consultation process. Those who wished to make a submission were also given the options of doing so via the Conversations Merri-bek page, by post, by email or by hand delivery to the Council offices.

The Hearing of Submissions Committee Meeting was held on 16 October 2025.

5. Officer declaration of Conflict of Interest

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

6. Financial and resources implications

In accordance with the section 114 2(c) *Local Government Act 2020*, a valuation is required to be current within 6 months of the sale date. The valuation will be undertaken by Council's contracted valuers prior to the sale if endorsed.

If Council were to not proceed with the sale of the site for market value, this would have significant cashflow and financial implications for funding strategies for other significant projects.

Upon the sale of the site, Council will direct the net proceeds from sale (the difference between the asset valuation in the balance sheet and the sale price) to the Significant Projects Reserve.

If Council were to decide to not proceed with the sale of the site at market rate, this has financial implications on an ongoing basis and will impact Council's ability to deliver on the next significant project.

7. Implementation

Indicative timelines to implement a Council decision to sell the site are below.

Real Estate Agent appointed	December 2025
Advertising campaign	February 2026
Sale of the site	March 2026
Settlement	June 2026

Attachment/s

- 1 [↓](#) Submissions Received - Proposed Sale of 10 Murrell Street, Glenroy D25/582555
- 2 [↓](#) Hearing of Submissions Committee - Summary of Proceedings - 10 Murrell Street Glenroy - 16 October 2025 D25/582481

Attachment 1 - Submissions Received

Submission 1

Please see the attachment. I would be happy to be contacted by email if you wish to see higher resolution pictures.

[Attachment overleaf]

SUBMISSION IN RESPONSE TO PROPOSED SALE OF LAND
10 MURRELL STREET, GLENROY

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in response to the recent council notice regarding the proposed sale of the land at 10 Murrell Street, Glenroy.

As a neighbouring resident, I am fully supportive of the sale. Since approximately late 2024, the property has remained abandoned and has unfortunately attracted squatters and associated anti-social behaviour. On one occasion, the situation escalated to the point where police intervention was required due to a physical altercation. In this context, I welcome the sale of the land and the opportunity for it to be repurposed.

Protection of the Golden Elm Tree

While I understand the buildings are disused and the property is a large allotment (possibly suitable for redevelopment), I would like to highlight the significance of the mature Golden Elm tree (*Ulmus glabra* 'Lutescens') at 10 Murrell Street.

With ongoing gentrification in the area and the increasing construction of townhouses, I am concerned that the tree may be removed to accommodate future development at 10 Murrell Street. While I support the addition of new housing, this Golden Elm is one of the few large canopy trees on Murrell Street and plays a key role in maintaining a green corridor linking to Mott Reserve. It should not be significantly affected by the sale of land.

As shown in [Picture A](#) below, the tree stands out in the streetscape and adds substantial ecological and visual value to the neighbourhood. Importantly, it is also listed on the Merri-bek Council's Significant Tree Register (see [Picture B](#)). Despite this listing, there is no clarity as to whether its protection will be upheld should redevelopment occur.

[Picture C](#) and [Picture D](#) were taken by me in May and August 2025.

I respectfully urge Council to consider placing a formal condition on the sale of the land that ensures the long-term preservation of the Golden Elm. Any future development should be required to incorporate this tree into its design, thereby balancing growth with the preservation of our urban greenery.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards,

[Redacted Signature]

Resident of Murrell Street, Glenroy



Submission 2

just wondering why only four alternative uses were assessed? surely there are other options that could be looked at? a youth centre like the excellent oxygen centre for example, or a refugee centre, or an arts centre. there are lots of council services that need homes and this could no doubt be used for one of them. the real issue is that once this land is sold, it will never come back to council. council won't buy more land in the future so it needs to hold on to every piece of land it has and make them valuable resources for the communities that surround them.

Submission 3

What about opening up an art shed for all the local artists. I am an artist and have a Bachelor of Fine Art and Visual Culture Double degree.

There are limited areas for artists to do there work.

Also art is good for people with disabilities and elderly

Submission 4

Mens shed is a great idea, it would be very positive for our community.

Submission 5

see attached correspondence.

[Attachment overleaf]

**Community Consultation Submission**

Reference: Proposed Sale of Land – 10 Murrell Street, Glenroy

Introduction

Onemda has provided disability services across Melbourne for over 50 years and today operates eight campuses across multiple LGAs, with a growing presence in Hume and Merri-bek.

Demand for our services has never been greater due to NDIS market pressures, provider exits, and the increasing needs of people with severe and complex disabilities. Our integrated model – combining education, training, therapy, and wellbeing programs – empowers participants to live meaningful lives.

Community Need

Importantly to note, with escalating demand, significant reductions in funding, and rising costs, the disability sector is now in crisis. Nationally, most providers are now running at a loss (67% in FY24 from 47% in FY21) (1), risking further gaps in support for the most vulnerable. Furthermore, the NDIS predicts demand for services in the areas of Brimbank Melton, Hume Moreland and NW Melbourne will grow by nearly 80% between now and the end of the decade, from 27,280 participants in 2021 to an expected 49,100 in 2029 (2).

In Merri-bek, the scale of need is significant: nearly 6% of residents (around 11,000 people, per 2021 Census) have a severe disability requiring daily assistance, while updated modelling suggests over 38,000 residents are living with disability. The northern metropolitan region has almost 7,600 households on the social housing waitlist, nearly two-thirds of them with priority needs such as disability. Glenroy, Fawkner, Hadfield, and Coburg North already show the highest rates of severe disability in the municipality (3).

The compounding effect is that demand is outstripping supply, and financial pressures are making service expansion increasingly unviable — leading to a gradual market failure for Victoria's most vulnerable.

Previous Correspondence

In October 2022, Onemda formally expressed interest in operating services from the Murrell Street site. We highlighted the shortage of suitable disability support sites in Glenroy and proposed a partnership with Council to transform the facility into an inclusive hub — directly advancing Merri-bek's Community Vision 2030 and Council Plan commitment to a "more inclusive, connected, healthy and caring" municipality (4). This proposed partnership, provided a practical way to help overcome the financial challenges in expanding service footprints, while also addressing growing shortfalls in disability service supply in the Merri-bek region.

Unfortunately, no response was received, and we now note Council's intention to sell the property.

The Onemda Association Inc.

ABN 76 721 607 868 | REG NO. A0025065T

Main Campus: 123 Andersons Creek Road, Doncaster East VIC 3109

P: 03 9842 1955 | F: 03 9842 3756 | E: onemda@onemda.com.au

onemda.com.au

**For Consideration**

We respect Council's need to raise funds for the Glenroy Community Hub. However, we urge reconsideration of the Murrell Street site's potential community impact before proceeding to sale. With building constraints limiting residential development potential, the site presents a unique opportunity to meet urgent, long-term social and disability support needs.

Options to re-consider

#1 - Council enter a long-term lease arrangement with a community service provider (such as Onemda), where refurbishment and site costs are borne by the provider in exchange for enabling service delivery to meet local needs. During this time, land value would continue to appreciate, and Council will retain leasing earnings on the site for a fixed period.

#2- If Council proceeds to sell, first provide community and welfare providers addressing disability, health and wellbeing needs the option to purchase.

#3 - If the sale proceeds to the open market, the successful purchaser be encouraged to explore partnership opportunities with social welfare organisations such as Onemda.

Together, Council and organisations like Onemda can help prevent escalating gaps in disability support. Retaining 10 Murrell Street for community use would demonstrate Merri-bek's leadership in ensuring people with severe and complex disabilities, or other socially isolating barriers are not left behind. A partnership approach will limit further growth in unmet need and build a stronger, more inclusive Merri-bek.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted signature block]

References

1. Disability Services Financial Benchmark Report FY24, StewartBrown 2024.
2. NDIS Market Data Report, 2024.
3. Merri-bek Health & Wellbeing Profile, 2024.
4. Merri-bek Community Vision, 2023

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HEARING OF SUBMISSIONS COMMITTEE

Proposed sale of 10 Murrell Street, Glenroy

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday 16 October 2025

The meeting was held online

Mayor, Cr Davidson opened the meeting at 6.11 pm and stated that we are meeting on the lands of the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung people. We wish to acknowledge them as the traditional custodians of these lands and waterways and would also like to pay our respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging, as well as to all First Nations communities who significantly contribute to the life of this City.

Present	Time in	Time out
Cr Helen Davidson, Mayor	6.11 pm	6.18 pm
Cr Helen Politis, Deputy Mayor	6.11 pm	6.18 pm
Cr Nat Abboud	Apology	
Cr Sue Bolton	6.11 pm	6.18 pm
Cr Liz Irvin	6.11 pm	6.18 pm
Cr Jay Iwasaki	6.11 pm	6.18 pm
Cr Chris Miles	6.11 pm	6.18 pm
Cr Adam Pulford	Absent	
Cr Ella Svensson	6.11 pm	6.18 pm
Cr Katherine Theodosios	Absent	
Cr Oscar Yildiz JP	Absent	

Council officers

Director Place and Environment – Pene Winslade
Unit Manager Property – Seamus Lowe
Senior Property Officer – Liliane Sutherland
Team Leader Governance – Naomi Ellis

1. WELCOME

Mayor, Cr Davidson welcomed Councillors and the submitter to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance.

2. APOLOGIES

Cr Nat Abboud was an apology to the meeting.

Cr Adam Pulford, Cr Katherine Theodosios and Cr Oscar Yildiz JP were absent.

3. DISCLOSURES OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Nil.

4. HEARING OF SUBMISSIONS

Mayor, Cr Davidson advised the purpose of the meeting was to hear any submissions requesting to be heard in support of their written submission on the proposed sale of 10 Murrell Street, Glenroy.

Mayor, Cr Davidson advised that the submitter would be invited to speak for up to 3 minutes and that they should build on key issues raised, as Councillors have been provided with the written submissions and that Councillors may ask questions of clarification.

Mayor, Cr Davidson stated that no decision would be made on the matter at this Hearing of Submissions.

Mayor, Cr Davidson stated that 5 submissions were received during the consultation period. The following submitter spoke to their submission:

1. Submitter 2

5. MEETING CLOSE

The Chair reiterated that a decision in relation to the proposal would be made at a future Council meeting, and that submitters and the speaker will be advised via email once the date is confirmed.

The meeting closed at 6.18 pm.

7.5 INVESTIGATION INTO AN URBAN AGROFORESTRY TRIAL - RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION

Acting Director City Infrastructure, Greg Rodwell

Open Space and Environment

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the investigation into an urban agroforestry trial and its findings.
2. Continues to focus tree and native vegetation planting efforts on strengthening Council's Street and Park Tree Program and along creek corridors, to enhance canopy cover and biodiversity.
3. Explores small-scale Micro-Forest projects in suitable locations and monitor outcomes.
4. Continues to develop an Urban Wood Circular Economy initiative within existing operations to realise a higher benefit for trees with quality timber that require removal.

REPORT

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of a high-level investigation into the potential for a site for an agroforestry trial in the city to cultivate a forest for timber harvesting, which Council resolved to undertake in July 2025. The investigation was framed as a circular economy and research initiative, assessing its potential to generate local evidence, build new skills, and create value from urban timber.

The findings confirm that while an agroforestry trial is technically feasible, it presents a combination of significant practical, financial, and strategic challenges that make it a high-risk undertaking in an urban parkland context.

Based on the options analysis, this report recommends focusing investment on strengthening Council's core programs, namely the Street and Park Tree Program and creek corridor tree and native vegetation planting—while trialing lower-risk innovations like micro-forests and developing a circular economy for urban wood within existing operations.

Issues and challenges identified through the investigation include:

- Site and planning constraints: Suitable large-scale sites, such as those investigated at Lorne Street, Fawkner, and Gowanbrae for their propensity of underdeveloped grass area and potential to accommodate planting, are located within sensitive creek corridors. These areas are subject to Environmental Significance Overlays (ESO) in the Merri-bek Planning Scheme, which require revegetation approaches that preference using locally indigenous species, protection and enhancement of riparian ecology, habitat connectivity, bank stability, water quality and maintaining habitat connectivity for native fauna. This creates a policy conflict with a trial designed to test productive timber harvesting and would restrict the species choices available for such a trial.
- High operational risk and complexity: The trial would introduce high-risk forestry operations into local streets and public parks. A formal risk assessment identified a 'High' Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) risk associated with felling, processing, and transporting timber in areas with high public access.
- The risks of maintaining a long-term commitment: The 15 to 30-year cycle required to establish and then harvest timber is a long-term, multi-decade commitment. There are risks of project failure due to shifts in community sentiment, support and funding.

- **Specialised maintenance:** The trial would require a specialised, costly, and frequent clearwood pruning regime, which is operationally distinct and far more resource-intensive than Council's standard amenity pruning regime.

As part of the investigation a comparative carbon analysis was completed. This analysis confirmed that agroforestry offers very competitive carbon sequestration potential, estimated at 280–420 tonnes of CO₂-equivalent per hectare (tCO₂e/ha) over 30 years. This compares favourably to micro-forests (200–300 tCO₂e/ha) and creek corridor tree and native vegetation planting (80–140 tCO₂e/ha). However, this benefit is highly dependent on the final end-use of the timber.

The investigation into the Master Tree Grower program found that while partners are willing, the program's specialised curriculum is not aligned with Council's core training needs and is therefore not a high priority at this time.

The investigation concluded that while the program could potentially be supported for general arborist professional development under existing Council learning and development policies (particularly in relation to timber value assessment, which supports the separate circular economy initiative), the development and hosting of a specific MTG program in Merri-bek is not a high priority for Council at this time.

Based on the options analysis, this report recommends focusing investment on strengthening Council's core programs - the Street and Park Tree Program and creek corridor tree and native vegetation planting - while trialing lower-risk innovations like micro-forests and developing a circular economy for urban wood within existing operations.

Previous Council Decisions

Notice of Motion - Agroforestry Trial – 9 July 2025

That Council receives a report following a high-level investigation into:

1. *A site for an agroforestry trial in the city to cultivate a forest for timber harvesting, including consideration of the area of land at the end of Lorne Street, Fawkner, including a broad estimate of the level of carbon offset that would be achieved by such a forest and high level comparative analysis of carbon offsets achieved by micro forests or creek revegetation.*
2. *Opportunities for the Master Tree Growers program, run by the Australian Agroforestry Foundation, to be delivered here in the city to educate people including council staff about effective treatments of live timbers within an agroforestry lens.*

1. Policy Context

The investigation confirmed that the proposal for an urban agroforestry trial is, at a high level, broadly aligned with the core objectives of Council's key strategic documents. The Urban Forest Strategy (2017–2027), the Urban Forest Tree Policy (2023), and the Urban Forest Tree Management Plan (2024–2027) all explicitly support exploring innovative approaches to lifecycle tree management, enhancing urban greening, building climate resilience, and engaging the community in the stewardship of the urban forest. The proposal, particularly when framed as a "circular economy and research" initiative, speaks directly to these goals of innovation and sustainability.

A policy review confirmed that the Tree Policy (2023) provides a specific, albeit complex, administrative pathway for a trial of this nature. The policy's allowance for renewal initiatives permits the planned removal (after all other alternative actions have been explored and discounted) of non-significant trees, provided this removal is part of a formally Council-approved project. This pathway is strictly conditional on being accompanied by a robust, co-designed community engagement plan and a comprehensive replanting strategy. This policy mechanism provides a clear, in-principle framework for a harvest-and-replant cycle, which is the central operational feature of an agroforestry trial.

However, a critical finding of this investigation is that while the concept of the trial aligns with high-level strategy, its practical application on suitable land creates significant policy and planning conflicts. The most viable sites for a trial of this scale—namely the large, underdeveloped grass areas at Lorne Street, Fawkner (Merri Creek) and Gowanbrae (Moonee Ponds Creek)—are located within sensitive creek corridors.

Development within creek corridors and environs are subject to Environmental Significance Overlays (ESO) in the Merri-bek Planning Scheme. The primary objective of these planning overlays is the protection and enhancement of riparian ecology, habitat connectivity, bank stability, and water quality. These objectives, which prioritise ecological restoration with locally indigenous species, are at odds with the production and harvesting of timber. Furthermore, it restricts the species that could be selected for a trial, effectively precluding the use of the most common non-indigenous, high-yield timber species and limiting the trial to a narrow list of local eucalypts.

2. Background

Purpose of the Report and Strategic Framing

This report presents the findings of a high-level investigation into the potential for a site for an agroforestry trial in the city to cultivate a forest for timber harvesting, which Council resolved to undertake in July 2025. This investigation explored the feasibility of an urban agroforestry trial, providing a comparative carbon offset analysis, and exploring opportunities for the Master Tree Grower program.

To provide a clear lens for this assessment, the investigation framed the proposal not as a commercial timber plantation, but as a circular economy and research initiative. This strategic framing is important: it assumes the primary goals are not financial profit, but rather:

- Learning and evidence generation: To generate local, empirical data on the performance, risks, carbon sequestration potential, and operational challenges of such a system in Merri-bek's specific urban context.
- Circular economy pathways: To test a "waste-to-resource" stream, creating a local supply of timber that could be diverted from mulch and used in public realm furniture, art, or social enterprise initiatives.
- Skills and capacity building: To build specialist skills in lifecycle management and timber reuse among Council staff and the community.

Brief History and Definition of Agroforestry

Agroforestry is broadly defined as a land management system that intentionally integrates woody perennials (trees and shrubs) with agricultural crops and/or livestock on the same land-use unit. Unlike traditional monoculture forestry or farming, agroforestry seeks to combine these elements to create more diverse, productive, and sustainable land-use patterns.

The practice itself is not new; it has ancient roots in Indigenous land management systems across the globe, which leveraged the complex and beneficial interactions between different components (flora and fauna) to create resilient and productive landscapes. Modern agroforestry builds on this knowledge and includes various typologies, such as:

- Alley Cropping: Rows of trees or shrubs are planted with agricultural crops in the "alleys" between them.
- Silvopasture: Trees are integrated onto land that is also used for grazing livestock.
- Windbreaks/Shelterbelts: Rows of trees planted to protect crops, livestock, or soil from wind.

- **Multi-storey Food Forests:** A diverse planting of trees, shrubs, and understorey plants designed to mimic a natural forest ecosystem and produce food.

This integrated approach seeks to provide multiple environmental, economic and social benefits simultaneously. Key potential advantages include improved soil health and erosion control, diversified farm income (from timber, fruit, nuts, or fodder), microclimate regulation, carbon sequestration, and enhanced wildlife habitat.

For the specific purpose of this investigation, the scope was narrowed from this broad agricultural definition. The investigation did not explore the agricultural (crops) or livestock (silvopasture) aspects of agroforestry. Instead, it focused entirely on the application of agroforestry principles for timber production and reuse within an urban parkland setting.

3. Issues

This section details the findings of the investigation into the three items specified in the July 2025 Council resolution: the agroforestry trial, the Master Tree Grower program, and the comparative carbon analysis (which is included as part of the trial investigation).

Investigation into the Proposed Agroforestry Trial

The investigation into the trial's feasibility was comprehensive, covering a detailed site and planning compliance analysis, an assessment of operational and financial risks, an exploration of economic pathways, and the development of compliant species palettes.

Site Analysis and Planning Constraints

The primary sites investigated were the large, open, underdeveloped grass areas at Lorne Street, Fawkner (adjacent to the Merri Creek) and an alternative site at Gowanbrae (adjacent to the Moonee Ponds Creek and close to the public tennis courts). From a purely horticultural perspective, these sites offer reasoned potential as the existing low-biodiversity grassed areas could be enhanced through a planting initiative.

However, a formal planning compliance review identified key site constraints. Both sites are located within creek corridors subject to the Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO) and, in the case of Lorne Street, an Erosion Management Overlay (EMO).

While these overlays do not prohibit planting or development, they provide strong policy direction toward environmental protection, restoration, and native revegetation, which influences the suitability of these sites for agroforestry purposes.

Planning controls

Lorne Street, Fawkner (Merri Creek Corridor)

Specific Controls:

Zone: Public Park and Recreation Zone (PPRZ)

Overlays:

- Environmental Significance Overlay – Schedule 1 (ESO1)
- Erosion Management Overlay (EMO)

The ESO1 seeks to ensure works are compatible with the environmental values of the Merri Creek corridor. Objectives focus on protecting riparian vegetation, improving water quality, maintaining passive open space character, and promoting revegetation with locally indigenous species.

Under ESO1, a planning permit is required for most buildings or works unless they are minor and avoid disturbance to remnant vegetation or archaeological sites.

The EMO applies to land prone to erosion or degradation. It requires a permit for buildings, earthworks, and vegetation removal, except where specific exemptions apply (for example, minor maintenance or public authority works).

Gowanbrae (Moonee Ponds Creek Corridor)

Specific Controls:

Zone: Public Park and Recreation Zone (PPRZ)

Overlay: Environmental Significance Overlay – Schedule 2 (ESO2)

The ESO2 manages the Moonee Ponds Creek corridor to balance hydrology, water quality, recreation, and habitat outcomes. It promotes restoration of natural creek forms, reintroduction of riparian vegetation, and improved visual amenity and access.

A planning permit is required for most buildings or works that could disturb remnant vegetation, alter natural drainage, or introduce non-indigenous species. Certain low-impact works (e.g. revegetation, interpretive signage, or shared paths) may be exempt where they align with environmental objectives and are undertaken to the satisfaction of Melbourne Water.

Under ESO2, any form of agroforestry would be a captured use requiring a planning permit, as it constitutes land disturbance and the introduction of non-indigenous species.

Summary of findings

The primary objective of these overlays is not to enable productive land use, but to achieve ecological restoration. Their objectives are specifically to protect and enhance riparian ecology, improve bank stability, protect water quality, and maintain habitat connectivity for native fauna. This establishes a clear restoration-first policy direction (rather than a prohibition) signal for all works within these corridors, prioritising ecological restoration and the use of locally indigenous species for all works within these corridors.

This restoration-first policy framework for these sites, which prioritises the planting of locally indigenous species, creates an inherent unavoidable policy tension between the planning goal of ecological restoration and the trial's goal of productive harvesting.

Any agroforestry activity involving non-indigenous or commercially oriented species would require a planning permit under both the Environmental Significance Overlay and, at Lorne Street, the Erosion Management Overlay. Such proposals would be unlikely to receive planning support, as they would be inconsistent with the overlays' environmental objectives and could increase soil disturbance within a sensitive riparian corridor.

Species Selection

As established by the site analysis, the restoration-first planning controls are the dominant factor in species selection. Any trial within the creek corridors would be restricted to a palette of locally indigenous species. The investigation identified the following local canopy trees as compliant with the ESO and suitable for the ecological context:

- River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*)
- Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*)
- Swamp Gum (*Eucalyptus ovata*)
- Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*)
- Yellow Gum (local subspecies *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* ssp. *connata*)
- Grey Box (*Eucalyptus microcarpa*)

While these species are ecologically appropriate and have known timber properties, they are not the fast-growing, high-yield species typically selected for a productive timber trial. This further complicates the trial's cost-benefit analysis and operational timeline.

High-Level Comparative Analysis of Carbon Offsets

As per the Council resolution, a high-level comparative analysis of carbon sequestration potential was conducted. This analysis compared the proposed agroforestry trial against the two other greening strategies mentioned in the resolution (micro-forests and creek revegetation) over a 30-year timeframe.

The analysis, which is based on a synthesis of Australian field studies and national modelling data, found that on a per-hectare basis, the agroforestry model offers highly competitive carbon storage potential. This is primarily due to the high biomass density of trees managed for timber.

The table below provides the estimated carbon storage (in tonnes of CO₂-equivalent per hectare) and the basis for each calculation. *Note: these carbon figures represent estimates and scenario assumptions rather than empirically locked values.*

Comparative Carbon Sequestration (Biomass Only) at 10 and 30 Years

Greening Strategy	Est. Storage at 10 Years (tCO₂e/ha)	Est. Storage at 30 Years (tCO₂e/ha)	Basis for Estimate (Source of Data)
Agroforestry	100 – 180	280 – 420	Field Study Data: Based on a large-scale South Australian field study of 121 mixed-species planting sites. The range reflects adjustments for rainfall and site survival.
Micro-forest	80 – 150	200 – 300	National Modelling: Based on national-level modelling for "environmental plantings" (Miyawaki-style) which assumes very high-density planting and rapid initial biomass accumulation.
Creek Corridor Planting	30 – 60	80 – 140	Blueprint Modelling: Based on a national blueprint model for riparian (creek corridor) restoration. This assumes a mixed planting of trees, shrubs, and understorey, resulting in a lower overall biomass density than a pure forest.

While the 30-Year figures are high, the investigation found that this benefit is highly dependent on the final end-use of the timber. The long-term climate benefit is not guaranteed.

A theoretical Year 100 fate analysis was conducted to model this critical factor:

- **If Kept Standing:** The full 280–420 tonnes of carbon remain stored.
- **If Removed and Mulched:** The vast majority of the stored carbon (over 90 per cent) returns to the atmosphere as the mulch decomposes, leaving a negligible long-term benefit.
- **If Harvested and used in Long-Lived Wood Products:** A small but durable portion of the carbon (estimated at 8–30 tonnes, depending on mill recovery rates) is retained in the wood products (e.g., furniture, building materials). The rest is lost during processing (sawdust, offcuts) or as the product decays over subsequent decades.

Therefore, while the carbon *potential* is high, its actual, permanent climate benefit is contingent on a complex, resource-intensive, and uncertain harvesting and production pathway.

Economic Potential and Circular Economy Pathways

A significant finding of the investigation, and a core part of the circular economy and research framing, was the high potential for an Urban Wood Circular Economy (UWCE) initiative. It is critical to note that this initiative is distinct from the agroforestry growing trial; it focuses instead on capturing value from high-quality urban trees that Council already removes for safety, end-of-life, or approved development reasons.

Currently, the vast majority of this removed timber is processed into mulch. While mulch has value, this practice represents a significant loss of potential economic value and results in the rapid release of the tree's stored carbon back into the atmosphere as the mulch decomposes.

The investigation confirmed that a local ecosystem of potential partners already exists to support such an initiative. This includes social enterprises like CERES Fair Wood, which is already a significant operator in the sustainable timber space, proving the viability of the social enterprise model in our region.

Furthermore, the investigation confirmed there is a strong appetite for a partnership from a local milling supplier and sawyer who is already working with adjacent councils on similar urban timber initiatives. This existing infrastructure and market interest significantly de-risks a pilot program for Merri-bek.

This demonstrates a viable, low-risk, and high-return pathway for Council to achieve its circular economy goals by optimising its *existing* tree removal operations. This initiative, recommended for implementation in Section 7, is distinct from the high-risk agroforestry growing trial.

Challenges and Risks

The investigation identified a suite of significant, interconnected challenges and risks that are distinct from Council's standard greening programs.

- **Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Risks** (Rated: High): This was assessed as the most severe operational risk. The trial would introduce high-risk forestry operations into local streets and public parks. This includes managing public safety during felling, processing, and the use of specialised equipment (like harvesters or forwarders) in areas with high pedestrian and cyclist traffic. Managing exclusion zones and the transport of heavy logs through residential streets presents a complex and high-risk OHS challenge not currently faced by Council's arboriculture teams.
- **Risks of Maintaining a Long-term Commitment:** The 15 to 30-year cycle required to establish and then harvest timber is a long term, multi decade commitment. There are risks of project failure due to shifts in community sentiment, political support and funding.

This creates a high risk of a zombie project being established but never properly managed to completion.

- **Sentiment Risk and Social Licence:** The concept of Council "harvesting" trees in public parks carries a high risk of significant community backlash from residents who view park trees as permanent assets, regardless of the trial's intent. Precedents in other cities confirm that tree removal, even when well-intentioned, can damage public trust and Council's reputation if not managed via a deeply consultative, long-term engagement strategy.

- **Operational Resourcing** (Specialised Pruning): Producing high-value, knot-free timber requires a specialised clearwood pruning regime, which is operationally distinct from Council's standard amenity pruning (focused on safety, structure, and clearance). Clearwood pruning is a costly, time-sensitive, and labour-intensive operation, requiring multiple lifts (lower branch removals) at 1-2 year intervals during the tree's first 4-10 years to minimise the size of the knotty defect core. This represents a new, intensive, and expensive maintenance liability that is not resourced or part of current staff skillsets.
- **Cost Risk:** The financial viability of a small-scale, non-commercial urban trial is highly uncertain. The market for small-batch, mixed-species urban timber is niche and unproven. Operational costs for specialised maintenance and harvesting are expected to be high.
- **Biodiversity Disruption:** While planting is positive, the harvesting phase of the trial involves the removal of mature canopy. This act, even if staged, causes periodic soil disturbance and habitat loss, conflicting directly with the "restoration-first" and habitat connectivity goals of the Environmental Significance Overlays on the proposed sites.

Investigation into the Master Tree Grower Program

The second item from the Council resolution was to assess the opportunity for the Australian Master TreeGrower (MTG) program, run by the Australian Agroforestry Foundation to be delivered in Merri-bek. The investigation into this opportunity confirmed that the MTG program is a well-regarded initiative and that the Foundation is willing to partner to deliver it in Merri-bek.

The MTG is typically delivered as an 8-day, field-based course founded on peer-to-peer learning. Its curriculum is highly specialised for farm forestry and agroforestry, focusing on topics like plantation design, species selection, silviculture (including clearwood pruning), and accessing timber markets.

While the program is high-quality, its curriculum is specifically tailored to the skills required for growing timber. This is not aligned with Council's core operational needs for managing parks and street trees, which are focused on amenity, safety, and ecological structure.

The investigation concluded that while the program could potentially be supported for general arborist professional development under existing Council learning and development policies (particularly in relation to timber value assessment, which supports the separate circular economy initiative), the development and hosting of a specific MTG program in Merri-bek is not a high priority for Council at this time.

4. Community consultation and engagement

A central finding of the investigation, identified as a medium risk in the formal risk assessment, is the challenge of securing and maintaining social licence. The concept of timber harvesting in a public urban park risks negative community sentiment, regardless of the project's scale or intent.

Urban residents often form deep psychological and emotional bonds with local trees, viewing them as permanent community assets for shade, amenity, and nature connection, rather than as a productive crop to be harvested. This fundamental disconnect in perception creates a high risk of significant community backlash.

The investigation concluded that an inform level community consultation process would be insufficient for a project of this nature. To mitigate these risks, the project would require a comprehensive, co-designed, and multi-decade community engagement strategy.. This would need to be supported for the project's entire 15 to 30-year life cycle to build and maintain trust across generations of residents.

Success would require moving beyond simple consultation to genuine co-design and shared decision-making, consistently framing the initiative as a cycle of renewal and research from its inception. This represents a significant, long-term, and resource-intensive undertaking that is far more complex than the engagement required for Council's standard greening programs.

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 high-level investigation was completed within existing operational resources and the officer recommendation requires no additional funding above current budgets.

A full pilot program, however, would require significant new, unbudgeted funding. The costs for a trial are not limited to the initial planting; they represent a multi-decade financial commitment. Significant new funding would be required for:

- Detailed site design and planning: including planning permit applications to address the Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO) requirements.
- Specialised maintenance: The trial would require a clearwood pruning regime, which is operationally distinct from Council's standard amenity pruning. This is a specialised, costly, and frequent operation requiring multiple visits in the tree's first 10 years.
- Harvesting and processing: A significant, unfunded liability for future harvesting operations, including the management of high-risk OHS requirements and heavy vehicle transport.
- Long-term monitoring: Decades of monitoring for carbon, growth rates, and community sentiment.

The financial viability of a small-scale urban trial is highly uncertain. The market for small-batch, mixed-species urban timber is niche and unproven.

7. Implementation

The final recommendation of this high-level investigation, based on the comprehensive findings, is to not proceed with an Urban Agroforestry Trial.

Instead, the investigation recommends that Council prioritises strengthening Council's proven, core programs while simultaneously pursuing lower-risk, higher-value innovations that were identified during the investigation.

This recommended implementation plan consists of the following concurrent initiatives:

- Focusing Investment in our Street and Park Tree Program and Creek Corridor Tree and Native Vegetation Planting - prioritising resources to accelerate the delivery of Council's existing, Street and Park Tree Program and Council's existing ecological restoration programs along key waterways, such as the Merri Creek and Moonee Ponds Creek corridors.
- Further exploring micro-forest projects in suitable locations and monitor outcomes - implemented as a defined pilot program, targeting suitable heat-vulnerable or low-biodiversity park sites. The pilot would include a monitoring framework to gather local data on survival, growth rates, and cooling benefits to inform future use.

- Continue to develop an Urban Wood Circular Economy initiative within our existing operations to realise a higher benefit for trees with quality timber that require removal. This could be implemented as a pilot within Council's existing tree removal and arboricultural contracts. The pilot would focus on developing specifications for usable logs, establishing partnership agreements, and trialing the logistics of diverting a small number of logs from the waste stream.

Attachment/s

There are no attachments for this report.

7.6 DRAFT PUBLIC ART POLICY

Acting Director Community, Stefan Grun
Cultural Development

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Endorses the draft Public Art Policy at Attachment 1 for public exhibition in November 2025.
2. Refers funding recommendations for the draft policy for consideration as part of the 2026/2027 budgeting process.
3. Notes the current statutory limitations and practical feasibility of consideration of the inclusion of public art in the planning process.

REPORT

Executive Summary

Through the development of the 2023-2030 Arts and Culture Strategy, community shared their desire for increased support of the arts in Merri-bek, including an increase in public art. This was reiterated through the recent Council Plan process.

The creation of Merri-bek's first Public Art Policy will enable increased investment in public art across the municipality, creating increased opportunities for artists, engaging residents and visitors and enhancing public space. The Policy will also ensure best practice in the commissioning and maintenance of Council's public art collection.

Previous Council Decisions

Options to Increase Funding for the Arts in Merri-bek – 12 June 2024

That Council:

1. *Requests the development of a Merri-bek Public Art Policy in 2025, that includes a percentage for public art to be allocated from the Council capital works budget.*
2. *Receives a report in 2025 into mechanisms for how Council could request inclusion of public art and arts infrastructure in significant developments through the planning process.*
3. *Receives a future briefing in 2025 about the benefits and risks of establishing a Council-initiated philanthropic fund for the arts.*

1. Policy Context

- Council Plan 2025-2029, Theme 3: Beautiful and liveable city; and Theme 4: Thriving economy and culture.
- Council Action Plan 2025/2026, Initiative 4.3: Revitalise local shopping precincts by beautifying streetscapes, activating local community events, removing graffiti, installing public art, and improving amenity to create beautiful, accessible centres. Action 62: Develop a Public Art Policy.
- 2023-2030 Arts and Culture Strategy – Key Commitment: Public art to be built into Council capital works, urban design and open space projects.

2. Background

Through the consultation for the 2023-2030 Merri-bek Arts and Culture Strategy there was clear community interest in increasing public art across the municipality. As a result, the strategy commits to public art being built into Council capital works, urban design and open space projects. Following the inclusion in the Arts and Culture Strategy, in June 2024 Council requested the development of a Merri-bek Public Art Policy in 2025, which was further committed through the 2025/2026 Arts and Culture Action Plan and 2025/2026 Council Action Plan.

The endorsement of a Public Art Policy will ensure that the strategic development and resourcing of public art into the future. Currently, public art is included in some Merri-bek capital works projects at the discretion of project managers. In recent years between two and four commissions have been completed annually as part of urban design, open space design or major capital projects, including Glenroy Community Hub, Balam Balam Place, and Michelle Guglielmo Park. Outside of these projects, Council's only ongoing budgets for public art are the Merri-bek Murals graffiti prevention program (operational) and a small budget for public art maintenance budget (capital).

Extensive benchmarking and research were undertaken in the development of the Draft Public Art Policy with many Victorian Councils having public art policy, including Casey, Yarra, Melbourne, Knox, Maribyrnong, Banyule, Wyndham and more. There are several different models for resourcing the policy including percentages of budget for all projects over a certain threshold and/or include percentages of the total capital works budget and/or allocated a percentage for maintenance and renewal of the collection. Only very few Councils have a requirement for public art in the Planning Scheme, with some using guidelines to encourage developers to consider public art.

Increased support for artists and arts organisations was also raised through the consultation process for the Arts and Culture Strategy, and as a result investigation was undertaken into the possibility of Council creating a philanthropic fund for the arts.

3. Issues

Policy objectives

The objectives of the policy are to:

- Ensure sustained financial investment and strategic planning for public art across the municipality.
- Enhance the city's public spaces through art that invites reflection, celebration, critique and engagement with contemporary issues.
- Provide a clear framework for the acquisition, commissioning and delivery of public art.
- Support best practice management of the public art collection, including conservation and responsible deaccessioning.
- Create meaningful employment and professional development opportunities for artists.

Commissioning artwork

Through the policy, an annual budget allocation (see Financial Impact) will be made to fund new public art commissions, increasing annually over the next five years, with the hope to create a percentage-based commissioning fund on renewal of this policy. This structure has been proposed in line with the current budgetary environment and to enable the scaling of Council's commissioning and maintenance processes over time.

The budget allocation is accruable, allowing unspent funds to be carried forward to support larger or future projects as needed. Managed by the Arts and Culture Unit, public art commissioned through this funding stream may be integrated within infrastructure projects or delivered independently in response to community needs, site opportunities, or cultural priorities.

Application of funds will be guided by Council's Public Art Policy and Arts and Culture Strategy 2023–2030 to ensure alignment with broader cultural and community goals. Project selection and prioritisation will be undertaken by the Arts and Culture Unit in consultation with relevant internal departments and each year.

All public art proposals will be assessed by a Public Art Advisory Panel using pre-determined selection criteria for each commission. Panel members provide community context, specialist knowledge, and advice will be selected for their expertise and lived experience in relation to the commissioned project, ensuring diversity and appropriate representation.

Artwork maintenance and renewal

The annual maintenance budget will be increased to 0.8% of the total market value of the public art asset register will be set aside for renewal and conservation activities, with a minimum annual provision of \$50,000. This funding supports routine and responsive conservation, condition assessments, valuation, restoration, and the responsible deaccessioning of artworks where appropriate.

All existing and new permanent public artworks will be recorded on Council's Asset Register and managed in accordance with a scheduled conservation and renewal plan. Ongoing care of these assets will be prioritised through an annual Conservation Action Plan, ensuring responsible lifecycle management of the Public Art Collection.

Public Art for developments

Under the Victorian Planning Provisions (VPP), there are limited statutory mechanisms available to councils to require developers to contribute to public art or to provide funds for public or art installations. Established case law confirms that any permit condition must serve a clear planning purpose, have a direct nexus to the development, and be reasonable and proportionate. As a result, few planning permits include conditions relating to public art.

Within the current planning framework, councils may only encourage or negotiate the inclusion of public art through local planning policy or voluntary agreements under the planning permit process, including Section 173 Agreements. These approaches rely on applicant agreement, cannot be mandated and would be unlikely to result in any meaningful contribution to public art.

While Council has recently progressed developer contribution mechanisms for roads, drainage, and community facilities, through Amendment C236mbek, public art is not recognised as an allowable category under the current Development Contributions Plan (DCP), Infrastructure Contributions Plan (ICP), or the Public Open Space Contribution Rate (POSCR) frameworks. Public art is not classified as “development” or “community” infrastructure for the purposes of these contribution systems. Attempts by other councils to include public art in similar mechanisms have been unsuccessful. Both developer contribution experts and Merri-bek officers have raised this issue with the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) and received consistent advice that public art is not a permissible inclusion under the existing frameworks.

Additionally, further investigating a statutory mechanism to support public art contributions would require a detailed review, Planning Scheme Amendment, and Ministerial support. This work would require significant resources and is not funded in the current financial year. Given the State Government's focus on streamlining development contributions and avoiding new local levies, such an amendment is unlikely to receive support from the Minister for Planning at this time. Moreover, previous discussions with DTP and sector experts indicate that resource investment in pursuing this avenue is not warranted at this time.

Options to increase funding for the arts in Merri-bek: philanthropic funding

In June 2024, in addition to creation of a Public Art Policy, Council requested a briefing in regard to establishing a Council-initiated philanthropic fund to further increase funding for the arts.

Council Officers have undertaken research into Council initiated philanthropic funds and considered the benefits and risks. Creation of a fund would require significant investment from Council (over \$1,000,000) and staff resources to seek further donations from the community. Given the increase to arts grants that was made in the 2025/2026 budget process, the outlay in establishing such a fund is not recommended at this time.

Community impact

Increased public art in Merri-bek will provide significant community benefits, enhancing the city's public spaces through art that invites reflection, celebration, critique and engagement with contemporary issues.

Human Rights Consideration

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and the key section in the Charter that is relevant to this report is the right to freedom of expression. In addition a Gender Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the draft policy.

4. Community consultation and engagement

Extensive community engagement was completed through the Arts and Culture Strategy process in 2023 to inform the need for increased arts funding and public art in the municipality. Engagement undertaken included an online survey, consultation at festivals, First Peoples consultation, as well as a variety of targeted focus groups.

The Public Art Policy was developed with Jo Herbig from Open Arts Consultancy. Jo brought extensive public art policy development experience to the process, including extensive benchmarking and best practice advice and has worked on Wyndham's current policy redesign, as well as the creation of Knox's leading Public Art Policy.

Staff from the following branches have been consulted in the creation of this Policy including Capital Works Planning and Delivery, Finance, Community Wellbeing, Property Place and Design, Early Years and Youth, Open Space and Environment, Cultural Development and Finance.

Following the November Council meeting, this draft Public Art Policy will be added to Conversations Merri-bek for a three-week public consultation and shared with the Arts Advisory Committee, networks and social media.

Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Elders and the First Nations Creative Consultation group will also be consulted.

Affected persons rights and interests

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

Affected persons include artists and general community members, who were consulted during the initial development of the Arts and Culture Strategy which outlined the Public Art Policy as a key action. Further consultation will occur during the public exhibition of the draft policy.

Communications

Information on how to provide feedback on the draft policy will be shared with the community through the Merri-bek City Council corporate channels, and through the Arts Merri-bek and Counihan Gallery e-news and social media.

5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

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

6. Financial and Resources Implications

The draft Public Art Policy outlines the commissioning and maintenance resources required for its delivery, scaling up from \$79,500 in year 1 to \$279,500 in year 5.

The funds required (\$895,250 over 5 years) to action this resolution are referred to the 2026/2027 budget process and Capital Works Program for consideration.

Public Art Policy Budget Projection						
	Current 2025 2026	Year 1 2026 2027	Year 2 2027 2028	Year 3 2028 2029	Year 4 2029 2030	Year 5 2030 2031
New Commissions (Capital)	0	50,000	100,000	150,000	200,000	250,000
Maintenance (Capital)	20,950	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
Total Annual Budget	20,950	100,000	150,000	200,000	250,000	300,000
New annual budget required above 25/26 (Capital)	0	79,050	129,050	179,050	229,050	279,050
Total new commissions budget required over 5 years	750,000					
Total new maintenance budget required over 5 years	145,250					
Total new capital budget required over 5 years	895,250					

7. Implementation

- November 2025: Community consultation on draft
- December 2025: Council Meeting – Policy Endorsement
- December 2025 – February 2026: Consideration in 26/27 budget development
- July 2026: New public art commissions and maintenance/renewal program commences

Attachment/s

1 [📄](#) Arts and Culture - Public Art Policy Revised Draft - September 2025 D25/486065



Public Art Policy

Date Authorised by Chief Executive Officer or Council: <Type text here>

Commencement Date: <Type text here>

Review Date (5 years from authorised date): 2030

Responsible Department Arts and Culture

This policy has been authorised.

Eamonn Fennessy
Acting Chief Executive Officer

<Insert Date signed here>

1. Introduction

The *Public Art Policy* provides a strategic framework for the resourcing, acquisition, commissioning, and management of public art within Merri-bek City Council. It is designed to increase the number of public art commissions within the municipality and ensure the implementation of best practices that support and enhance the delivery of public art programs and the stewardship of public art collections.

This policy applies to all public art initiatives undertaken or supported by Council within the local government area, including but not limited to permanent installations, temporary and ephemeral artworks, and integrated design elements in public infrastructure. It applies to Council-managed projects, partnerships, and developer contributions where public art is a component. This policy does not apply to private art collections, exhibitions on private land, or commercial art displays not associated with Council activities.

2. Context

The *Public Art Policy* supports Merri-bek City Council's commitment to creating a vibrant, inclusive and culturally rich municipality. It aligns with the *Council Plan 2025–2029*, particularly the strategic objectives of creating a beautiful and liveable city and a thriving economy, emphasising vibrant spaces and cultural experiences, celebration and community connection, First Peoples heritage, and the role of public art in strengthening community identity and pride.

This policy has been created through the *Arts and Culture Strategy 2023–2030*, providing the vision, principles, and strategic framework for commissioning and managing public art. It is supported by the *Public Art Guidelines*, which outline the processes and responsibilities involved in the planning, delivery and management of public art in Merri-bek.

The policy draws on national and state best practice standards and complies with relevant legislation, particularly those protecting First Peoples cultural heritage and intellectual property.

2.1. Alignment

The *Public Art Policy* is informed by the vision, objectives and priorities of the following Council policies, plans and strategies:

- *Council Plan 2025-2029*
- *Arts and Culture Strategy 2023-30 and associated Action Plans (PDF 8.6Mb)*
- *Asset Management Policy 2023 (PDF 205Kb)*
- *Community Engagement Policy (PDF 1MB)*
- *Human Rights Policy (DOC 554Kb)*
- *Information Privacy and Health Records Policy (PDF)*
- *Procurement Policy 2021-25 (PDF)*
- *Public Transparency Policy (PDF 271Kb)*

- Risk Management Policy (PDF 227Kb)
- Sponsorship Policy 2021 (PDF)
- Statement of Commitment to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities of the City of Merri-bek (PDF).

The policy adheres to the following documents in guiding best practice in the Public Art sector:

- Australian Government, Office of the Arts, *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place, National Cultural Policy 2023*
- National Association for Visual Artists, *The Code of Practice for the Professional Australian Visual Arts, Craft and Design Sector*
- Creative Australia, *Protocols for using First Nations Cultural and Intellectual Property in the Arts*
- Creative Victoria, *Creative State 2025*

2.2. Organisational Context

The Policy adheres to legislative requirements as follows:

- Local Government Act 2020
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
- Corporations Act 2001
- Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012
- Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988
- Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Gender Equity Act 2020
- National Copyright Act 1968
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Victorian Legislation, Heritage Act 2017
- Victorian Legislation, Heritage Amendment Act 2023
- Victoria State Government, Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy 2021-2026
- Victorian Legislation, Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006
- Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act 1972
- Indigenous Cultural Protocols and the Arts 2015 by Terri Janke
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)

2.3. Research and other drivers

The development of this policy has been informed by a comprehensive research process, including:

- A review of relevant literature on public art policy and practice.
- Analysis of research conducted by peak industry bodies.

- A survey of successful public art policies and strategies implemented by local governments across Greater Melbourne and Australia.
- Consultation with key internal Council departments and service areas.
- Consultation with community.

3. Objectives

1. Ensure increased financial investment and strategic planning for public art across the municipality.
2. Enhance the city's public spaces through art that invites reflection, celebration, critique and engagement with contemporary issues.
3. Provide a clear framework for the acquisition, commissioning and delivery of public art.
4. Support best practice management of the public art collection, including conservation and responsible deaccessioning.
5. Create meaningful employment and professional development opportunities for artists.

4. Policy details

4.1. Guiding Principles for Public Art and the Public Art Collection

Merri-bek City Council is committed to commissioning and presenting public art that is bold, inclusive, place-based, and transformative. These guiding principles are aligned with the policy objectives and inform the planning, commissioning, acquisition, management, conservation and presentation of public art throughout the municipality.

First Peoples Cultural Leadership: Ensuring First Peoples voices, knowledge systems, and cultural protocols inform and lead public art outcomes.

Equity, Inclusion and Access: Reflecting community diversity through equitable opportunities, inclusive commissioning, and practices that prioritise cultural safety and remove systemic barriers.

Artistic Excellence and Innovation: Driving public art with bold, research-informed, and innovative practices that express distinct cultural ideas, engage audiences, and achieve artistic excellence.

Place Activation and Urban Identity: Enriching public spaces by telling local stories, improving liveability, and activating vibrant civic life.

Community Engagement and Participation: Celebrating diversity and local stories through community-led projects, supported and empowered by Council's inclusive, grass roots initiatives.

Artists as Cultural Workers: Recognising artists as essential contributors to cultural life and providing paid opportunities alongside professional development.

Diverse Forms and Flexible Practices: Supporting a broad range of creative expressions and encouraging experimental, temporary works that engage communities and provide opportunities for emerging artists.

Environmental Sustainability: Developing public art using environmentally sustainable materials and practices, with a commitment to ongoing care and conservation that upholds the principles of long-term environmental stewardship and aligns with Council's sustainability goals.

Best Practice Governance and Equitable Processes: Managing public art with transparency, fairness, and respect for artists' rights and equity throughout all stages.

Equitable Geographic Access: Ensuring fair, accessible public art across all municipal areas and communities.

4.2. Funding

4.2.1 Council Funding

New Commissions

An annual budget allocation (see Appendix: Public Art New Commissions Budget Projection) will be made to fund new public art commissions, increasing annually over the next five years to reach a permanent percentage-based commissioning fund on renewal of this policy.

The budget allocation is accruable, allowing unspent funds to be carried forward to support larger or future projects as needed. Managed by the Arts and Culture Unit, public art commissioned through this funding stream may be integrated within infrastructure projects or delivered independently in response to community needs, site opportunities, or cultural priorities. It will also fund Council's graffiti prevention mural program.

Application of funds will be guided by Council's *Public Art Policy* and *Arts and Culture Strategy 2023–2030* to ensure alignment with broader cultural and community goals. Project selection and prioritisation will be undertaken by the Arts and Culture Unit in consultation with relevant internal departments and each year.

Artwork Renewal – Capital Works Renewal Budget

An annual allocation equivalent to 0.8% of the total market value of the public art asset register will be set aside for renewal and conservation activities, with a minimum annual provision of \$50,000. This funding supports routine and responsive conservation, condition assessments, valuation, restoration, and the responsible deaccessioning of artworks where appropriate.

All existing and new permanent public artworks will be recorded on Council's Asset Register and managed in accordance with a scheduled conservation and renewal plan. Ongoing care of these assets will be prioritised through an annual Conservation Action Plan, ensuring responsible lifecycle management of the Public Art Collection.

Other Projects

Consideration of the integration of artist-led design elements in Council's infrastructure and programs is always encouraged. Integration of these elements may fall outside the scope of the detailed funding streams, with budget decided by Project Managers and Project Control Board, and in consultation with the Arts and Culture Unit.

4.2.2 Non-Council Funding

Grants, Philanthropy, Sponsorship

Council will, where possible, pursue grants from other levels of government, philanthropic organisations, and the private sector to enhance the delivery and longevity of public art outcomes. Sponsorships will be considered in accordance with Merri-bek City Council's *Sponsorships Policy*, ensuring that all partnerships align with Council values and community expectations. Philanthropic contributions may also be explored as a means of fostering shared cultural investment and long-term stewardship of the city's public art assets. All public art commissions funded via grants, funding or philanthropy must adhere to the *Public Art Policy* and *Public Art Guidelines*.

Community and Private Business Led Projects

All community and private business-led public art projects proposed for the public realm must adhere to the *Public Art Policy* and *Public Art Guidelines* and be approved by Council's Arts and Culture Unit to ensure alignment with Council's standards for quality, cultural integrity, and public value. A decision on whether these works will be acquired into the Public Art Collection will be on a case-by-case basis, governed by the Public Art Assessment Panel.

4.3. Artist Rights and Copyright

Merri-bek City Council upholds artists' rights under the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth), including copyright ownership and moral rights. Artists retain copyright, while Council receives a limited, non-exclusive licence for promotional and archival use. All alterations, relocation, or conservation of artworks will involve artist consultation, and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property will be respected through meaningful engagement with Traditional Owners and communities. Under the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth), copyright protection applies equally to the creative works of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

4.4. Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) and Moral Rights

Merri-bek City Council is committed to upholding the collective and perpetual rights of First Peoples to their cultural knowledge, expression and heritage. Council will seek free, prior, and informed consent before using any Indigenous cultural content, and will work in genuine partnership with Traditional Custodians to ensure respectful consultation, attribution, and protection of ICIP.

Merri-bek City Council recognises that both individual moral rights and the collective cultural rights of First Peoples must be respected. Council will not alter, reproduce or repurpose material containing Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) without informed consent from the original artist and relevant Traditional Custodians, regardless of copyright ownership.

4.5. Public Art Commissioning and Selection Process

Merri-bek City Council is committed to a clear, transparent, culturally respectful, and gender-inclusive process for commissioning public art. The commissioning framework balances flexibility with accountability, ensuring each project is responsive to its unique context, community, and cultural significance, while actively promoting equity and inclusion at every stage.

4.5.1 Commissioning Methods

Council employs a range of commissioning methods depending on the scope, budget, and intent of each project while adhering to Council's procurement and equity policies:

- Open Competition (Expression of Interest – EOI): Publicly advertised through diverse media channels, this method is typically used for higher-value commissions and follows Council's procurement and equity policies.
- Limited Competition (EOI): When targeted expertise is required, Council invites a select number of artists (usually 3–5), ensuring that gender balance and diversity are considered in the invitation process.
- EOI Process with Concept Design Stage: Shortlisted artists are paid to develop concept designs, with clear attention given to ensuring gender diversity among participants.
- Direct Invitation: Artists may be directly commissioned based on their qualifications, lived experience, cultural authority, or relevance to the site or community.

These methods are implemented with a conscious effort to promote equitable representation of Council's Human Rights Priority Groups among commissioned artists and collaborators.

4.5.2 Artist Engagement and Support

Artists will be fairly compensated at all stages, with transparent contractual agreements outlining rights, responsibilities, timelines, deliverables, and copyright. Council recognises that barriers exist in the arts and therefore prioritises the inclusion, mentorship, and professional development of First Peoples artists and arts workers, as well as members of Council's Human Rights Policy Priority Groups. Appropriate resourcing will be allocated to support equitable participation, per the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) Code of Conduct Payment Standards.

4.5.3 Indigenous Protocols in Commissioning

Merri-bek City Council's vision for reconciliation is for respectful and inclusive recognition of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waterways in the area now known as Merri-bek. Council commits to addressing dispossession and dislocation of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from their traditional lands by establishing and maintaining into the future, respectful partnerships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the broader community. This vision for reconciliation extends to Council's public art program.

Council will appoint a Council-employed First Peoples arts worker, community worker, or an approved representative to support First Peoples artists throughout the Expression of Interest process, when required. Any commissions telling First Peoples stories will be First Peoples led to ensure cultural integrity and appropriate representation. The engagement of First Peoples curators, arts workers, or project managers will also extend to projects that may not be created solely by First Peoples artists, reflecting an inclusive and collaborative approach.

Council will consult with Traditional Owners on the public art program, and a Traditional Owner or delegate will be invited to participate in the Public Art Assessment Panel in a paid role to provide expert cultural advice on those projects when required.

4.5.4 Site Selection

The location of public art is instrumental in shaping its impact, accessibility, and relevance within a community. A carefully selected site can enhance how the work is perceived, encourage public interaction, and reinforce the character and identity of a place.

When considering potential locations for public art, several key factors will guide the evaluation process. These include the cultural and historical significance of the site, how it is used and accessed by the public, local demographics, and the social context of the surrounding area. Practical elements such as visibility, safety, ownership, environmental conditions, and how the site relates to nearby architecture and heritage features are also critical.

4.5.5 Project Planning and Evaluation

Each project will include:

- A comprehensive project brief and contract
- Risk assessment and risk management plan
- Long-term conservation and maintenance planning
- Clear procedures for decommissioning or removal, with transparency and fairness
- An evaluation and feedback process that aims to continuously improve equity outcomes in public art commissioning.

4.6. Risk and Insurance

All public art projects must begin with a risk management plan and risk register, in line with Work, Health and Safety legislation and the Disability Discrimination Act 1992. Complex works require assessment by qualified professionals. Artists must hold appropriate public liability, professional indemnity, and OH&S insurance, with evidence provided at contract execution. Following installation and handover to Council, ownership and insurance responsibilities transfer to Council.

4.7. Public Art Collection Management and Renewal

4.7.1 Budget

The Arts and Culture Unit will manage and administer the Artwork Renewal budget.

4.7.2 Ownership and Responsibility

All public artworks acquired, commissioned, or donated and accepted by the Council will be managed as part of Merri-bek City Council's Public Art Collection. The Arts and Culture Unit manages custodianship, documentation, conservation, and strategic management of the collection. A Public Art Collection Valuation will be conducted every five years, coordinating with Council's Assets and Insurance Departments.

4.7.3 Acquisition and Accessioning

Public artworks can be acquired through commission, donation, or transfer and must comply with the *Public Art Policy*. New artworks are assessed by the PUBLIC ART ASSESSMENT PANEL for artistic merit, durability, relevance, conservation requirements, and alignment with Council priorities before being accepted into the collection. Developer or community-initiated artworks or donations must adhere to the *Public Art Policy* and require review and approval by the Public Art Assessment Panel.

4.7.4 Care and Documentation

All new public art assets will be managed by the Arts and Culture Unit as part of Merri-bek City Council's Public Art Collection and documented in the Public Art Asset Register, detailing key information including artist, title, location, materials, condition, and conservation needs. Artists will be required to prepare a conservation manual outlining construction, materials, cleaning schedules, and conservation requirements, to inform the Public Art Conservation Plan. The Arts and Culture Unit will oversee this plan, along with the annual Conservation Action Plan in consultation with the Public Art Assessment Panel and will coordinate inspections, conservation tasks, and budget requirements. Artists will be consulted on repairs in line with their moral rights, with a 12-month warranty covering any latent defects. Refer to the *Public Art Guidelines* for detailed requirements.

4.7.5 Deaccessioning

Artworks may be considered for removal if they are irreparably damaged or deteriorated, pose safety risks, exceed their lifespan or are no longer relevant to context or artistic intent. Proposals are reviewed by the Public Art Assessment Panel according to clear evaluation criteria, including physical condition, relevance and context, aesthetic and cultural merit, conservation costs and artist, community and stakeholder input.

4.8. Governance

All public art proposals are assessed by a Public Art Assessment Panel using pre-determined selection criteria for each commission. Panel members provide community context, specialist knowledge, and advice will be selected for their expertise and lived experience in relation to the commissioned project, ensuring diversity and appropriate representation.

The Public Art Assessment Panel will evaluate all public art project proposals submitted by internal Council departments, community members, groups, organisations, businesses, or developers for potential inclusion in the Merri-bek City Council Public Art Collection. The Public Art Assessment Panel will make recommendations on the acquisition, commissioning, care, and deaccession of all public art. Recommendations are made to the relevant Manager, CEO, or Council for approval, in line with financial delegations and the *Public Art Guidelines*.

Membership of the Public Art Assessment Panel will change for each commission or commissioning period and include the following membership for any given assessment:

- Unit Manager Arts and Culture or delegate (voting member)
- Public Art Officer (voting member)
- At least one Merri-bek City Council representative relevant to the project and subject matter (voting member).
- A relevant expert advisor, cultural or commission specific, with consideration given to lived experience and gender-informed perspectives (voting member).
- A First Peoples representative (voting member).
- A representative from the Arts Advisory Committee with appropriate public art expertise (voting member).

The Public Art Assessment Panel will operate under a Terms of Reference that outlines roles, responsibilities, membership, authority, and operations. These terms will align with Council's *Public Art Policy*, *Arts and Culture Strategy*, and principles of equity and inclusion.

The preselection and recommendation of external members will be conducted by internal staff and recommendations will be reviewed and endorsed by the Unit Manager Arts and Culture.

Public Art Assessment Panel meetings will be chaired by the Unit Manager Arts and Culture or their delegate and facilitated by the Public Art Officer. Invitations may be extended to internal or external industry specialists or project stakeholders (non-voting) to participate in

one-off meetings and advise the Public Art Assessment Panel on key matters relevant to its role.

5. Roles and responsibilities

Party/parties	Roles and responsibilities
Unit Manager Arts and Culture	Oversees Public Art Assessment Panel including composition of panel, decision maker on commissioning and decommissioning.
Public Art Officer	Runs commissioning and decommissioning process, completes conservation plans and actions.
Team Leader Gallery and Arts Programs	Works with Unit Manager Arts and Culture on commissioning and decommissioning decisions, oversees Public Art Officer.
Arts and Culture Unit	Responsible for delivery of this policy.
Manager Cultural Development	Final decision making on commissioning when required, in line with procurement policy.
Director Community	Final decision making on commissioning when required, in line with procurement policy.
CEO	Final decision making on commissioning when required, in line with procurement policy.
Capital Works	Key stakeholders in policy, contract management of projects that will include public art.
Open Space	Key stakeholders in policy, contract management of projects that will include public art.
Urban Design	Key stakeholders in policy, contract management of projects that will include public art.
Early Years	Key stakeholders in policy, contract management of projects that will include public art.
Aquatics and Leisure	Key stakeholders in policy, contract management of projects that will include public art.
Finance	Assist with resource allocation.
Procurement	Ensure procurement procedures are followed as required.
Council Project Managers	Contract management of projects that will include public art.
Arts Advisory Committee	1-2 members from the Committee will be selected to be members of the Public Art Assessment Panel. The Committee will be informed of all public art commissions and deaccessions from the Public Art Collection.

6. Monitoring, Evaluating and review

Public art requires a significant investment of time and financial resources. To ensure that this investment is strategic, impactful, and well-considered, output measures will be established for each project. These measures will be included in the approval process for commissioning and acquiring public artworks, reviewed by the Unit Manager, Manager, Director, CEO, or

Council as determined by financial threshold. The Arts Advisory Committee, Ward Councillor for each public art project, and Mayor will be updated at key intervals as each project progresses and given the opportunity to provide feedback.

7. Definitions

Term	Definition
Acquisition	The process of obtaining legal ownership and possession of a work of art through purchase, donation, or transfer, whether for an existing piece or a newly commissioned artwork to be added to a collection.
Art Collection	A curated assembly of artworks, objects, or items of artistic, historical, or civic value, organised based on specific guiding principles or curatorial objectives.
Commission	A new purchased artwork that is requested to be created for a specific site or purpose.
Community Art	Art created in collaboration with local communities, where artists engage with the public to develop the concept and execution of the artwork, often in public spaces such as parks or community centres.
Conservation	The practice of repairing and preserving the physical condition of an artwork or object, ensuring its longevity and integrity over time.
Council	Merri-bek City Council, whether constituted before or after the commencement of this Policy.
Councillor	The individuals holding the office of a member of Merri-bek City Council.
Deaccession	A formal process for the removal of an artwork from a collection through either selling or disposing of it and thereby eliminating it from the official collection.
Developer	An individual or company responsible for the construction and sale of residential or commercial properties, typically in a new or redeveloped area.
Ephemeral Public Artwork	Artworks with a temporary existence, often created for a limited time (from a few hours to several days), whose form or relationship to its environment may change during its display. These artworks are not included in permanent art collections, and the artist retains responsibility for any insurance related to the work.
Integrated Public Art	Art that is incorporated into the design of public spaces, architecture, or landscape elements. Examples include artist-designed furniture, lighting, seating, interpretive signage, or sculptural elements embedded in urban infrastructure. Integrated art is designed and/or created by an artist, which is what differentiates it from general infrastructure or features.
Lifespan	The expected duration that a public artwork remains on display or part of a collection, determined by the artist and considering factors such as materials used, conservation needs, expected deterioration, and location-specific impacts. Lifespan may vary and inform decisions around deaccessioning.

Moral Rights	Rights of creators of copyrighted works which includes the right of attribution, the right to have a work published anonymously or pseudonymously, and the right to the integrity of the work such as the display of the work in the way the artist intends.
Public Art Assessment Panel	Public Art Assessment Panel – The Panel responsible for reviewing and evaluating public art proposals, ensuring they align with policy objectives and community standards.
Permanent Public Artwork	Artworks intended for long-term display, often built with durable materials to withstand environmental conditions. These pieces are site-specific and designed to engage with their surroundings and enhance local culture and narratives.
Placemaking	A collaborative approach to the design, planning, and management of public spaces, aiming to create environments that foster a sense of community, belonging, and identity while improving the quality of life for residents.
Public Art Program	A series of initiatives that promote the creation and engagement with public art, including temporary and permanent art installations, educational programs, and community participation opportunities.
Sculpture	Three-dimensional art created through methods such as carving, modelling, casting, or assembling materials to form a tangible, often site-specific object or installation.
Temporary Public Art	Artworks that are intended to be displayed for a short duration, often experimental and dynamic in nature. These works may occupy a space for days, months, or up to five years, contributing to the temporary vibrancy of the environment.

8. Associated Documents

- Public Art Guidelines

9. References

Arts + Law, [Copyright Law Information Sheets](#),
 Arts Law Centre of Australia 2016, [Public Art: Design and Commissioning Information Sheet](#)
 Arts SA and Local Government Association of South Australia (2006) [Public Art, Making It Happen: Commissioning Guidelines for Local Councils](#)
 Australia Council for the Arts (2019) [Protocols for using First Nations Cultural and Intellectual Property in the Arts](#)
 Australian Government, Office of the Arts (2023) [Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place, National Cultural Policy](#)
 Banyule City Council (2020) [Public Art Policy 2020 - 2024](#)
 Brimbank City Council (2018) [Public Art Policy and Plan 2018 - 2023](#)
 City of Casey (2018) [Arts Acquisition Policy](#)
 City of Kingston (2023) [Public Art Policy 2023 - 2028](#)
 City of Melbourne (2021) [Public Art Framework 2021-3](#)

City of Port Phillip (2019) [Public Art Developer Guidelines](#)
City of Vincent 2014 [Percent for Art Policy](#)
Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)
Creative Victoria (2025) [Creative State 2025](#)
Georges River Council (2024) [Public Art Policy](#)
Knox City Council (2022) [Public Art Policy](#)
Maribyrnong City Council (2019) [Public Art Strategy](#)
National Association for Visual Artists (2024) [The Code of Practice for the Professional Australian Visual Arts, Craft and Design Sector](#)
NSW Government (2023) [Public Art Toolkit](#)
Wyndham City Council (2019) [Public Art and Collections Policy](#)
Yarra City Council (2015) [Public Art Policy 2015-2020 and Guidelines for Public Art in Private Development in Yarra](#).

10. Appendix: Public Art New Commissions Budget Projection

Year	New Commissions	Maintenance
2026/2027	\$50,000	0.8% of value of public art collection (min \$50,000)
2027/2028	\$100,000	0.8% of value of public art collection (min \$50,000)
2028/2029	\$150,000	0.8% of value of public art collection (min \$50,000)
2029/2030	\$200,000	0.8% of value of public art collection (min \$50,000)
2030/2031	\$250,000	0.8% of value of public art collection (min \$50,000)

7.7 OPEN COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS REPORT

Acting Director Business Transformation, Anita Curnow

Governance and Strategy

Officer Recommendation

That Council receives and notes the Open Council Resolutions Report provided as Attachment 1 to this report.

REPORT

Executive Summary

The Open Council Resolutions Report provided as **Attachment 1**, has been prepared to update Councillors and the community on the progress of Council resolutions that remain open and are yet to be finalised.

There are currently 33 open Council resolutions, with 1 of these relating to a Petition, 15 relating to Council officer reports and 17 relating to Notices of Motion.

The Open Council Resolutions Report is presented to Council on an ongoing basis, promoting transparency of how Council resolutions are being implemented.

Previous Council Decisions

Open Council Resolutions Report – 9 July 2025

That Council receives and notes the Open Council Resolutions Report provided as Attachment 1 to this report.

1. Policy Context

Section 46(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020* states:

- (a) That Chief Executive Officer has responsibility for ensuring that the decisions of the Council are implemented without undue delay.
- (e) When requested by the Mayor, reporting to the Council in respect of the implementation of a Council decision.

This report also supports Council's continuing commitment to transparent management of resources on behalf of ratepayers, key stakeholders and the broader community.

2. Background

The purpose of the Open Council Resolutions Report, provided as **Attachment 1**, is to update Councillors and the community on the progress of Council resolutions that remain open and are yet to be finalised.

3. Issues

The Open Council Resolutions Report (shown at **Attachment 1**) outlines the open resolutions and indicates that there is a total of 33 Open Resolutions, with 1 of these relating to a Petition, 15 relating to Council officer reports and 17 relating to Notices of Motion. Each open resolution in **Attachment 1**, includes a target date for completion.

The table below details the allocation of open items - Petitions, Council Reports, Notices of Motion, and Urgent Business—across each directorate:

Directorate	Petitions	Council Reports	Notices of Motion	Urgent Business
Chief Executive Office	-	-	2	-
Business Transformation	-	-		-
City Infrastructure	-	2	3	-
Community	-	2	5	-
Place and Environment	1	11	7	-

Attachment 1 excludes resolutions relating to Confidential Items and items relating to Planning and Related Matters.

An Open Council Resolutions report is presented to Council on an ongoing basis, to promote the transparency of how Council resolutions are implemented.

Community impact

Community impact is addressed through the Council Plan 2025-2029 under strategic objective 4: Act with transparency and accountability in all financial and governance practices, setting the standard for integrity and building trust within the community.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

There are no climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications associated with the preparation of this report.

Economic sustainability implications

There are no economic sustainability implications associated with the preparation of this report.

Legal and risk considerations

There are no legal and risk implications associated with the preparation of this report.

Human Rights Consideration

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

4. Community consultation and engagement

Community consultation and engagement are not required for this report, as it solely provides an update on the implementation status of previously adopted Council decisions.

Affected persons rights and interests

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

5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

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

6. Financial and Resources Implications

Any financial implications associated with the preparation of this report have been met within existing resource and budget allocations.

7. Implementation

Reporting on Open Council Resolutions will continue on an ongoing basis, with the next update scheduled for presentation to Council in early 2026.

Attachment/s

- 1** [!\[\]\(4678750ddedf23f08d02c1a050b89abf_img.jpg\)](#) Open Council Resolutions Report for the period ending 30 September 2025 D25/590558

Open Council Resolutions Report

For the period ending 30 September 2025



Contents

Petitions.....	2
Officer Reports.....	3
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Petitions - 1

Director Place and Environment	Council 13/08/2025	Target Date: 30/11/2025	Further Report: No
5.1 PETITION REQUESTING COUNCIL TAKE ACTION TO REDUCE THE VOLUME OF CARS ON SHAFTSBURY STREET, COBURG			
That Council:			
1. Receives the petition, requesting Council take action to reduce the volume of cars on Shaftsbury Street, Coburg, particularly between Reynard Street and Munro Street. 2. Refers the petition requesting Council take action to reduce the volume of cars on Shaftsbury Street, Coburg, particularly between Reynard Street and Munro Street, to the Director Place and Environment for consideration and response.			
Progress Comment			
Traffic count data and speed information gathering process is underway.			

Officer Reports - 15

Director Place and Environment	Council 11/10/2017	Target Date: 30/06/2026	Further Report: No
DCS59/17	PROPOSED LAND SWAP WITH DARUL ULUM COLLEGE OF VICTORIA - EVANS RESERVE, FAWKNER		
That Council, having given public notice and having considered the submission received, in accordance with sections 189 and 223 of the Local Government Act 1989:			
1. Determines to exchange part of its land at 20 Victory Street, Fawkner, with land currently owned by Darul Ulum College of Victoria at 21 and 23 Marjory and 16 and 18 Victory Streets, Fawkner, as shown in the negotiated plan at Attachment 1 to this report. 2. Authorises the Director Corporate Services to do all things necessary to affect the exchange of land of part of its land at 20 Victory Street, Fawkner as shown in with land owned by the Darul Ulum College of Victoria at 21 and 23 Marjory and 16 and 18 Victory Streets, Fawkner, as shown in Attachment 1 to this report, including the execution of all relevant documentation. 3. Authorises the Director Corporate Services to commence the subdivision of approximately 2,393 square metres from the Evans Reserve, shown as the red hatched area on Attachment 1 to this report, and remove its drainage, sewerage and recreation reserve status pursuant to section 24(A) of the Subdivisions Act 1988. 4. Requests authorisation from the Minister for Planning to prepare a planning scheme amendment in accordance with section 20(4) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 to rezone 21 and 23 Marjory and 16 and 18 Victory Streets, Fawkner, to Public Park and Recreation Zone and rezone the land to be sold at 20 Victory Street, Fawkner, shown as the blue hatched area on attachment 1 to this report, to General Residential 1 (GRZ1). 5. Notifies the person who made a submission in writing of its decision and the reasons for that decision 6. Explores options with Darul Ulum to preserve 7 mature native trees that exist on the site in keeping with the aims of the newly adopted Urban Forest Strategy			
Progress Comment			
The land swap process is underway. Since the original 2017 decision, the State Government has introduced a Windfall Gains Tax that may render the swap cost prohibitive. Council has requested a ruling from the State Revenue Office to confirm whether the tax applies and is awaiting the outcome before proceeding further.			

Director Place and Environment	Council 13/09/2023	Target Date:	Further Report:
		30/03/2026	No
7.9	NAMING OF LANEWAYS		
That Council:			
1. Notes the potential risks and resource challenges associated with a universal approach to naming laneways, and that individual requests for naming laneways can be accommodated within the existing Naming Merri-bek Places Policy (2013), in cases where there is a clear reason to consider them as exceptions to standard practice.			
2. Continues discussions with Geographic Names Victoria to assess the name 'Kastoria Lane' against Geographic Naming Victoria's naming rules for places in Victoria - Statutory requirements for naming roads, features and localities – 2022.			
3. Writes to the submitter of the request to name a walkway on Sydney Road 'Pagonis Place' requesting supporting evidence in relation to the naming rules, specifically Principle C – linking the name to the place and Principle I – using commemorative names.			
4. Commence a formal process to name the laneway between Trafford Street and Ann Street, Brunswick.			
5. Continues to assess individual naming requests as the naming authority, noting that the Registrar of Geographic Names holds the power to either approve or reject any proposal for naming.			
6. Refers to the 2024/25 budget process consideration of allocating funds for the installation of informative text beneath new road names and interpretive signage at newly named parks to offer insights into the history and significance of place names and enhances understanding and appreciation of the locale's heritage and cultural importance.			
7. If budget savings are declared in the 2023/24 budget, that consideration be given to allocating savings identified to ensure that projects nominated in this recommendation are delivered with interpretive signage elements.			
Progress Comment			
The above has been implemented except for point 4 which will commence once Council's naming policy has been updated.			

Director City Infrastructure	Council 8/11/2023	Target Date: 31/03/2026	Further Report: No
7.7 TOWARDS A PLACE-BASED, COMMUNITY CO-MANAGEMENT OF PARKS AND OPEN SPACES - PROJECT REPORT			
That Council:			
- Notes the successful outcomes achieved in partnership with the community and the findings of the report. - Updates all park pages under the 'Find a Park' section of Council's website with current photos, park features and for those with a sportsground, links to sporting club pages with training and game time information.			
Progress Comment			
Point 1- Noted.			
Point 2 - New Park pages: All parks that previously did not have individual pages now have new page containers created. Each page includes park information and key features Dog Walking Pilot updates: Photos and details related to the dog walking pilot parks are being progressively updated. This work is ongoing.			
Find a Park Tool: Functionality improvements have been completed, including fixes to bugs and search features.			
Shared reserves and parks: Information and resources for reserves and parks shared by clubs have been added.			
Ongoing photo updates: Adding new and updated photos to park pages will remain an ongoing process, depending on available resources.			
Anticipate all Find a Park updates completed by March 2026 (subject to resourcing).			
Signage to Hosken Reserve and Fleming Park with a QR link to club social media pages. Existing ground booking system is not visible to the public. Investigations are underway into a new ground booking system that will provide public visibility of days and times of use.			

Director Place and Environment	Council 8/05/2024	Target Date: 31/12/2025	Further Report: Yes
7.4 NAMING THE PARK AT 14 FRITH STREET, BRUNSWICK - VOTING POLL RESULTS			

That Council:

1. Invite further consultation from the broader Merri-bek community on the resolved list of names for the Park at 14 Frith Street, with a view to a report coming back to Council in August 2024 with the final outcome of the consultation and poll and to confirm Council's preferred name.
2. Undertake a review of the Naming Merri-bek Places Policy, including consideration of:
 - a) Considering naming parks and facilities only after they have been opened to the public, allowing users of the space to engage in the naming process.
 - b) Reviewing consultation methods to explore additional strategies for increasing community participation.
 - c) Considering incorporating a pre-poll workshop with submitters and stakeholders to discuss proposed names, taking into account historical and contextual factors for each site, as well as the overarching objectives of the policy, particularly in prioritising indigenous, women and migrant names.

Progress Comment

The Frith Street renaming was completed in 2024. A review of the Naming Merri-bek Places Policy is underway.

Director Place and Environment	Council 10/07/2024	Target Date: 15/04/2026	Further Report: Yes
7.1 BARROW STREET TRIAL ROAD CLOSURE AT HARDING STREET, COBURG			
That Council:			
1. Considering the report from the Department of Transport and Planning and the written and verbal submissions from the public submitted under Section 223 of the <i>Local Government Act 1989</i> (the Act), resolves under Clause 10, Schedule 11 of the Act to block the passage or access of vehicles, other than bicycles and pedestrians, by installing temporary barriers (bollards) to trial a road closure on Barrow Street, Coburg, from the intersection of Harding Street to a point up to 8 metres further south. The trial shall be in place for approximately 12 months starting in December 2024. 2. Following the trial, receives a report from Council officers in early 2026 with a recommendation on whether to proceed with consulting with the community on a permanent road closure under Section 223 of the Act.			

3. Schedules installation of trial infrastructure to occur during the 2024/25 Summer School Holidays to allow for local schools and the community to prepare for the closure ahead of the 2025 school year.

Progress Comment

Trial infrastructure was installed in January 2025. The trial period lasts for 12 months and a report will be provided to council after the trial period.

Director Place and Environment**Council 11/09/2024****Target Date:****Further Report:**

31/01/2026

No

7.2 SUB-LEASE OF FORMER COBURG TRAIN STATION - UPDATE ON EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

That Council:

1. Notes that a public Expression of Interest (EOI) process was carried out to test local community organisations' interest and capacity in taking on a sub-lease of the State Government owned former Coburg Train Station building.
2. Endorses not-for-profit organisations Schoolhouse Studios Inc and the Melbourne Art Library as the successful proponents to operate and manage the former Coburg Station as an Art Library and community space through a sub-lease, noting they achieved the highest scores against the EOI criteria.
3. Authorises the Director Place and Environment to do all things necessary to negotiate and formalise the sub-lease of the former Coburg Train Station building.

Progress Comment

A planning permit has been issued and the process of drafting a formal lease document is underway.

Director Place and Environment	Council 12/02/2025	Target Date:	Further Report:
		26/03/2026	No
7.6 FAWKNER TRANSPORT STUDY IMPLEMENTATION			
That Council:			
1. Endorses infrastructure improvements to improve transport safety and accessibility in Fawkner including: a) A new pedestrian priority crossing on Jukes Road at the Fawkner Leisure Centre to assist in north-south movement. b) Completing a missing link of shared user path between McBryde Street and the Merri Creek. c) Shared Path Accessibility Improvements in Charles Mutton Reserve. d) Zebra Crossings at the intersections of Jukes Road and Williams Street. e) Raised threshold crossings along Jukes Road at the intersections of McDougall Street, Penn Court and Co-op Lane. 2. Endorses the following actions to reduce conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles on Bonwick Street: a) Installing new signage to direct visitors to the adjacent car parks near Bonwick Street. b) Formally requesting a compliance blitz by Victoria Police to reduce double parking, cars not giving way to pedestrians and other unsafe driver behaviour. c) Reconsider a "Walking Legs" pedestrian sign on the zebra crossing in the carpark on the eastern side of Bonwick St to signify that that it is a pedestrian crossing. d) In 12 months assess the impact of the above measures on the intersection of Jukes Rd and Bonwick St and bring a report to council identifying ways pedestrian safety could be further improved 3. Endorses the Fawkner Safe Travel Corridors as the preferred active transport routes within Fawkner and investigates extending the north south cycling corridor continuing through Parker Reserve to Shorts Road to enable this as a safe cycling corridor to Aldi supermarket, Upfield Bike Path, Merlynston Station, and Hosken Reserve. 4. Notes that there will be opportunity as part of the Streets for People Plan to identify priority corridors throughout Merri-bek for targeting improvements, which may include the east-west bicycle route in Fawkner at Roma Street and the Sydney Road – Murray Street intersection.			

Progress Comment

Designs for Infrastructure treatments are near finalisation. Further investigations to take place in February 2026.

Director Community**Council 12/03/2025****Target Date:****Further Report:**

9/06/2027

Yes

7.5 VICKI CLEARY DAY 2025 AND FAMILY VIOLENCE INITIATIVES

That Council:

1. Notes the information provided on current data, initiative and partnerships on prevention of family violence and gender based violence
2. Endorses the proposed program of support for the annual Vicki Cleary Day.
3. Requests that an evaluation, outcomes report, and future program proposal be presented to Council for consideration in the first half of 2027.
4. Refers support for Vicki Cleary Day in May 2025 to Quarter 3 budget deliberations.
5. Refers a funding request of \$40,000 to the 2025/26 budget process for consideration.

Progress Comment

Funding agreement in place with club and budget confirmed. Project plan to commence. Working towards the evaluation and outcome to be presented to council in 2027.

Director Community**Council 12/03/2025****Target Date:****Further Report:**

30/08/2026

Yes

7.2 BACHAR HOULI FOUNDATION - ISLAMIC COLLEGE OF SPORT AND ASPIRE SPORTS CENTRE

That Council:

1. Notes the Bachar Houli Foundations concept designs for the proposed Aspire Sports Centre as shown in Attachment 1.
2. Notes the Federal Government's commitment to provide grant funding of \$15 million and the Bachar Houli Foundation's application to the Victorian Government's Building Fund for Non-Government Schools to develop the facility.
3. Notes the planning requirements that must be met for the project to proceed, and the significant community benefits it will deliver.
4. Resolves to enter into a peppercorn lease agreement with the Bachar Houli Foundation for a 30-year term with a 10-year extension option, exercisable by the Bachar Houli Foundation, subject to confirmation that funding has been secured for the project.
5. Receives a further report setting out:
 - a) detailed terms of the proposed lease agreement
 - b) potential relocation options for existing users at the former Coburg Bowls Club
 - c) grant funding updates
 - d) further design and planning considerations, draft community and stakeholder engagement plan
 - e) details outlining how women and girls will be intentionally included in the programs and design of the facility and how this will be measured and reported by the Bachar Houli Foundation
6. Requests officers continue to explore the potential of Council's adjacent Russell Street car park sites, particularly for future community sport and recreation infrastructure needs, and maximise any synergies or colocation potential with the Bachar Houli Foundation as their proposal develops.

Progress Comment

Council officers are working with the Bachar Houli Foundation and other stakeholders in relation to the project. A report will be presented to Council in 2026.

Director Place and Environment	Council 9/04/2025	Target Date:	Further Report:
		31/12/2025	No
7.2	RAINBOW CROSSINGS - SITES FOR CONSULTATION		

That Council:

1. Endorses the eight identified locations listed below for community engagement to help select two sites and designs for the installation of pride flags on Council roads or footpaths:
 - Piera Street, Brunswick East
 - Howarth Street, Brunswick (adjacent to Yubup Park)
 - West Street, Brunswick (adjacent to Bulleke-bek Park)
 - Brunswick Town Hall
 - Waterloo Road and Snell Grove intersection, Oak Park
 - Glenroy Community Hub (in forecourt)
 - Victoria Street, Coburg (outside Coburg Library)
 - CB Smith Reserve (outside Fawkner Leisure Centre)
2. Notes that any site that is trafficable will be subject to a road safety audit and recommendations from an audit could add to the cost, between \$3,500 and \$20,000 per site. This applies to Piera Street, Howarth Street and Waterloo Road / Snell Grove.
3. Includes in the community engagement the following:
 - information about the relative environmental impacts of the materials considered in the report for the application of the rainbow crossings
 - information about sites where additional costs may arise resulting from road safety audits and the range of possible costs
 - specific consideration of the needs of vision-impaired people in the design of the rainbow crossings.
4. Acknowledges that of the two sites to be selected, one is to be in the municipal area north of Bell Street and one in the municipal area south of Bell Street.
5. Refers the installation of two rainbow crossings (progressive pride flags) on Council roads or footpaths at a total cost of \$45,000 to the 2025/2026 Council budget process for consideration, noting that if the selected site/s require additional investment resulting from a road safety audit, that these additional costs will be referred to the final budget before adoption or a quarterly budget update.

Progress Comment

Consultation complete and further meetings with key stakeholders undertaken. A report is proposed to be presented to Council in coming months.

Director Place and Environment	Council 9/04/2025	Target Date: 30/06/2026	Further Report: No
7.16	ELECTRICAL CAPACITY UPGRADE - HADFIELD OPERATIONS CENTRE		
That Council:			
1. Notes the need for an increase in electrical capacity at the Hadfield Operations Centre (also known as 5 Walter Street, Hadfield) by 3,000kVA (or 3 MW), to support electrification of the site and installation of infrastructure necessary for the transition of Council fleet to zero emissions vehicles. 2. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to upgrade electrical capacity at Hadfield Operations Centre, including: a) Accepting the negotiated offer from Jemena to install a new 3 MegaWatt kiosk transformer at Hadfield Operations Centre, for \$403,690.59 (excluding GST); and b) Executing a contract for the delivery of required civil and electrical works on Council property to operationalise the transformer. 3. Notes that the following sums have been referred to the draft budget process for 2025/26: a) \$403,690 (for the Jemena offer) b) \$376,000 (for the remaining works).			
Progress Comment			
The negotiated offer from Jemena for \$403,690.59 has been accepted and planning has commenced to deliver the required civil and electrical works.			
2.b The contract has yet to be executed. Final design for electrical and scope for civil works is progressing. Once this is complete, the works will go to tender.			

Director City Infrastructure	Council 9/07/2025	Target Date: 30/07/2026	Further Report: Yes
7.2	DOG WALKING IN MERRI-BEK - CONSULTATION SUMMARY AND STAGE 1 PILOT IMPLEMENTATION		

That Council:

1. Revises Attachment 1 and Attachment 2 so that they reflect changes to Tate Reserve to increase the area zoned as No Dogs, still retaining a corridor for Dog Off-Leash along the western side of the No Dogs area.
2. Adopts the Council Order at Revised Attachment 1 (Dog Off-Leash and Dog Prohibited Areas) and directs for it to be published with tracked changes accepted in the Victorian Government Gazette with an effective date of 28 July 2025.
3. Endorses the implementation of the Stage 1 pilot program across eight identified parks the support the Council Order to trial draft principles and interventions for improved management of dog access (Revised Attachment 2) for a minimum of six months, utilising capital funding of \$150,000 set aside in 2025/26 for this purpose.
4. Notes that the community has participated significantly in consultation on Stage 1 of the Dog Walking in Merri-bek project summarised in Attachment 3 of this report and that officers will continue to engage with the community during the pilot.
5. Receives a future report at the conclusion of the Stage 1 pilot on outcomes, learnings and future recommendations as part of the preparation of Stage 2 of the Dog Walking in Merri-bek project (remaining off leash reserves).

Progress Comment

Items 1 and 2 are complete. Ongoing community education occurring at all 8 pilot parks. Implementation of infrastructure to support Stage 1 pilot sites is progressing. Significant resourcing commitments to one of the sites, Tate Reserve, has slowed roll-out of signage and evaluation at the other trial sites. As indicated, the report back to Council (item 5) will occur after the trials are complete, community feedback has been received and analysis undertaken to enable recommendations to be made. This is expected to occur in May or June 2026.

Director Place and Environment	Council 13/08/2025	Target Date:	Further Report:
		27/08/2026	No
7.1	STREETS FOR PEOPLE PLAN		
That Council:			

1. Notes the findings of the community engagement on the draft Streets for People Plan, and thanks the community for their feedback.
2. Adopts the Streets for People Plan (Attachment 1), including the Streets for People network, the high priority projects list, and the Streets for People process for design, community engagement, and delivery.
3. Advocates to the State Government to:
 - a) Make improvements to Elm Grove and Urquhart Street in the Coburg Civic and Pentridge area or negotiate changes in the responsible authority for roads in this area, with a goal of moving the state road designation from Elm and Urquhart Streets to Pentridge Boulevard.
 - b) Make improvements for people walking and riding along the length of Boundary Road, Pascoe Street, and Rhodes Parade, in Pascoe Vale.
 - c) Design and deliver the Craigieburn Line shared path project in collaboration with Council.
4. Notes the findings of the investigation into turning roads into parks.
5. Conducts a review into the operation of Northumberland Road, between Rhodes Parade and Arndt Street, 12 months following reconstruction of the road. The review shall consider feedback from Pascoe Vale Girls College, Pascoe Street businesses, local residents, and users of Northumberland Road.
6. Adds the following text to the 'Proposed Network - Corridor and Targeted network' section of the Streets for People Plan (as a new paragraph 2 on Page 17 of the plan – page 41 of the Council Agenda): “Targeted projects focus on smaller improvements that can be made to the street. This includes elements such as street trees, wayfinding, street benches, and other amenities. Targeted projects typically will not consider significant changes to the way the street operates, such as road closures or protected bike lanes.”
7. Changes the title in Table 3 of the Streets for People Plan from “Aspirations Community Engagement” to “Engagement on the community’s aspirations and lived experiences” (page 20 of the Streets for People Plan, and page 44 of the Council Agenda).
8. Authorises the Director Place and Environment to make minor changes to the policy document for publication, as required.

Progress Comment

Items 1,2,4,6,7 and 8 have been completed. Further advocacy on item 3 has commenced. A review of Northumberland is being scheduled following reconstruction of the road carriageway. Target date amended to August 2026 to allow for Northumberland Road project to be completed and a review undertaken.

Director Place and Environment	Council 13/08/2025	Target Date: 31/03/2026	Further Report: Yes
7.2 SHARED E-BIKE SCHEME FOR MERRI-BEK (UPDATE)			
That Council:			
1. Notes the results of community engagement related to a shared e-bike scheme, including that the biggest issue of concern was about footpath access. 2. Delegates authority to the CEO to finalise and sign a multi-council Memorandum of Understanding for selecting shared e-bike operator(s). 3. Notes that virtual parking pins have a low accuracy and should not be considered for Merri-bek, except for temporary or short-term parking uses. All shared e-bike parking bays to be installed on the road and none on footpaths. 4. Receives a report for a decision to allow a shared scheme in Merri-bek once the outcome of the joint procurement proceedings is known. 5. Notes that any agreement with shared e-bike operators be predicated on the private e-bike operator agreeing to fully fund the installation of parking bays.			
Progress Comment			
Shared mobility model in discussions with neighbouring councils. Report on implementation to be presented to council in early 2026.			

Director Place and Environment	Council 13/08/2025	Target Date: 31/12/2025	Further Report: No
7.6 BRUNSWICK LXRP MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING			
That Council:			
1. Delegates to the Chief Executive Officer the power to negotiate and execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in accordance with the draft MOU at Attachment 1, including: a) Negotiating future funding for Council to engage resources to support the work that will be required in responding to the design and delivery of			

the Brunswick LXP, should the project proceed.

- b) Negotiating future handover of any newly created assets for Council operation and maintenance, should the project proceed.

Progress Comment

Council is awaiting a finalised copy of the MOU from the Level Crossing Removal Authority – we have been advised it will be received before the end of 2025.

Notices of Motion - 17

Director Community	Council 9/08/2023	Target Date: 1/3/2026	Further Report: Yes
8.2 FIRST NATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE			
That Council: - Undertakes a review of existing processes associated with Council decision-making (including the formation of Officer recommendations and Notices of Motion) that have an impact on the First Nations community and explore ways to effectively consider and/or refer such matters to the First Nations Advisory Committee and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation for their advice and feedback, prior to presenting to Council for consideration. - In addition, the review would seek input from the First Nations Advisory Committee and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation at the beginning of the process and on the outcomes of the review prior to presentation to Council. - Receives a further report identifying recommendations that can fulfill the objectives mentioned in point 1) above.			
Progress Comment A First People's Strategy as part of the Council Plan will speak to how this group will be involved in decisions. A report will be presented in early 2026.			

Director Place and Environment	Council 13/03/2024	Target Date: 1/03/2026	Further Report: Yes
8.6 DANGERS FOR CYCLISTS AND PEDESTRIANS AT HUDSON STREET AND VICTORIA STREET, COBURG INTERSECTION			
That Council: - Receives a report on safety hazards and potential solutions for cyclists and pedestrians at the Hudson Street and Victoria Street, Coburg intersection. - Requests officers to take account of potential flow-on effects of additional traffic to Hudson Street and consider the need for potential safety			

improvements to Hudson Street as part of the Harding/Munro Streets for People project.

Progress Comment

Design options have been prepared and will be released for public consultation in early 2026 as part of the Harding/Munro Streets for People Project.

Director City Infrastructure

Council 12/06/2024

Target Date:

31/07/2026

Further Report:

Yes

8.1 STANDARDS FOR ENCLOSED DOG PARKS

That Council:

1. Conducts a review of the standards for enclosed off-lead dog parks with consideration given to:
 - eliminating gaps in fences, underneath fences and underneath gates that allow tiny dogs to escape
 - provision of water in both the large dog and small dog sections of the dog park
 - provision of shade in dog parks, especially in the area where people gather to watch their dogs
 - latches on gates to be accessible on both sides of the gate for people in wheelchairs
2. Receives a report on the outcome of the review.

Progress Comment

Enclosed off-lead dog park standards are to be included in draft Open Space Guidelines. Draft Guidelines will be provided to members of the: i) Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience, ii) Health, Wellbeing and Social Inclusion and, iii) Liveability Advisory Committees for feedback early in 2026, with a proposed deadline for completion of the Open Space Guidelines of 30 June 2026 and a report prepared summarising how the matters at item 1 have been considered by July 2026.

Director Community	Council 10/07/2024	Target Date: 10/04/2026	Further Report: Yes
8.3 ART AND HISTORY AT THE BRUNSWICK TOWN HALL			
That Council:			
1. Calls for a report into the best use of the Brunswick Town Hall and as part of the report considers the following: • Expanding the Counihan Gallery to include a permanent exhibition of the Merri-bek Art Collection which focus on the work of Noel Counihan and themes associated with Brunswick. • Interpreting the history of Brunswick in collaboration with the Brunswick Historical Society the permanent exhibition spaces can display art and objects which interpret the history of the suburb, including the historical council chambers and multimedia displays. • That consideration be given to expanding the Library and community usages, which include study spaces, meeting rooms, information and customer service desk and other community spaces. • That consideration also be given to small scale commercial operations and, or social enterprises, which can contribute to the vision and function of the Brunswick Town Hall. 2. Gives recognition to the role of prominent local activists Vic Little and Vida Little from the Brunswick Progress Association for their role in preventing the demolition of and saving of the Brunswick Mechanics Institute in 1971 and the Brunswick Town Hall in 1973. 3. Calls for a report that considers how Council could formally recognise and acknowledge the Littles and the many other local activists and artists who have made a significant contribution to Brunswick over time.			
Progress Comment A report on this matter is currently being prepared for an early 2026 Council meeting.			

Director Community	Council 10/07/2024	Target Date: 11/03/2026	Further Report: Yes
8.2 RECOGNITION OF INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED LOCAL ARTIST - DESTINY DEACON 1956 TO 2024			
That Council:			
1. Pays tribute to the life and work of internationally renowned Merri-bek artist Destiny Deacon. 2. Receives a report with recommendations on the best way to recognise the contribution of Destiny Deacon to art, the First Nations community and the local community. Some suggestions for recognition to be considered include an artist's residency or art prize in Destiny Deacon's name as well as other recommendations.			
Progress Comment			
A report on this matter is currently being prepared for an early 2026 Council meeting			

Director Place and Environment	Council 14/08/2024	Target Date: 31/03/2026	Further Report: No
8.3 SHORT STAY ACCOMMODATION			
That Council:			
1. Writes again to the Minister for Government Services, Gabrielle Williams MP, noting our earlier request for further detail about the proposed legislative changes in respect to short stay accommodation, observing that significant time has elapsed since the announcement of the measure and expressing concern about the efficacy of the proposed action, if it does not include an annual cap on the number of days a property can be rented on a short-term basis.			

2. Writes to the Minister for Planning raising the important issue of the proliferation of short-stay accommodation and its impact on housing supply in light of the current housing crisis and seeking the Minister's advice and views on the appropriateness of the planning system to address this issue and of any plans to do so as part of the Government's planning reform agenda, as well as advice on any other suggested mechanisms for how State and/or Local Government can regulate the extent to which dwellings are being rented out as short-stay accommodation.
3. Notes the success other jurisdictions have had in shifting properties back to long-term housing by installing caps on the number of days they can be available for short stay.
4. Notes the advice provided in the report to the February 2024 Council meeting about the inability to pursue a local law on the basis of the impending legislation and receives a report once more detail is known about the legislation. The report should consider what options there are, particularly in relation to the ability for a local law to impose an annual cap on the number of days a property can be listed as short-stay accommodation and include any advice received from the Minister for Planning.

Progress Comment

Items 1 and 2 actioned with letters sent August 2024.

Item 4 to be actioned.

Director Place and Environment	Council 11/09/2024	Target Date: 30/12/2025	Further Report: Yes
8.3 UPFIELD TRAIN LINE			
That Council:			
1. Receives a report as soon as practicable that identifies the methodology and cost for a survey of people who live north of Batman station who are also current users of the Upfield Line or who have abandoned using the Upfield line. Such a survey would seek to discover: • why people have abandoned using the Upfield Line • changes people have made to their public transport usage because of the unreliability of the train service for people who live north of Batman station			

- whether people would resume using the Upfield train if it was duplicated to improve frequency and reduce cancellations
 - whether people would be attracted to using the Upfield train service if there were one or two extra train stations between Gowrie and Upfield stations.
2. Proposes to our partner Councils in the Northern Alliance of Councils (Banyule, Darebin, Hume, Mitchell Shire, Nillumbik and Whittlesea) that we commission this survey to support advocacy efforts for the Upfield Line duplication and extension.

Progress Comment

Council report scheduled to be submitted at the December 2025 council meeting.

Director Community**Council 12/02/2025****Target Date:**

10/04/2026

Further Report:

Yes

8.3 IMPROVING SAFETY, CLEANLINESS AND WELLBEING OF COMMUNITY AT VICTORIA MALL

That Council receives a report by mid-March that considers:

1. Security

In the interests of public safety, Council extends the current level of Security Services in Victoria Mall with these security services to be trained in and have a focus on de-escalation, for a period of a further 6 months and undertakes a review of the impact of these services within the next 3 months.

2. Cleanliness

Maintains and seeks to increase the cleaning services in the Mall, so that rubbish, tree debris and pigeon droppings are properly managed. In the interests of wellbeing the community should have access to a healthy, hygienic and pleasant public space, that enhances community wellbeing and contributes to a thriving local economy.

3. Community Forum

That Council coordinates a Community Needs and Safety Forum, which is advertised for the public to attend as well as all stakeholders, including Council, traders, service providers, sports clubs, community leaders to have an input into community safety in central Coburg. This forum should consider ways of turning the area in front of the Coburg Library into a community space.

4. Exploring ways to better engage with people displaying dangerous and antisocial behaviour

To keep the community safe, address safety concerns, and reassure shoppers, traders, and the community, Council explores methods for better engaging with people displaying dangerous and antisocial behaviour.

5. Reinstating public seating with back rests and access to shelter in Coburg Mall

In the interests of elderly people, people with mobility issues and others, Council to consider reinstating public seating with back rests in Coburg Mall. Consideration should be given to providing an equivalent amount of public seating to that which was demolished, and some of the new seating to be in front of the library with a table.

Progress Comment

Items 1 and 2 have been actioned. Item 4 has been actioned and appropriate measures are in place.

Item 3, the community forum, is to be organised in 2026 to determine further actions, which will include consideration of item 5.

Director Community	Council 12/02/2025	Target Date: 10/04/2026	Further Report: Yes
8.2	REVIVING PASCOE VALE POOL		
That Council:			
1.	Acknowledges the importance of accessible, high quality local pools for all residents in Merri-bek.		
2.	Recognises that during this Climate Crisis, we have an obligation to take proactive action and ensure that there are spaces for residents to stay cool in increasingly hot summers.		
3.	Requests Officers provide a report that considers the level of investment required for the refurbishment of Pascoe Vale Pool, with a view to:		
	Extending opening hours		

- Improving facilities
- Avoiding unexpected maintenance
- Increasing sustainability
- Advocating to both state and federal levels of government for funding.

4. Revisits the Aquatic and Leisure Strategy for an update.

Progress Comment

A report will be presented to Council in early 2026.

Director City Infrastructure

Council 12/03/2025

Target Date:

30/05/2026

Further Report:

No

8.5 STEPS TOWARDS A MERRI-BEK POLLINATOR BIODIVERSITY CORRIDOR

That Council:

1. As the first step in establishing a Merri-bek Pollinator Corridor, organises a community forum and workshop to develop community participation for establishing a broader pollinator biodiversity corridor across Merri-bek. The forum should aim to connect local action groups and residents and link knowledge among participants. A council-supported workshop can also teach participants to build their own native bee hotels and/or establish an initial pilot site with information about native pollinators with localised habitat restoration (including “bee hotels”) in a visible location.
2. Provides support to the forum in the following ways (among others):
 - a) Supporting a suitably qualified ecologist to present
 - b) Identification and provision of a suitable venue
 - c) Promotion of the community forum and workshop through targeted and general communication
 - d) Provision of materials needed to construct artificial nesting habitat (bee hotels) for the workshop
 - e) Safety and insurance oversight of the community workshop

3. Notes that the information summarised from participants of this forum will help inform on the direction, scope, and scale of a wider pollinator biodiversity corridor in Merri-bek.

Progress Comment

A proposed workshop was intended to be hosted in October but was postponed. There is now an opportunity to align this work with the Native Understorey Planting project as a pilot site/s for this biodiversity corridor forum.

We are currently working to finalise a proposed event plan, a rescheduled date has not yet been set. The proposed pilot site is Park Street reserve, where there is good community engagement opportunity with Brunswick South Primary School.

Chief Executive Officer

Council 12/03/2025

Target Date:

1/03/2026

Further Report:

No

8.2 CONTINUING HIGH QUALITY IN-HOME SUPPORT FOR OLDER RESIDENTS: ADVOCACY TO FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

That Council:

1. Notes the meaningful and important work of Council's aged care workers supporting older residents in Merri-bek to live good lives and remain independent in their own homes.
2. Notes that while this work is predominantly funded by the Federal Government's Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) block grants, Council does subsidise this work through our own budget.
3. Writes to the Federal Ministers, Shadow Ministers and Assistant Ministers for Aged Care and Health advocating to make permanent the Commonwealth Home Support Program block grants that are currently scheduled to end mid-2027 to give certainty to the 30+ Councils in Victoria still delivering these services in-house, to older residents who currently access the program and to Council workers employed through the program.
4. Seeks to convene a meeting this year of Victorian Councils still delivering aged care services in-house supported by the CHSP block grants to coordinate collective advocacy to Federal Government and local Federal MPs in these Councils' areas to make CHSP block funding permanent.
5. Invites the Australian Services Union to participate in the above meeting and advocacy efforts.

Progress Comment

Point 1 & 2 - No action required, for noting only.

Point 3 - Complete.

Point 4 and 5 - Australian Services Union will be invited to participate in the public roundtable.

Director Community

Council 14/05/2025

Target Date:

26/06/2026

Further Report:

No

8.3 HONOURING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF JOE SAM LUPPINO

That Council:

1. Formally recognises and honors the outstanding contribution of Joe Sam Luppino by naming the grandstand at Coburg City Oval the "Joe Sam Luppino Stand".
2. Should this not be deemed suitable, identifies and considers an alternative location or facility within Merri-bek to appropriately commemorate Joe's legacy and service to the community.

Progress Comment

This naming process is currently underway with delivery expected for 2026.

Chief Executive Officer

Council 11/06/2025

Target Date:

1/03/2026

Further Report:

No

8.1 ABOLISHING SUB MINIMUM WAGES FOR DISABLED WORKERS

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/1Dj4N8NtD9RKj7eyPgKkIPggKI2aONCrwBOEzjrElg/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.

Progress Comment

Point 1, 2 and 3 Complete.

4 a) This will be considered within the upcoming grants policy guidelines review. Commencing early 2026.

b) In progress

Director Place and Environment**Council 13/08/2025****Target Date:****Further Report:**

31/03/2026

No

8.1**JOHN ENGLART RECOGNITION**

That Council:

1. Recognises the significant contribution that John Englart made to the Merri-bek community over many years.
2. Initiates a discussion with John Englart's family and the community groups that John was most associated with, to plan a suitable way of commemorating his work.

Progress Comment

A discussion with John Englart's family and the community groups he was most associated will be initiated at a mutually convenient time before the end of March 2026.

Director Place and Environment**Council 10/09/2025****Target Date:****Further Report:**

30/12/2025

Yes

8.4 SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC HOUSING STATEMENT

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

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

Progress Comment

A report is to be presented at the December 2025 Council meeting.

Director Place and Environment	Council 10/09/2025	Target Date: 24/12/2025	Further Report: No
8.9 URGENT ACTION REQUIRED ON ROAD SAFETY: RECENT FATAL INCIDENTS ON MORELAND ROAD			
That Council:			
1. Recognises two recent deaths on the state-controlled Moreland Road, of a cyclist on 25 August and a skateboarder in mid-May, both caused by motorists. 2. Acknowledges the urgent need for a safer road environment for vulnerable users along Moreland Road. 3. Writes to the Minister for Transport and relevant Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) officials to request: a) An immediate safety audit of Moreland Road. b) Implementation of priority interventions at Murdock Street, Gordon Street, and other high-risk locations. c) That the State government fund and deliver safety enhancements including pedestrian crossings, speed reductions, infrastructure upgrades, safe cycling infrastructure and road user awareness campaigns.			
Progress Comment			
Supporting documentation is being prepared to inform requests for road safety interventions and priority crossing investment on state roads. This work will inform the letter to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety.			
Director City Infrastructure	Council 10/09/2025	Target Date: 30/03/2026	Further Report: Yes
8.6 ADDRESSING TYRE DUMPING			

That Council:

1. Writes to the Minister for Environment requesting the State:
 - a) bolsters Environment Protection Authority (EPA) resourcing and powers to deal with the prevalence of illegal tyre dumping; and
 - b) invests in Recycling Victoria programs that improve access to appropriate waste disposal and recycling facilities and develop end-markets for the use of recycled tyre materials
2. Works with Tyre Stewardship Australia to develop and deliver public education programs and initiatives that support the Recycling Victoria programs.
3. Monitors illegal tyre dumping on Council owned land at known dumping sites for six months.
4. Explores opportunities to collaborate with our neighbouring councils to develop a regional response to tackle a common problem.
5. Receives a report back to Council within nine months on progress, including potential pilot programs or partnerships to reduce illegal tyre dumping in Merri-bek.

Progress Comment

Work on actioning this resolution has commenced and is on track to report back in March 2026.

7.8 2025-26 FIRST QUARTER FINANCIAL REPORT

Acting Director Business Transformation, Anita Curnow

Financial Services

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the 2025-26 First Quarter Financial Report for the period ending 30 September 2025, including operating performance and capital performance at Attachment 1.
2. Notes the status of the capital works program for 2025-26.
3. Notes the increase to the full-year forecast for operating income of \$9.2 million and the increase to operating expenditure of \$6.0 million arising from the 2025-26 First Quarter Financial Review.
4. Approves a decrease of \$2.7 million to the transfer to the Significant Projects Reserve (to \$1.8 million) in 2025-26 to fund additional expenditure relating to the Elevate Transformation Program and the bring forward of the Coburg basketball feasibility study. This reduction will be offset by a corresponding increase to the reserve in the 2026-2030 budget.
5. Endorses the full-year capital expenditure forecast of \$102.9 million, arising from the 2025-26 First Quarter Financial Review.
6. Carries forward the following capital project funding to the 2026-27 Capital Works Program:
 - a) Fully or partially grant funded projects to be carried forward if the funding is secured and received this financial year:
 - AG Gillon Stormwater Harvesting - \$1,000,000
 - Coburg Bluestone Cottage Complex Redevelopment - \$611,324.
 - b) Rates funded projects:
 - Bin Purchases (waste charge funded) - \$2,258,519
 - West Street Neighbourhood Streetscape - \$1,000,000
 - DeChene Reserve - Gender Inclusive Facilities - \$700,421
 - Coburg Outdoor Pool - 8 X 15 Toddlers Pool - \$175,000
 - Fawkner Library Upgrade Works - \$70,000.
7. Brings forward the following capital project funding to the 2025-26 Capital Works Program:
 - Brunswick Early Years Hub (grant funded) - \$261,663
 - Coburg Olympic Pool - Repainting - \$135,000
 - Balfe Park Sportsfield Redevelopment - \$50,000.
8. Approves funding for the following new projects in the 2025-26 Capital Works Program:
 - Fawkner Netball Club Roof (grant funded) - \$4,560,000
 - Jukes Rd & William St, Fawkner - Priority Crossing (grant funded) - \$437,000
 - Blackspot Project - Intersection of Widford St & View St, Glenroy (grant funded) - \$263,900
 - Raised Crossing - Everett St & Moreland Rd (SLRSP) (grant funded) - \$184,000
 - Electric Vehicle Chargers (externally funded) - \$170,000 (previously budgeted as operating)
 - Emergency Road Works - Ivy St, Brunswick - \$104,010
 - Blackspot Project - Intersection of Albert St & Wilkinson St, Brunswick (grant funded) - \$57,330

- Brunswick Bowls Club - \$16,646
 - Albion St/Lillian St Rectification - \$15,000
 - Glenroy Community Hub - Electrical Works - \$10,815
 - Coburg Lake Bridge Rectification Works - \$10,620.
9. Approves additional funding for the following existing projects in the 2025-26 Capital Works Program:
- Mitchell Parade Retaining Walls (grant funded) - \$1,068,852
 - Drainage, Moama Crescent and Jhonson Street - Hot Spot No 21 - \$381,650
 - Victoria St - Streets for People (grant funded) - \$374,000
 - York Street Park Close to Home (reserve funded) - \$265,374
 - Rehabilitation, Moonee Pde from Jewel to Union - \$245,000
 - Wombat Crossings - Barrow St & Blair St, Coburg - \$200,000
 - Brunswick City Baths Repainting & Renewal - \$174,345
 - Road Reconstruction, Katawa Grove from Cooraminta to Dead End - \$168,000
 - 40 km/h Rollout - Traffic Calming - \$100,000
 - South Street - Engeny Hot Spot No 12 - \$99,404
 - Richards Reserve Natural Turf Renewal - \$85,485
 - South Street from Jensen to West, Road Reconstruction - \$82,866
 - Fawkner Leisure Centre Redevelopment - \$55,195
 - South Street from Dickinson to Everitt, Road Reconstruction - \$51,421
 - Park Renewal - Soudan St (reserve funded) - \$48,599
 - Building Maintenance - Capital Purchases - \$28,138
 - Fallon St From Union to Collier Both Carriageways - \$16,889
 - Park Renewal - Beccles / Oulton Reserve (reserve funded) - \$12,974
 - Tyson Street from Jukes Rd to Denys Street, Road Reconstruction - \$12,028
 - Mobile Phone Purchases - \$15,408
 - Shade Sail Installation - Anne Sgro Child Care (grant funded) - \$6,302.
10. Notes savings realised from the following existing projects in the 2025-26 Capital Works Program:
- Road Reconstruction, O’Hea Street from Lonsdale St to Clifton Grove - \$548,786
 - Road Reconstruction, O’Hea Street from Montefiore St to Lonsdale St - \$425,878
 - Road Reconstruction, O’Hea Street from Sussex St to Bishop St - \$356,397
 - Road Reconstruction, O’Hea Street from Bishop St to Montefiore St - \$350,514
 - Road Reconstruction, Dalgety Street from Hope to Whitby - \$325,000
 - Road Reconstruction, Devon Street from View to Oak - \$300,000
 - Park Renewal, Cox Reserve, including playground upgrade (reserve funded) - \$227,239
 - School Active Travel and Safety Infrastructure - \$200,000
 - Road Reconstruction, Garden Street from Belfast to Glenlyon (both Carriageways) - \$165,237
 - Road Safety and Amenity Improvements Program - \$143,000
 - Wombat Crossing - Albion to Melville - \$115,000
 - Coburg North Sports Hub Upgrades - \$95,755
 - Patterson Street from Tinning to Albion, Road Reconstruction - \$26,760
 - Parker Reserve - Baseball - Change Room & Refurbishment - \$25,000
 - Snell Gve-Public Toilet-Snell Gve, Oak Park - \$15,859
 - Fawkner Community Hall - CB Smith Reserve - \$7,000.

Executive Summary

The First Quarter Financial Report gives an overview of Council's performance through delivery of the budget. It compares the actual revenue and expenditure with the budgeted revenue and expenditure year to date (YTD) and assesses the financial performance in the first quarter to determine a forecast outcome for 30 June 2026.

A detailed financial review was undertaken across the organisation in October 2025 to form the 2025-26 First Quarter Financial Review (Q1 Forecast). This process provided Council the opportunity to review its YTD performance and reallocate available financial resources to maximise the delivery on its strategic objectives. The results of this review are included in this report as the Q1 Forecast.

For the three months ended 30 September 2025, Council has achieved an operating surplus result of \$161.4 million which is \$1.6 million (1%) more than the YTD budget of \$159.9 million. It is important to note that the 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 Fawcner Leisure Centre redevelopment and Balam Balam Place.

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

Council's forecast adjusted underlying surplus of \$17.0 million is \$5.0 million less than the adopted budget of \$22.0 million. This result is important as it measures Council's ability to generate a surplus in the ordinary course of business – excluding non-recurrent capital grants, non-monetary asset contributions, and other contributions to fund capital expenditure from net results.

Although the Q1 underlying result remains a surplus, the lower surplus compared to the adopted budget indicates a decline in the operating position. It should also be noted that of the \$5.0 million, \$2.7 million relates to the Elevate Program and Coburg basketball feasibility study, which will be funded by a reduced transfer to the Significant Projects Reserve in 2025-26.

After budgeted transfers to reserves, a deficit (negative) unrestricted result of \$0.7 million has been forecasted. This is primarily due to an additional \$1.0 million of rates funded capital projects.

Council has spent \$9.1 million on capital expenditure as at the end of September which is \$0.3 million (3%) less than the YTD budget of \$9.4 million, with \$84.8 (90.3%) of the adopted full year budget remaining.

After a detailed review of the capital works program, there is a forecast increase of \$9.0 million from the adopted budget of \$93.9 to \$102.9 million. This is primarily due to 35 projects requiring additional funding of \$9.3 million and \$8.4 million of additional carry forwards from 2024-25, offset by \$5.8 million of carry forwards into 2026-27 and \$3.3 million of savings.

Previous Council Decisions

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

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

- 1. Approves 'in principle' the Financial and Performance Statements 2024-25.*
- 2. Authorises the Mayor, Cr Helen Davidson, Deputy Mayor, Cr Helen Politis, and the Chief Executive Officer, Cathy Henderson, to certify the Financial and Performance Statements for 2024-25 in their final form.*

3. Carries forward the \$473,339 of tied operating funding that were not spent as of 30 June 2025.
4. Carries forward the \$32,410,329 of capital project funds into the 2025/26 Capital Works Program.
5. Authorises the Principal Accounting Officer to implement any minor administrative changes to the Financial and Performance Statements for 2024-25 if recommended by the Auditor-General upon final review, for approval by the Chief Executive Officer.

1. Policy Context

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

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

2. Background

Section 97 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires that the Chief Executive Officer must ensure that a quarterly budget report is presented to Council at a Council meeting which is open to the public after the end of each quarter of the financial year.

The purpose of this report is to compare the actual and budgeted results to date and provide an explanation of any material variations. This report also includes the Q1 Forecast which assesses the financial trends that have occurred in the first quarter of the 2025-26 financial year to determine a forecast outcome for 30 June 2026.

3. Issues

Operating Performance Summary

	Year to Date			Full Year		
	Actual	Adopted Budget	Variance Fav / (Unfav)	Adopted Budget	Q1 Forecast	Variance Fav / (Unfav)
	(\$'000)	(\$'000)	(\$'000)	(\$'000)	(\$'000)	(\$'000)
Income / revenue	220,191	218,912	1,279	281,292	290,487	9,195
Expenditure	58,743	59,027	284	237,964	243,947	(5,983)
Surplus / (deficit)	161,448	159,885	1,563	43,328	46,540	3,212
Adjusted underlying surplus	157,650	157,672	(22)	22,040	17,014	(5,025)
Unrestricted result	152,323	150,404	1,919	504	(741)	(1,245)

Year to Date Result (against adopted budget)

For the three months ended 30 September 2025, Council had an operating surplus of \$161.4 million was \$1.6 million (1%) more than the year to date (YTD) budget of \$159.9 million.

Revenue of \$220.2 million was \$1.3 million (1%) more than the YTD budget of \$218.9 million and expenditure of \$58.7 million was \$0.3 million (0%) favourable compared to the YTD budget of \$59.0 million.

The main drivers for the YTD favourable variance compared to the adopted budget are:

Revenue

- Grants – Capital ended \$1.2 million favourable due to Roads projects which had \$0.5 million grants receipted earlier than budgeted.

Expenditure

- Contracts, Materials and Services ended \$1.6 million favourable due to \$0.5 million insurance policy savings (permanent), as well as other timing delays across IT (timing).
- Employee Benefits ended \$0.8 million unfavourable due to higher than anticipated leave provision growth (\$0.4 million) and Workcover premiums (\$0.3 million)

Forecast Year End Result (forecast movement)

Council adopted the 2025-26 budget projecting a surplus of \$43.3 million in June 2025.

Following a detailed review across the organisation in October 2025, Council has completed a revised forecast with full year projections now showing a surplus of \$46.5 million, a favourable movement of \$3.2 million.

Revenue

The forecast for revenue is an increase of \$9.2 million, comprising of:

- Contributions Monetary is forecast to increase by \$1.5 million due to the reallocation of the revenue budget for the Kendall/Harding Footbridge project. This is offset by a decrease in Capital Grants.
- Capital Grants are forecast to increase by \$6.7 million primarily due to additional capital carry forwards from 2024-25 which are grant funded (\$2.2 million) and additional grant funded projects of \$7.1 million, offset by \$1.5 million reclassified as Contributions Monetary for the Kendall/Harding Footbridge project and \$1.2 million of grant funded projects carried forward into 2026-27.

Expenditure

The forecast for expenditure is an increase of \$6.0 million, comprising of:

- Contracts, Materials & Services are forecast to increase by \$4.9 million primarily due to increases relating to the Elevate Transformation Program being brought forward (\$2.5 million), Coburg Central Revitalisation (\$0.4 million), and Coburg basketball feasibility study funding being brought forward (\$0.2 million).

Council's forecast adjusted underlying surplus of \$17.0 million is \$5.0 million less than the adopted budget. This result is important as it measures Council's ability to generate a surplus in the ordinary course of business - excluding non-recurrent capital grants, non-monetary asset contributions, and other contributions to fund capital expenditure from net results.

A surplus or increasing surplus suggests an improvement in the operating position. Although the Q1 result remains a surplus, the lower surplus compared to the adopted budget indicates a decline in the operating position. It should also be noted that of the \$5.0 million, \$2.7 million relates to the Elevate Transformation Program and Coburg basketball feasibility study, which will be funded by a reduced transfer to the Significant Projects Reserve in 2025-26. This reduction will be offset by a corresponding increase to the reserve in the 2027-2030 budget.

Significant Project Reserve -

Balance at 30 June	2025-26 (\$'000)	2026-27 (\$'000)	2027-28 (\$'000)	2028-29 (\$'000)
Adopted Budget	4,354	17,910	23,829	27,416
Q1 Forecast	1,687	17,910	23,829	27,416

After budgeted transfers to reserves, a negative unrestricted result of \$0.7 million has been forecast from the surplus. This is primarily due to an additional \$1.0 million of rates funded capital projects.

Capital Performance Summary

	Year to Date			Full Year		
	Actual	Adopted Budget	Variance Fav / (Unfav)	Adopted Budget	Q1 Forecast	Variance Fav / (Unfav)
	(\$'000)	(\$'000)	(\$'000)	(\$'000)	(\$'000)	(\$'000)
Property	1,601	1,217	(384)	16,445	18,891	(2,446)
Plant and equipment	1,003	561	(442)	8,302	8,965	(663)
Infrastructure	6,517	7,616	1,099	69,140	75,023	(5,883)
Total capital works	9,121	9,395	274	93,887	102,878	(8,991)

Year to Date Result (against adopted budget)

For the three months ended 30 September 2025, Council's capital expenditure of \$9.1 million was \$0.3 million (3%) below the YTD budget, with \$84.8 million (90.3%) of the full year budget remaining.

Forecast Year End Result (forecast movement)

The capital works program is forecast to increase by \$9.0 million from the adopted budget of \$93.9 million to \$102.9 million as the result of:

- 35 projects requiring additional funding of \$9.3 million;
- \$8.4 million of additional carry forwards from 2024-25;
- \$5.8 million of carry forwards into 2026-27 identified in the Q1 forecast;
- \$3.3 million of savings; and
- \$0.4 million brought forward from 2026-27 and 2029-30.

There remains \$93.8 million (91%) of the capital revised forecast to be spent.

Further details of the forecast movement are included under **Attachment 2**.

Financial Position Summary

	Year to Date			Full Year		
	Actual	Adopted Budget	Variance Fav / (Unfav)	Adopted Budget	Q1 Forecast	Variance Fav / (Unfav)
	(\$'000)	(\$'000)	(\$'000)	(\$'000)	(\$'000)	(\$'000)
Cash and investments	99,431	96,116	3,315	73,196	67,889	(5,307)
Net current assets	257,431	104,856	152,575	62,966	57,187	(5,779)
Net assets and total equity	2,922,979	2,761,430	161,549	3,068,272	3,071,484	3,212

Year to Date Result

The financial position at 30 September 2025 shows a cash and investment balance of \$99.4 million which is \$3.3 million more than the YTD budget. This variance is primarily due to timing differences in receipt of rates and payments to suppliers.

Forecast Year End Result (forecast movement)

The forecast financial position for 30 June 2026 is a cash and investment position of \$67.9 million (a decrease of \$5.3 million) and net current assets of \$57.2 million (a decrease of \$5.8 million). These decreases are primarily due to a forecast increase in expenditure on materials and services (excluding the Elevate Transformation Program and Coburg basketball feasibility study) of \$2.2 million, and an increase in the capital works program (excluding grant funded projects) of \$2.2 million.

Cash and cash equivalents compared to current liabilities are forecast to be 109.9 per cent at 30 June 2026. This indicator measures whether a Council can generate sufficient cash to pay its commitments on time. Overall cash levels (both restricted and unrestricted) have remained consistent over the past few years, however, the split between unrestricted (less than 90 days) and restricted (greater than 90 days) has shifted to gain the best investment opportunities.

Council Resolutions included in the Q1 forecast

Council Report	Council Meeting	Source	\$
7.14 Contract Award: RFT-2025-17 Road Reconstruction, O'Hea Street, Sussex Street to Clifton Grove	July 2025	Rates	(1,681,575)
7.22 Contract Award: RFT-2025-24 Road Reconstruction Katawa Grove, Brunswick (Cooraminta Street to Dead End) and Drainage Along Cooraminta Street (Blyth Street to Katawa Grove)	August 2025	Rates	168,000
Rates funded resolutions			(1,513,575)
7.21 Contract Award: RFT-2025-10 Retaining Wall Reconstruction at Mitchell Parade, Pascoe Vale South	August 2025	Grants	1,068,852
Grant funded resolutions			1,068,852
7.13 Contract Award: RFT-2025-15 York Street Landscape Construction	July 2025	Reserves	265,374
Reserves funded resolutions			265,374
Total savings			(179,349)

Key Definitions

Surplus – is reported based on the Australian Accounting Standards and includes all operating income and expenditure recognised in the financial period, including gifted subdivisional assets (non-monetary), developer contributions and grants towards capital works projects. It is important to note that the surplus is not a cash surplus. It does not convert to immediately available cash for Council. Significant amounts of the surplus are restricted by legislation and must be used for future infrastructure investment.

Adjusted underlying surplus – is the surplus for the year adjusted for non-recurrent capital grants and contributions. It is an accepted measure of financial sustainability as it is not impacted by non-recurring or once-off items of revenue and expenses that can often mask the operating results.

Unrestricted result – this is the net funding result after considering the funding requirements to meet loan principal repayments and transfers to and from reserves.

Solvency Assessment

Council officers have reviewed Council's liquidity (Current Assets divided by Current Liabilities), and the revised forecast is 1.9. The Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) recommends that this ratio be 1.5 or higher. This is a positive result and shows that Council is solvent.

Human Rights Consideration

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. There are no Human Rights impacts.

4. Community Consultation and Engagement

Community consultation and engagement was not required for this report as it reflects the performance against the budget and delivery of the capital works program.

Advice was sought from officers across Council to provide performance results for the First Quarter Financial Review.

Affected persons rights and interests

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

5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

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

6. Financial and Resources Implications

The overall corporate objective is to deliver the 2025-26 budget with the best possible outcome for Council and the community, and in line with the approved revised forecast targets.

7. Implementation

Subject to Council's decision, the matters outlined in the First Quarter Financial Report will be implemented.

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

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|------------|
| <u>1</u> | Council Quarterly Financial Report - September 2025 | D25/567200 |
| <u>2</u> | 2025-26 First Quarter Financial Review - Capital Projects | D25/567578 |



Council Quarterly Financial Management Report

3 Months Ended September 2025

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Executive Summary

Operating Performance

For the three months ended 30 September 2025, Council recorded an operating surplus of \$161.4 million which is \$1.6 million (1%) more than the year to date (YTD) budget of \$159.9 million. This comprises total revenue of \$220.2 million which is \$1.3 million (1%) more than the YTD budget of \$218.9 million and total expenditure of \$58.7 million which is \$0.3 million (0%) favourable compared to the YTD budget of \$59 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	220,191	218,912	1,279	1%	281,292	290,487	9,195
Total Expenses	58,743	59,027	284	0%	237,964	243,947	(5,983)
Surplus/(Deficit)	161,448	159,885	1,563	1%	43,328	46,540	3,212

YTD favourable variance in revenue is driven by \$1.2 million relating to Capital Government Grants. Roads projects had \$0.5 million invoiced earlier than forecasted. YTD favourable variance in expenses of \$0.3 million due to savings in insurance policies (\$0.3 million).

Capital Works Program

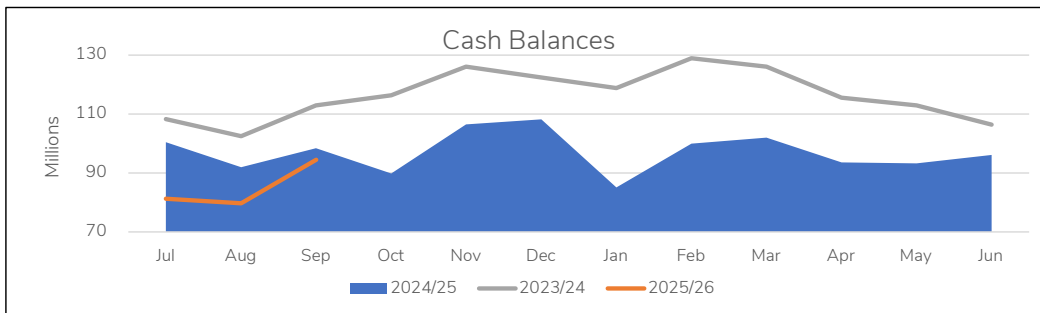
Council has spent \$9.1 million on capital expenditure to 30 September 2025, which is \$0.3 million (3%) less than YTD original budget, with \$84.8 million (90.3%) of the full year budget remaining. The variance is driven by overspends to the budget for Parks, Open Space & Streetscapes projects (\$0.9 million), Building Improvements projects (\$0.4 million) and Plant, Machinery & Equipment projects (\$0.4 million). This is offset by underspends in Recreational, Leisure & Community Facilities projects (\$0.9 million) and Footpaths and Cycleways projects (\$0.9 million).

Financial Results Summary	YTD Actuals \$'000	YTD Budget \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	YTD Variance %	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
New asset expenditure	1,523	914	(609)	(67%)	12,345	12,903	(558)
Asset renewal expenditure	5,281	5,575	294	5%	60,648	62,638	(1,990)
Asset upgrade expenditure	2,317	2,906	588	20%	20,894	27,337	(6,443)
Total capital works expenditure	9,121	9,395	274	3%	93,887	102,878	(8,991)

Cash & Investments

Cash assets are \$94.4 million as at 30 September 2025. This is a decrease of \$1.7 million on 30 June 2025 cash levels, mainly as a result of the delay of receiving the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) grant. Cash fluctuates frequently over the year due to a number of factors, mainly due to the timing of when the rates instalments fall due.

Of the \$94.4 million cash assets, \$84.4 million is convertible to cash in less than 60 days and \$50.0 million (89.3%) is held in green investments. The portfolio is in compliance with Council policy which requires at least \$20.0 million to be convertible to cash and green investments to make up greater than 70% of all investments.



Operating Performance

Income Statement

YTD Variance (\$)		YTD Variance (%)	
▲	> \$500k	▲	> 10%
■	< \$500k & > (\$500k)	■	< 10% & > (10%)
▼	< (\$500k)	▼	< (10%)

Income Statement	Notes	YTD Actuals \$'000	YTD Budget \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	YTD Variance %	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
Revenue								
Rates and charges		202,212	201,987	▲ 225	0%	202,778	202,802	▲ 24
Statutory fees and fines		5,577	5,209	▲ 368	7%	19,323	19,665	▲ 342
User Fees		1,518	1,504	▲ 14	1%	8,899	9,138	▲ 239
Contributions - Monetary		2,548	2,187	▲ 362	17%	8,232	9,773	▲ 1,541
Grants - Operating	1	4,786	6,089	▼ (1,302)	(21%)	21,205	21,373	▲ 167
Grants - Capital		1,211	-	▲ 1,211	0%	12,964	19,648	▲ 6,684
Other Revenue		2,300	1,911	▲ 389	20%	7,797	7,983	▲ 186
Asset Sales		39	26	▲ 13	48%	92	105	▲ 13
Total Revenue		220,191	218,912	▲ 1,279	1%	281,292	290,487	▲ 9,195
Expenses								
Employee Benefits		27,313	26,508	▲ (804)	(3%)	116,144	116,766	▲ (622)
Contracts, Materials & Services		18,960	20,524	▲ 1,564	8%	73,203	78,099	▲ (4,895)
Depreciation		10,905	10,905	-	0%	43,621	43,621	-
Amortisation		59	59	0	0%	236	236	0
Bad and doubtful debts		1,208	743	▲ (465)	(63%)	3,153	3,633	▲ (480)
Finance Costs		200	191	▲ (9)	(5%)	816	825	▲ (9)
Other Expenses		98	96	▲ (2)	(2%)	790	767	▲ 23
Total Expenses		58,743	59,027	▲ 284	0%	237,965	243,947	▲ (5,983)
Net Result		161,448	159,885	▲ 1,563	1%	43,329	46,540	▲ 3,212

Notes

Revenue

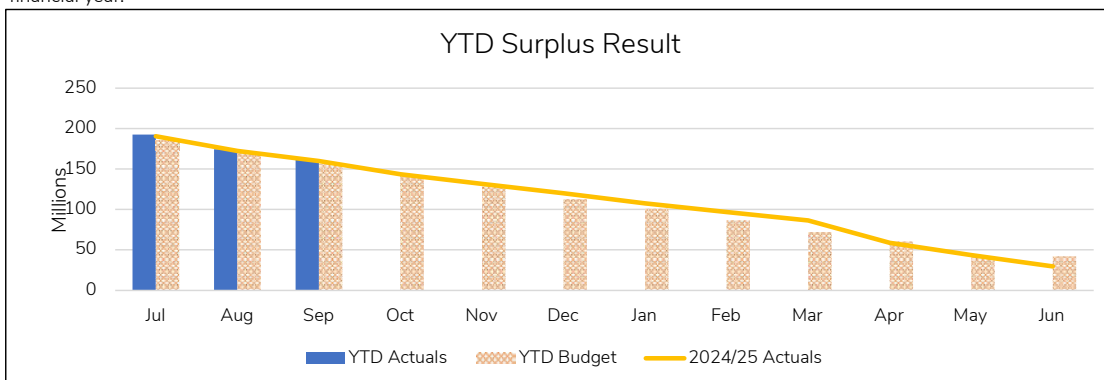
1. **Grants - Operating** ended \$1.3 million (21%) unfavourable primarily due to delays in the receipt of the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) Grants (\$1.3 million). This variance will be resolved in the coming months when payment is received.

Expenses

There was no expenditure that was favourable or unfavourable that reached the reportable threshold for the 3 months ending September. Expenditure has been on track since the budget was phased in July.

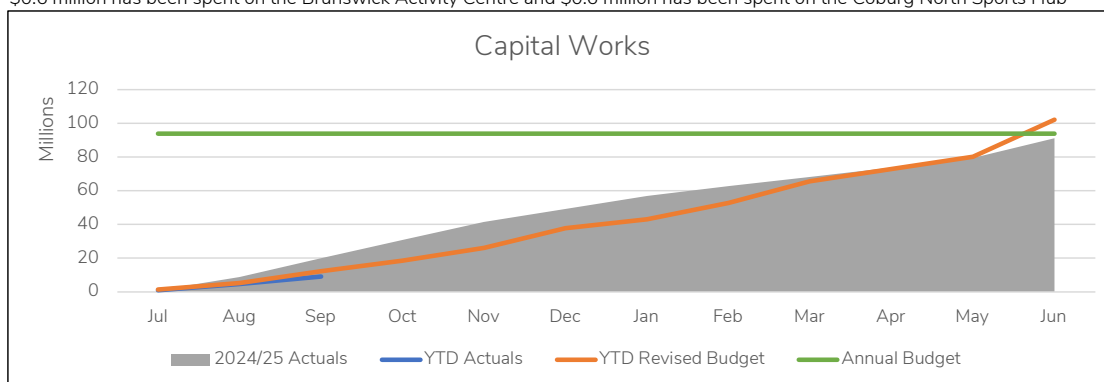
YTD Operating Result

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.

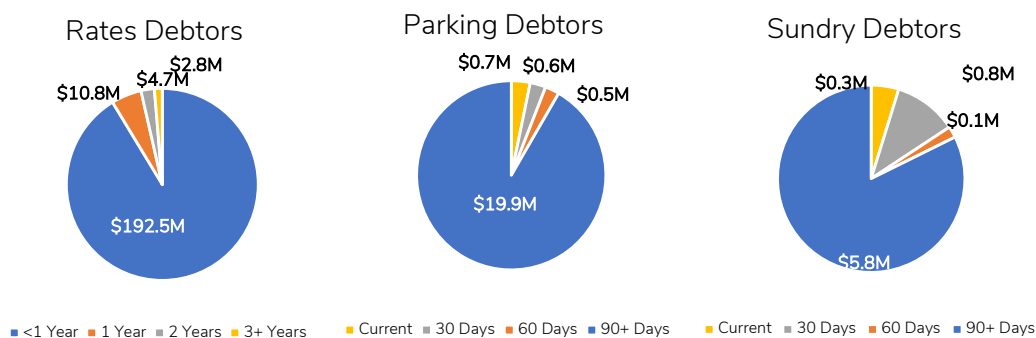


Capital Works

Council has spent \$9.1 million on capital expenditure to 30 September 2025 which is \$3 million (25%) lower than the YTD revised budget, with \$84.8 million (90%) of the full year budget remaining. The capital revised budget of \$102.9 million reflects the adopted 2025-26 budget, an additional \$8.4 million of carry forwards from 2024-25 and Q1 variations totalling \$0.7 million. Year to Date, \$0.6 million has been spent on the Brunswick Activity Centre and \$0.6 million has been spent on the Coburg North Sports Hub

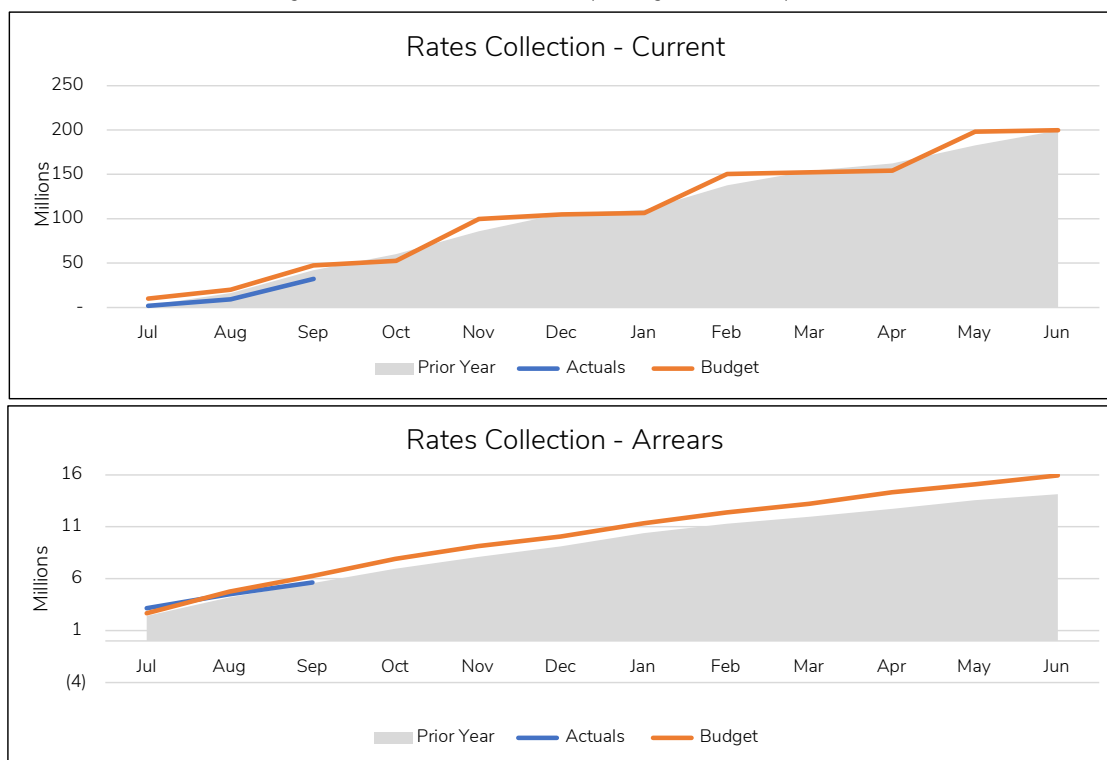


Debtors



Rates Collection

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



Investments

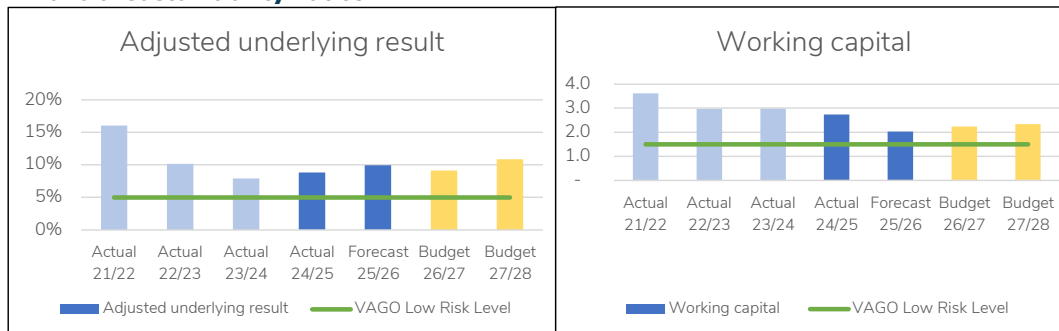
Of the \$94.4 million cash assets, \$84.4 million is convertible to cash in less than 60 days and \$50.0 million (89.3%) is held in green investments. The portfolio is in compliance with Council policy which requires at least \$20.0 million to be convertible to cash and green investments to make up greater 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	107	
Westpac	N/A		4.20%	A-1+	28,202	
Westpac	N/A		4.30%	A-1+	10,121	
ME Bank - 2	18/11/2025	100%	4.00%	A-2	5,000	8.9%
Bendigo Bank - 2	23/12/2025	100%	3.90%	A-2	5,000	17.9%
Bendigo Bank - 2	18/11/2025	100%	4.00%	A-2	5,000	
Suncorp - 3	23/12/2025	100%	3.81%	A-1	10,000	17.9%
IMB - 3	1/10/2025	100%	4.20%	A-2	10,000	26.8%
IMB - 3	8/10/2025	100%	4.20%	A-2	5,000	
Westpac - 6	27/02/2026	100%	4.14%	A-1+	4,000	17.9%
Westpac - 6	10/10/2025	100%	4.36%	A-1+	6,000	
CBA - 3	29/10/2025		4.19%	A-1+	6,000	10.7%
Total		89%			94,431	100.0%
Green					50,000	89.3%

* Minor cash includes NAB holding account and Petty Cash

Financial Sustainability

Financial Sustainability Ratios

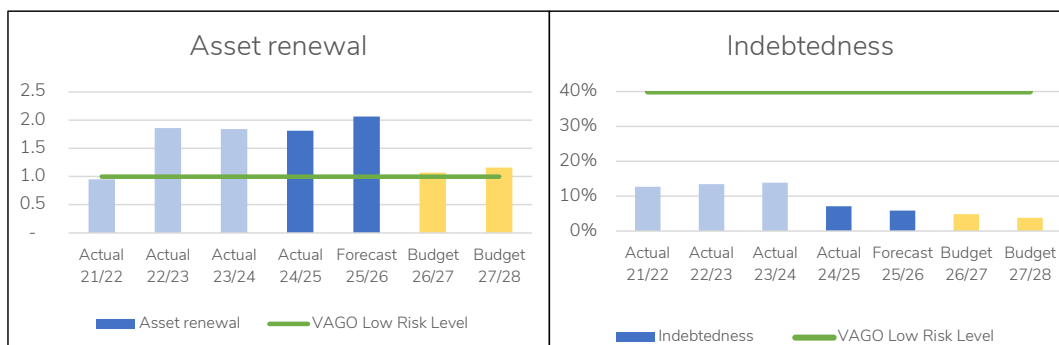


Adjusted underlying surplus (deficit) / adjusted underlying revenue

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)

		Target	Forecast
Interest Cover	EBITDA/Interest Expense	> 2	109
Interest Bearing Loans	Interest Bearing Liabilities/Own Source Revenue	< 60%	6%

TCV financing is conditional upon the Council maintaining a sustainable financial position when measured by the interest cover and interest bearing loans ratios. Forecast results indicate that the Council is meeting the minimum requirements. TCV loan requirements are well within target given limited borrowing compared to own source revenue and liability obligations.

Standard Statements

Comprehensive Income Statement

Comprehensive Income Statement	YTD Actuals \$'000	YTD Budget \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
Revenue						
Rates and charges	202,212	201,987	225	202,778	202,802	24
Statutory fees and fines	5,577	5,209	368	19,323	19,665	342
User Fees	1,518	1,504	14	8,899	9,138	239
Contributions - Monetary	2,548	2,187	362	8,232	9,773	1,541
Grants - Operating	4,786	6,089	(1,302)	21,205	21,373	167
Grants - Capital	1,211	-	1,211	12,964	19,648	6,684
Other Revenue	2,300	1,911	389	7,797	7,983	186
Asset Sales	39	26	13	92	105	13
Total Revenue	220,191	218,912	1,279	281,292	290,487	9,195
Expenses						
Employee Benefits	27,313	26,508	(804)	116,144	116,766	(622)
Contracts, Materials & Services	18,960	20,524	1,564	73,203	78,099	(4,895)
Depreciation	10,905	10,905	-	43,621	43,621	-
Amortisation	59	59	0	236	236	0
Bad and doubtful debts	1,208	743	(465)	3,153	3,633	(480)
Finance Costs	200	191	(9)	816	825	(9)
Other Expenses	98	96	(2)	790	767	23
Total Expenses	58,743	59,027	284	237,964	243,947	(5,983)
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	161,448	159,885	1,563	43,328	46,540	3,212

Underlying Result	YTD Actuals \$'000	YTD Budget \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
Surplus for the Year	161,448	159,885	1,563	43,328	46,540	3,212
Other Comprehensive Income						
Net asset revaluation	-	-	-	49,206	49,206	-
Total Comprehensive Result	161,448	159,885	1,563	92,534	95,746	3,212
Non Operating Income and Expenditure						
Net loss on disposal of assets	(39)	(26)	(13)	(92)	(105)	(13)
Contributions Capital (cash & non-monetary)	(128)	-	(128)	(32)	(1,569)	(1,536)
Grants - Capital	(1,211)	-	(1,211)	(12,964)	(19,648)	(6,684)
PRRLF Reserve	(2,416)	(2,187)	(229)	(8,200)	(8,200)	0
DCP Reserve	(5)	-	(5)	-	(5)	(5)
Net asset revaluation	-	-	-	(49,206)	(49,206)	-
Total Capital Income	(3,798)	(2,213)	(1,585)	(21,289)	(29,526)	(8,238)
Underlying Result	157,650	157,672	(22)	22,040	17,014	(5,025)
Less						
Loan Principal Repayments	505	505	-	14,212	14,209	3
Additional Rates Funded CAPEX	2,423	2,423	-	13,041	9,693	3,348
Transfers to Reserves - Operating	5	1,946	1,941	7,783	8,100	(317)
Transfers from Reserves - Operating	-	-	-	(13,500)	(16,640)	3,140
Carry Forwards processed into FY27	2,393	2,393	-	-	2,393	(2,393)
Total Transfers & Other	5,325	7,267	1,941	21,536	17,756	3,780
Unrestricted Surplus/(Deficit)	152,323	150,404	1,919	504	(741)	(1,245)

Statement of Financial Position

Statement of Financial Position	YTD Actuals \$'000	30/06/25 Actuals \$'000	Movement Inc/(Dec) \$'000	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
Current assets						
Cash and cash equivalents	38,431	36,116	2,314	89	282	193
Trade and other receivables	222,223	41,679	180,544	45,793	45,801	8
Other financial assets	61,000	60,000	1,000	73,107	67,607	(5,500)
Inventories	690	690	-	659	659	-
Prepayments	2,466	3,160	(694)	2,429	2,429	-
Non-current assets classified as held for sale	22,975	22,975	-	-	-	-
Other assets	4,843	4,156	687	2,208	2,208	-
Total current assets	352,627	168,776	183,852	124,284	118,985	(5,299)
Non-current assets						
Unlisted Shares	2	2	-	2	2	-
Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	2,644,286	2,635,161	9,125	2,983,191	2,992,182	8,991
Right-of-use assets	772	813	-	128	128	-
Investments	37,232	37,232	-	36,024	36,024	-
Total non-current assets	2,682,291	2,673,207	9,125	3,019,345	3,028,336	8,991
Total assets	3,034,918	2,841,983	192,976	3,143,629	3,147,322	3,692
Current liabilities						
Payables						
Payables	56,029	20,543	35,486	18,753	18,753	-
Revenue Received in Advance	2,473	2,302	170	6,898	6,898	-
Provisions	21,481	20,923	558	27,110	27,591	480
Interest Bearing Loans and Borrowings	14,209	14,209	-	2,172	2,172	-
Trust Funds & Deposits	910	5,822	(4,912)	6,384	6,384	-
Lease liabilities	94	121	(27)	-	-	-
Total current liabilities	95,196	63,920	31,276	61,318	61,798	480
Non-current liabilities						
Provisions	2,416	2,510	(93)	2,603	2,603	-
Interest-bearing liabilities	13,161	12,961	200	11,437	11,437	-
Lease liabilities	460	457	3	-	-	-
Trust Funds & Deposits	706	706	-	-	-	-
Total non-current liabilities	16,744	16,633	110	14,040	14,040	-
Total liabilities	111,940	80,554	31,386	75,358	75,838	480
Net assets	2,922,979	2,761,430	161,549	3,068,272	3,071,484	3,212
Equity						
Asset revaluation reserves	1,871,459	1,871,459	-	-	-	-
Other reserves	48,559	66,701	(18,142)	2,151,921	2,153,032	1,111
Accumulated surplus	1,002,961	823,270	179,691	916,351	918,452	2,101
Total equity	2,922,979	2,761,430	161,549	3,068,272	3,071,484	3,212

Statement of Cashflows

Statement of Cash Flows	YTD Actuals \$'000 Inflows (Outflows)	Annual Budget \$'000 Inflows (Outflows)	Annual Forecast \$'000 Inflows (Outflows)	Annual Variance \$'000 Inflows (Outflows)
Cash flows from operating activities				
Rates and charges	20,059	199,737	199,759	23
Statutory fees and fines	3,257	18,357	18,692	335
User fees	2,620	8,721	8,960	239
Grants - operating	4,786	21,205	21,373	167
Grants - capital	1,211	12,964	19,648	6,684
Contributions - monetary	2,462	8,232	9,773	1,541
Interest received	978	-	128	128
Trust funds and deposits taken	34,201	41,524	41,524	-
Other receipts	2,168	7,797	7,855	57
Net GST refund/(payment)	1,151	-	-	-
Payments to Employees	(29,522)	(113,670)	(114,292)	(622)
Payments to Suppliers	(12,065)	(73,167)	(78,062)	(4,895)
Trust funds and deposits repaid	(6,195)	(41,414)	(41,414)	-
Other payments	(109)	(790)	(767)	23
Net cash (used in) / provided by operating activities	25,003	89,497	93,177	3,680
Cash flows from investing activities				
Payments for property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	(20,048)	(93,886)	(102,877)	(8,991)
Proceeds from sale of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	91	92	105	13
Payments/(Proceeds) for investments	(1,000)	4,993	4,993	-
Net cash used in investing activities	(20,957)	(88,801)	(97,780)	(8,979)
Cash flows from financing activities				
Finance costs	(200)	(816)	(825)	(9)
Repayment of borrowings	(506)	(14,212)	(14,209)	3
Interest paid - lease liability	(3)	-	-	-
Repayment of lease liabilities	(23)	(20)	(20)	-
Net cash used in financing activities	(732)	(15,048)	(15,054)	(6)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash held	3,314	(14,352)	(19,656)	(5,304)
Cash at beginning of period	36,116	14,441	36,116	21,675
Cash at end of period	39,431	89	16,460	16,371
Cash Position				
Non-restricted Cash at 1 July 2025	36,116	14,441	36,116	21,675
Other Financial Assets at 1 July 2025	60,000	78,100	60,000	(18,100)
Cash & cash equivalents at beginning of financial year	96,116	92,541	96,116	3,575
Non-restricted Cash at end of financial period	38,431	89	282	193
Other Financial Assets at end of financial period	61,000	73,107	67,607	(5,500)
Cash & cash equivalents at end of financial period	99,431	73,196	67,889	(5,307)

Statement of Capital Works

Statement of Capital Works	YTD Actuals \$'000	YTD Forecast \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
Property						
Land	6	-	(6)	-	-	-
Buildings	576	681	105	8,910	5,828	3,082
Building Improvements	1,019	697	(323)	7,535	13,062	(5,528)
Total property	1,601	1,377	(224)	16,445	18,891	(2,446)
Plant and equipment						
Plant, machinery and equipment	526	194	(332)	5,877	6,460	(583)
Fixtures, Fittings and Furniture	31	26	(5)	171	176	(4)
Computers and telecommunications	31	157	126	1,125	1,200	(75)
Artworks	1	6	5	47	47	0
Library books	414	275	(139)	1,082	1,082	0
Total plant and equipment	1,003	657	(346)	8,302	8,965	(663)
Infrastructure						
Roads	2,093	2,926	833	27,223	29,897	(2,674)
Bridges	24	30	6	3,334	3,369	(35)
Footpaths and cycleways	742	1,974	1,232	6,662	7,605	(943)
Drainage	104	135	31	2,946	3,123	(177)
Recreational, leisure & community facilities	1,127	2,155	1,028	14,025	14,648	(623)
Waste management	(4)	200	204	2,183	269	1,914
Parks, open space and streetscapes	2,431	2,639	208	12,767	16,113	(3,346)
Total infrastructure	6,517	10,059	3,542	69,140	75,023	(5,883)
Total capital works expenditure	9,121	12,093	2,972	93,887	102,878	(8,991)
Represented by:						
New asset expenditure	1,523	1,762	239	12,345	12,903	(558)
Asset renewal expenditure	5,281	6,717	1,437	60,648	62,638	(1,990)
Asset upgrade expenditure	2,317	3,614	1,297	20,894	27,337	(6,443)
Total capital works expenditure	9,121	12,093	2,972	93,887	102,878	(8,991)

Procurement reporting

Contracts approved under delegation

This includes a listing of all of the contracts entered under delegation for the month of September.

Contract Description	Contract	Start date	Delegation	Total Contract (excluding GST)
Outdoor Gardening Panel - Panel of 7	RFT-2024-36	18/08/2025	CEO	\$500,000.00
Road Reconstruction: Garden Street, Brunswick (Belfast Road to Glenlyon Road)	RFT-2025-35	5/09/2025	Director	\$469,412.00
Road Reconstruction - Newman Street, Brunswick (Pearson Street to Westbourne Street)	RFT-2025-28	8/09/2025	CEO	\$774,786.00
Provision of Corporate Catering Services - Additional supplier onto panel. Financial remains	RFT-2023-504	11/09/2025	CEO	\$1,333,541.00
Maintenance of Essential Safety Measures - Panel of 2	RFT-P-2025-7	17/09/2025	CEO	\$525,000.00
Road Reconstruction Dalgety Street, Brunswick (Hope Street to Whitby Street)	RFT-2025-38	21/09/2025	CEO	\$617,875.66

Capital Works Program - 2025-26 Q1 Financial Review

Capital Works Program	\$'000
Adopted budget	93,887
Plus	
Additional carry forwards from 2024-25	8,366
Plus	
Q1 variations	625
Q1 forecast	102,879

Q1 Variations	\$'000
New projects requiring funding	5,829
Existing projects requiring additional funding	3,492
Projects requiring a bring forward from 2026-27 & 2029-30	447
Project savings	(3,327)
Projects requiring a carry forward into 2026-27	(5,815)
Q1 variations	625

New projects requiring funding

Project	Adopted Budget + CFs \$	Additional Funding \$	Q1 Forecast \$	Grants \$	Reserves \$	Council \$
Fawkner Netball Club Roof	-	4,560,000	4,560,000	4,560,000		
Jukes Rd & William St, Fawkner - Priority Crossing	-	437,000	437,000	437,000		
Blackspot Project - Intersection of Widford St & View St, Glenroy	-	263,900	263,900	263,900		
Raised Crossing - Everett St & Moreland Rd (SLRSP)	-	184,000	184,000	184,000		
Electric Vehicle Chargers ¹	-	170,000	170,000	170,000		
Emergency Road Works - Ivy St, Brunswick	-	104,010	104,010			104,010
Blackspot Project - Intersection of Albert St & Wilkinson St, Brunswick	-	57,330	57,330	57,330		
Brunswick Bowls Club	-	16,646	16,646			16,646
Albion St/Lillian St Rectification	-	15,000	15,000			15,000
Glenroy Community Hub - Electrical Works	-	10,815	10,815			10,815
Coburg Lake Bridge Rectification Works	-	10,620	10,620			10,620
Total	-	5,829,321	5,829,321	5,672,230	-	157,091

(1) Transfer from operating.

Existing projects requiring additional funding

Project	Adopted Budget + CFs \$	Additional Funding \$	Q1 Forecast \$	Grants \$	Reserves \$	Council \$
Mitchell Parade Retaining Walls	1,116,060	1,068,852	2,184,912	1,068,852		
Drainage, Moama Crescent And Jhonson Street - Hot Spot No 21	150,000	381,650	531,650			381,650
Victoria St - Streets for People	1,842,677	374,000	2,216,677	374,000		
York Street Park Close to Home	910,093	265,374	1,175,467		265,374	
Rehabilitation, Moonnee Pde from Jewel to Union	60,000	245,000	305,000			245,000
Wombat Crossings - Barrow St & Blair St, Coburg	186,095	200,000	386,095			200,000
Brunswick City Baths Repainting & Renewal	528,814	174,345	703,159			174,345
Road Reconstruction, Katawa Grove From Cooraminta To Dead End	700,108	168,000	868,108			168,000
40 km/h Rollout - Traffic Calming	409,064	100,000	509,064			100,000
Richards Reserve Natural Turf Renewal	2,432	85,485	87,917			85,485
South St from Jensen to West, Road Reconstruction	17,142	82,866	100,008			82,866
Park Renewal - Soudan St ¹	61,634	48,599	110,233		48,599	
Building Maintenance - Capital Purchases	-	28,138	28,138			28,138
Park Renewal - Beclles / Oulton Reserve ²	3,400	12,974	16,374		12,974	
Community - mobile phone purchases	-	7,765	7,765			7,765
Director Place & Environ- mobile phone purchases	-	3,498	3,498			3,498
City Infrastructure - mobile phone purchases	-	2,430	2,430			2,430
Business Transformation - mobile phone purchases	-	1,715	1,715			1,715
Projects completed with additional expenditure in 2025-26						
South Street - Engeny Hot Spot No 12	-	99,404	99,404			99,404
Fawkner Leisure Centre Redevelopment	-	55,195	55,195			55,195
South Street from Dickinson to Everitt, Road Reconstruction	-	51,421	51,421			51,421
Fallon St From Union To Collier Both Carriageways	-	16,889	16,889			16,889
Tyson Street from Jukes Rd to Denys Street, Road Reconstruction	-	12,028	12,028			12,028
Shade Sail Installation - Anne Sgro Child Care	-	6,302	6,302	6,302		
Total	5,987,518	3,491,931	9,479,449	1,449,154	326,947	1,715,830

(1) Project also includes the re-allocation of Project Management budget (\$3,328), bringing the Q1 forecast to \$113,561.

(2) Project also includes the re-allocation of Project Management budget (\$5,337), bringing the Q1 forecast to \$21,711.

Projects requiring a bring forward

Project	Adopted Budget + CFs \$	Bring Forward \$	Q1 Forecast \$	Grants \$	Reserves \$	Council \$
Bring forwards from 2026-27						
Brunswick Early Years Hub	-	261,663	261,663	261,663		
Coburg Olympic Pool - Repainting	-	135,000	135,000			135,000
Bring forwards from 2029-30						
Balle Park Sportsfield Redevelopment	-	50,000	50,000			50,000
Total	-	446,663	446,663	261,663	-	185,000

Projects with savings

Project	Adopted Budget + CFs \$	Savings \$	Q1 Forecast \$	Grants \$	Reserves \$	Council \$
Road Reconstruction, OHea Street From Lonsdale St to Clifton Grove	1,484,101	(548,786)	935,315			(548,786)
Road Reconstruction, OHea Street From Montefiore St to Lonsdale St	1,595,878	(425,878)	1,170,000			(425,878)
Road Reconstruction, OHea Street From Sussex St to Bishop St	966,397	(356,397)	610,000			(356,397)
Road Reconstruction, OHea Street From Bishop St to Montefiore St	960,514	(350,514)	610,000			(350,514)
Road Reconstruction, Dalgely Street From Hope To Whitby	945,940	(325,000)	620,940			(325,000)
Road Reconstruction, Devon Street From View To Oak	1,176,600	(300,000)	876,600			(300,000)
Park Renewal, Cox Reserve, including playground upgrade	280,000	(227,239)	52,761		(227,239)	
School Active Travel and Safety Infrastructure	500,000	(200,000)	300,000			(200,000)
Road Reconstruction, Garden Street From Belfast To Glenlyon (both Carriageways)	634,920	(165,237)	469,683			(165,237)
Road Safety and Amenity Improvements Program	1,114,760	(143,000)	971,760			(143,000)
Wombat Crossing - Albion to Melville	115,000	(115,000)	-			(115,000)
Coburg North Sports Hub Upgrades ¹	1,788,212	(95,755)	1,692,457	(87,695)		(8,060)
Patterson Street from Tinning to Albion, Road Reconstruction	243,017	(26,760)	216,257			(26,760)
Parker Reserve - Baseball - Change Room & Refurbishment	138,589	(25,000)	113,589			(25,000)
Snell Gve-Public Toilet-Snell Gve, Oak Park	67,719	(15,859)	51,860			(15,859)
Fawkner Community Hall - CB Smith Reserve	7,000	(7,000)	-			(7,000)
Total	12,018,647	(3,327,426)	8,691,221	(87,695)	(227,239)	(3,012,492)

(1) Transfer to operating - Coburg North Sports Hub Masterplan.

Capital carry forwards into 2026-27

Project and Delay Reason	Expected Completion Date	Adopted Budget + CFs \$	Carry Forward \$	Q1 Forecast \$	Grants \$	Reserves \$	Council \$
<u>Bin Purchases</u> Bin purchases deferred pending a decision on the introduction of the fortnightly rubbish service.	Dec-2027	2,484,111	(2,258,519)	225,592		(2,258,519)	
<u>AG Gillon Stormwater Harvesting</u> Melbourne Water has confirmed that grant funding is not available this financial year and has encouraged Council to apply for funding for the 2026-27 financial year. The timing for delivery will therefore be adjusted to allow for delivery in the following financial year (pending successful grant application).	Jun-2027	1,000,000	(1,000,000)	-	(1,000,000)		
<u>West Street Neighbourhood Streetscape</u> Delayed Melbourne Water approval process, causing tender delay and also the construction's start and completion date for next year.	Oct-2026	2,121,000	(1,000,000)	1,121,000			(1,000,000)
<u>DeChene Reserve - Gender Inclusive Facilities</u> Programme delayed by approximately 6 months due to additional project scoping required in the feasibility and concept stages. The recently approved project scope will also extend the construction stage into 2026-27. The projected carry forward reflects the revised programme.	Sep-2027	1,530,421	(700,421)	830,000			(700,421)
<u>Coburg Bluestone Cottage Complex Redevelopment</u> An approximate delay of 6 months to the sale settlement of the Coburg Health Hub site has in turn impacted the tender and construction schedule. Construction is now likely to commence in early 2026-27.	Jun-2028	797,623	(611,324)	186,299	(163,701)		(447,623)
<u>Coburg Outdoor Pool - 8 X 15 Toddlers Pool</u> Carry forward is required due to changes in programme scheduling. The toddlers' pool will now be completed in 2026-27, while the Coburg Olympic Pool repainting has been brought forward for completion in 2025-26.	Jun-2027	175,000	(175,000)	-			(175,000)
<u>Fawkner Library Upgrade Works</u> No budget has been allocated for 2026-27, therefore, construction can't commence. Design budget of \$150k is expected to extend into next financial year.	Jun-2028	150,000	(70,000)	80,000			(70,000)
Total		8,258,154	(5,815,264)	2,442,890	(1,163,701)	(2,258,519)	(2,393,044)

Re-allocation of Project Management budget

Project	Adopted Budget + CFs \$	Net Change to Budget \$	Q1 Forecast \$	Grants \$	Reserves \$	Council \$
Parks, Playground and Reserve Renewal and Improvement	268,659	(43,553)	225,106		(43,553)	
ATC Cook Reserve (Design)	108,000	7,115	115,115		7,115	
Gowanbrae Dog Park	369,181	6,656	375,837		6,656	
Park Renewal - Gervase Reserve	339,982	5,337	345,318		5,337	
Half Court Basketball Ring in Glenroy	44,086	5,337	49,422		5,337	
Park Renewal - Beclles / Oulton Reserve ¹	3,400	5,337	8,737		5,337	
Park Renewal, Ivan Page Reserve (Design and Construct)	332,000	3,558	335,558		3,558	
Park Renewal, Morris Reserve (Design and Construct)	60,000	3,558	63,558		3,558	
Park Renewal - Sewell Reserve	181,007	3,328	184,335		3,328	
Park Renewal - Soudan St ²	61,634	3,328	64,962		3,328	
Total	1,767,948	0	1,767,948	-	0	-

(1) Project also requires additional funding of \$12,974, bringing the Q1 forecast to \$21,711.

(2) Project also requires additional funding \$48,599, bringing the Q1 forecast to \$113,561.

Re-allocation of WSUD Implementation budget

Project	Adopted Budget + CFs \$	Net Change to Budget \$	Q1 Forecast \$	Grants \$	Reserves \$	Council \$
WSUD Implementation - Various	302,000	(302,000)	-			(302,000)
Fran Street IWM Project	-	102,000	102,000			102,000
Moonee Boulevard IWM Project	-	100,000	100,000			100,000
Austin Cres swale/wetland - Westbreen Creek IWM	-	100,000	100,000			100,000
Total	302,000	-	302,000	-	-	-

7.9 GOVERNANCE REPORT - NOVEMBER 2025 - CYCLICAL REPORT

Acting Director Business Transformation, Anita Curnow

Governance and Strategy

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the summary of minutes from the Friends of Aileu Community Committee held 14 October 2025, at Attachment 1 to this report.
2. Notes the Records of Meetings, at Attachment 2 to this report.
3. Notes responses to questions taken on notice during Public Question Time at the 13 August and 10 September Council meetings, provided as Attachment 3.
4. In the exercise of the powers conferred by section 147(4) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and section 313 of the *Local Government Act 2020*:
 - a) Appoints and authorises Council staff referred to in the Instrument at Attachment 4 to this report, as set out in the instrument.
 - b) Determines the instrument comes into force immediately, the common seal of Council is affixed to the instrument, remains in force until Council determines to vary or revoke it, and revokes the previous Instrument executed on 18 December 2024.
 - c) Authorises the affixing of Council's common seal.
5. Appoints the community members listed in Confidential Attachment 5 of this report to the First Peoples Advisory Committee, Disability Reference Group and Health, Wellbeing and Social Inclusion Advisory Committee.
6. Notes that all applicants to the First Peoples Advisory Committee, Disability Reference Group and the Health, Wellbeing and Social Inclusion Advisory Committee will be contacted to thank them for their application and advised of the outcome.
7. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to amend the 2025 Road Management Plan (as adopted 8 October 2025), to include a corrected table as shown in Attachment 6 of this report.

REPORT

Executive Summary

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

This Governance report includes:

- A summary of the minutes of the Advisory Committees.
- Records of Meetings, with a recommendation that Council notes the records.
- Responses to Public Question Time items taken on notice at the 13 August and 10 September Council meetings, with a recommendation that Council notes the responses.
- A recommendation that Council appoints and authorises the Council officers referred to in the Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation (*Planning and Environment Act 1987*).

- A recommendation that Council appoints applicants to the First Peoples Advisory Committee, Disability Reference Group and the Health, Wellbeing and Social Inclusion Advisory Committee.
- A request to amend the 2025 Road Management Plan to include information that was omitted from the 2025 Road Management Plan as presented to Council at its meeting held 8 October 2025.

Previous Council Decisions

Governance Report – December 2024 – Cyclical Report – 12 March 2025

That Council:

...

4. *In the exercise of the powers conferred by section 147(4) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and section 313 of the Local Government Act 2020:*
 - a) *Appoints and authorises Council staff referred to in the Instrument at Attachment 2 to this report, as set out in the instrument.*
 - b) *Determines the instrument comes into force immediately, the common seal of Council is affixed to the instrument, remains in force until Council determines to vary or revoke it, and revokes the previous Instrument executed on 16 September 2024.*
 - c) *Authorises the affixing of Council's common seal.*

...

Council Advisory Committee Review – 13 August 2025

That Council:

1. *Endorses the proposal to establish the following Advisory Committees and reference groups to support the delivery of its strategic directions and objectives, together with relevant Terms of References as provided in Attachment 1:*
 - a) *Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience Advisory Committee.*
 - b) *Health, Wellbeing and Social Inclusion Advisory Committee; supported by the following Reference Groups:*
 - i) *Gender Equality Reference Group*
 - ii) *LGBTIQA+ Reference Group (established as part of the LGBTIQA+ Action Plan)*
 - iii) *Disability Reference Group*
 - iv) *Older Persons Reference Group.*
 - c) *Liveability Advisory Committee; supported by a Strategic Transport Reference Group.*
 - d) *Merri-bek Arts Advisory Committee*
 - e) *First Peoples Advisory Committee.*
2. *Initiates a public engagement process to invite applications for membership for the newly established Council Advisory Committees.*
3. *Receives a report at its October 2025 Council meeting detailing the outcomes of the application process and appoint members and Councillors accordingly.*

Advisory Committees - Appointment of Members – 8 October 2025

That Council:

1. *Amends the Advisory Committees and Reference Groups Terms of Reference to include Heritage and Local History as part of the Role and Responsibilities of the Liveability Advisory Committee and include 13 Community Members as part of the Committee membership.*
2. *Appoints community members to its Advisory Committee and Reference Groups as listed in the revised confidential attachment 1*
3. *Notes the appointments to the Advisory Committees and Reference Groups will sunset on 30 June following the next General Election.*
4. *Endorses postponing the appointment of the vacant positions on the First Peoples Advisory Committee and Disability Reference Group to the November Council meeting.*
5. *Informs the successful applicants of their appointments and to disseminate other relevant information, as deemed appropriate.*
6. *Notes the final Terms of Reference will be made available via the Merri-bek City Council website.*

Road Management Plan – 8 October 2025

That Council:

1. *Adopts the amended Road Management Plan at Attachment 1 to this report prepared in accordance with the requirements of Division 5 of the Road Management Act 2004.*
2. *Publishes a notice of the adoption of the Road Management Plan in the Victoria Government Gazette and a local daily newspaper as required by Section 55 of the Road Management Act 2004 stating:*
 - a) *The Road Management Plan has been adopted on 8 October 2025; and*
 - b) *That a copy of the Road Management Plan may be inspected or obtained from Council's website or customer service centers.*
3. *Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to arrange for edits to the document for presentation and clarity, without making any material change ahead of publishing the final Road Management Plan.*

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.

Authorisation of planning officers under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* is done in accordance with said Act.

Council's Governance Rules provide the ethical framework for the operation of Council and apply to every meeting of Council, including Advisory Committees established through Council. As such, each Advisory Committee is established in accordance with a framework and terms of reference.

2. Background

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

3. Issues

Advisory Committee minutes

A summary of the minutes of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee held 14 October 2025 is provided at **Attachment 1** for Council's information.

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:

- Central Coburg Oversight Committee – 11 September 2025
- Central Coburg Oversight Committee – 24 September 2025
- Councillor Briefing – 6 October 2025
- Councillor Briefing – 13 October 2025
- Hearing of Submissions – 16 October 2025
- Planning Briefing – 20 October 2025
- Councillor Briefing – 27 October 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 recorded in the meeting minutes and provided with a written response after the meeting in which they were raised. The response is then reported to Council at the next practicable meeting.

The responses to questions taken On Notice at **Attachment 3** to this report relate to questions from the 13 August and 10 September Council meetings. The questions relate to:

- Dog walking in Merri-bek
- Vehicle crash data
- Domestic Animal Management Plan
- Local Sports Infrastructure Fund
- Cat Curfew
- Illegal Dumping of Hard Rubbish

Appointment and Authorisation to enforce the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*

The appointment of Authorised Officers facilitates the administration and enforcement of any Act, regulations or local laws which relate to the functions and powers of the Council. Authorisations are made to specific Council officers in accordance with their roles and responsibilities.

In accordance with the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, Authorised Officers can only be appointed by the Council as the Act prohibits delegation of the power to appoint Authorised Officers.

Council staff can only take action to enforce provisions of legislation where they have been properly and lawfully authorised. The authorisation proposed appoints the staff member as an Authorised Officer which will enable that Officer to take action and commence proceedings against people who have breached permit conditions or otherwise not complied with the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* or regulations.

The Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation at **Attachment 4** is a routine, administrative update to ensure all Planning staff have a correct and up-to-date authorisation. Updates are reviewed internally each quarter to ensure relevant staff are authorised. The most recent update was presented to Council at its March 2025 meeting. Since the last update, one additional officer, Leanne Stockley has been included in the authorisation.

On the updated Instrument coming into force, the previous Instrument executed 18 June 2025 will be revoked.

Advisory Committees

At the Council meeting held on 8 October 2025, Council resolved to postpone the appointment of vacant positions on both the First Peoples Advisory Committee and the Disability Reference Group to the November Council meeting.

Additionally, an extra applicant has been recommended to both the Health, Wellbeing and Social Inclusion Advisory Committee and the Gender Equality Reference group. The recommended applicants are listed in **Confidential Attachment 5**.

Councillor appointments to the ten Advisory Committee and Reference Groups will be established at the upcoming 10 December Council meeting.

Amendment to the 2025 Road Management Plan

At its meeting held 8 October 2025, Council was presented with the 2025 Road Management Plan for adoption.

As part of the 2025 Road Management Plan presented for Council's adoption, the following table was included:

8. Appendix 'A' Maintenance & Inspection Standards RMP 2021

1.0 SCHEDULE OF INTERVENTION LEVELS – ROAD PAVEMENTS						
ITEM	OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY	INTERVENTION LEVEL	RESPONSE TIME			
			L	C	A	CL
1.1	Pot Hole Patching on sealed trafficable lane or on on-road bike lane	When a pot hole ≥ 40 mm in depth and ≥ 300 mm in diameter	2W	3W	4W	4W
1.2	Regulation of wheel ruts and depression	When rutting depression and vertical displacement is ≥ 50 mm over a 3m long straight edge in the trafficable path	2W	2W	4W	4W
1.6	Missing and Damaged Pit Lids	When missing or damaged	1D	1D	5D	10D

Since presenting the report to Council in October 2025, it has been determined that an administrative error was made, which affects Appendix A of the 2025 Road Management Plan relating to maintenance and inspection standards. The table unintentionally omitted several rows (items 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5), and the table heading incorrectly referred to 2021 instead of 2025.

While the correct version of the table (including all rows) was published and used during public consultation in accordance with statutory requirements, an administrative error resulted in an incorrect version being presented for adoption.

This report seeks Council's approval to amend the adopted 2025 RMP to include the correct table, as provided in **Attachment 6** of this report. Advice has confirmed that no further community consultation is required because the correct version was already subject to public review.

Human Rights Consideration

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

4. Community consultation and engagement

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

5. Officer Declaration for a Conflict of Interests

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

6. Financial and Resources Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

7. Implementation

Governance activity, including reports of Committees to Council, Records of Meetings and Community Question Time items will continue to be reported to Council monthly.

Subject to Council's decision the next steps include:

- Executing the Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation to enforce the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and updating the Register of Authorisations for publishing on Council's website.
- Pending Council endorsement of community members to the First Peoples Advisory Committee Disability Reference Groups and the Health, Wellbeing and Social Inclusion Advisory Committee, all applicants will be thanked and notified of the outcome of their application.

Attachment/s

1 	Reports from Advisory Committee to Council - November 2025	D25/578383
2 	Records of Meetings - November 2025	D25/578132
3 	Responses to questions taken On Notice - November 2025	D25/578307
4 	Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation - <i>Planning and Environment Act 1987</i> - November 2025	D25/553430
5	Confidential - Advisory Committee and Reference Groups <i>Pursuant to section 3(1)(f) of the Local Government Act 2020 this attachment has been designated as confidential because it relates to personal information, being information which if released would result in the unreasonable disclosure of information about any person or their personal affairs.</i>	D25/566186
6 	2025 Road Management Plan - Appendix A	D25/585360

FRIENDS OF AILEU COMMUNITY COMMITTEE - 14 OCTOBER 2025

A report of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee meeting held on 14 October 2025 is provided for Council's information.

Councillors appointed to the Friends of Aileu Community Committee:

- Merri-bek City Council: Cr Adam Pulford (apology)
- Hume City Council: Cr Jarrod Bell and Cr Naim Kurt (apologies)

Key Items Discussed

- Award of the Medal of the Order of Timor-Leste to Friends of Aileu by President Jose Ramos Horta on 12 August
- Financial summary of Friends of Aileu donations account balances, fundraising and project expenditure
- Draft Action Plan 2025-26 and 2026-27, relating activities to Strategy Plan 2025-2030
- Oral Health Promotion project, including activities of OHP Working Group, and planned visit to Timor-Leste (19 - 30 October) by Dr Sandra Frans, Working Group member and Volunteer Project Coordinator
- Other project activities including:
 - o Aileu Resource and Training Centre (ARTC) success in receiving \$3,120 grant from Permaculture Australia's Permafund
 - o Victoria University team visit to Timor-Leste and Aileu, early October, gathering information for proposed kindergarten resource project
 - o The Future Collective / Friends of Aileu community engagement trip to Timor-Leste (15 - 26 October, 9 persons including East Timor Project Administration Support Officer, Program Manager ARTC, one young Timorese Australian sponsored by Friends of Aileu and 2 sponsored by Friends of Baucau) to visit Atauro (with NaTerra NGO) and Aileu (with ARTC) and to participate in the PermaYouth Convergence in Ermera 20 - 26 October)
- Promoting the professional development opportunity of the Australian Volunteers Program's currently advertised role of a Local governance and Decentralisation Specialist with the Aileu Municipality (12 months commencing early 2026)
- Recent and Upcoming Events and Activities including:
 - o The successful Library Talk at Glenroy Community Hub (9 October) with Paulie Stewart speaking on his life story (published as 'All The Rage!') and the Balibo 5 murders on 16 October 1975
 - o Friends of Aileu's annual Trivia Quiz fundraiser, 7-10pm Thursday 20 November at Coburg Town Hall
 - o The proposal for a Civic Event on Friday 28 November for the annual raising of the Timor-Leste flag, this being the 50th anniversary of Timor-Leste's Declaration of Independence

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: Central Coburg Program Oversight Committee

Date: 11 September 2025

Meeting time: 4.00pm



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

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

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

Attendees	
Councillors	Cr Helen Davidson, Mayor Cr Nat Abboud Cr Helen Politis, Deputy Mayor Cr Jay Iwasaki
Apologies	Nil
Council Staff (name and position)	Cathy Henderson, CEO Eamonn Fennessy, Director Community Pene Winslade, Director Place and Environment Peter Sagar, Program Director Central Coburg Bec Fitzgerald, Coburg Revitalisation Lead Stefan Grun, Manager Customer Communications and Engagement Anna Morath, Unit Manager Community Engagement Eren Cakmakkaya, Unit Manager Communications
External participants	2 Representatives from Bridge 42

Items discussed		Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1	Central Coburg matters	-	-

Name and title of Council officer completing record: Lachlan McGowan, Central Coburg 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: Central Coburg Program Oversight Committee

Date: 24 September 2025

Meeting time: 4.00pm



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

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

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

Attendees	
Councillors	Cr Jay Iwasaki Cr Nat Abboud
Apologies	Cr Helen Davidson, Mayor Cr Helen Politis, Deputy Mayor
Council Staff (name and position)	Cathy Henderson, CEO Eamonn Fennessy, Director Community Pene Winslade, Director Place and Environment Peter Sagar, Program Director Central Coburg Chris Staring, 3D Digital Twin and Visualisation Lead
External participants	3 Representatives from Bridge 42

Items discussed		Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1	Central Coburg matters	-	-

Name and title of Council officer completing record: Lachlan McGowan, Central Coburg 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: 6 October 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	
Councillors	Cr Helen Davidson, Mayor Cr Adam Pulford Cr Liz Irvin Cr Ella Svensson Cr Nat Abboud Cr Chris Miles Cr Helen Politis, Deputy Mayor Cr Jay Iwasaki Cr Sue Bolton Cr Katherine Theodosios
Apologies	Cr Oscar Yildiz
Council Staff (name and position)	• Cathy Henderson, Chief Executive Officer • Indivar Dhakal, Acting Director City Infrastructure • Eamonn Fennessy, Director Community • Pene Winslade, Director Place and Environment • Sue Vujcevic, Director Business Transformation • Veronika Pradel, Community Strengthening Officer • Nalika Peiris, Unit Manager Community Development and Social Policy • Bernadette Hetherington, Manager Community Wellbeing
External participants	Nil.

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

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: Councillor Briefing

Date: 13 October 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	
Councillors	Cr Helen Davidson, Mayor Cr Chris Miles Cr Liz Irvin Cr Helen Politis, Deputy Mayor Cr Ella Svensson Cr Jay Iwasaki Cr Nat Abboud Cr Sue Bolton Cr Katherine Theodosis
Apologies	Cr Oscar Yildiz Cr Adam Pulford
Council Staff (name and position)	- Anita Curnow, Director City Infrastructure - Eamonn Fennessy, Director Community - Pene Winslade, Director Place and Environment - Sue Vujcevic, Director Business Transformation - Lillian Dunn, Youth Participation and Development Coordinator - Barry Hahn, Manager Early Years and Youth - Georgina Earl, Unit Manager Library Services - Lisa Dempster, Manager Cultural Development - Amber Stuart, Unit Manager Arts and Culture - Edmund Kron, Glenroy Movement and Place Officer - Zoe McMaster, Acting Unit Manager Transport Planning - Caden McCarthy, Manager City Design and Economy - Greg Rodwell, Manager Open Space and Environment - Seamus Lowe, Unit Manager Property
External participants	7 youth ambassadors attended

Items discussed		Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1	Youth Ambassadors	-	
2	Library Strategy - engagement results	-	

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

Items discussed		Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
3	Public Art Policy and Arts & Culture Strategy update	-	
4	Streets for People Projects – Harding/Munro & Hope Street	-	
5	Agroforestry Trial briefing	-	
6	Coburg Health and Community Services Precinct 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: Hearing of Submissions Committee – Proposed sale of 10

Murrell Street, Glenroy

Date: 16 October 2025

Meeting time: 6.11 pm



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

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

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

Attendees	
Councillors	Cr Helen Davidson, Mayor Cr Helen Politis, Deputy Mayor Cr Sue Bolton Cr Liz Irvin Cr Jay Iwasaki Cr Chris Miles Cr Ella Svensson
Apology	Cr Nat Abboud
Absent	Cr Adam Pulford Cr Oscar Yildiz JP Cr Katherine Theodosis
Council Staff	Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade Unit Manager Property, Seamus Lowe Senior Property Officer, Lilliane Sutherland Team Leader Governance, Naomi Ellis
External participants	Submitter 2 spoke to their written submission

Items discussed	Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1 Proposed sale of 10 Murrell Street, Glenroy - Council, at its Council Meeting on 9 July 2025, established a Hearing Committee and appointed the Mayor and all Councillors to the Committee to hear submitters who requested to be heard in support of their written submission on the proposed sale of 10 Murrell Street, Glenroy The meeting opened at 6.11 pm and closed 6.18 pm.	-	-

Name and title of Council officer completing record: Naomi Ellis, Team Leader Governance

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

Record of Meeting

Meeting: Planning Briefing

Date: 20 October 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.

Attendees	
Councillors	Cr Helen Davidson, Mayor Cr Nat Abboud Cr Jay Iwasaki Cr Adam Pulford Cr Helen Politis, Deputy Mayor Cr Liz Irvin Cr Katherine Theodosios Cr Ella Svensson
Apologies	Cr Oscar Yildiz JP Cr Sue Bolton Cr Chris Miles
Council Staff (name and position)	Cathy Henderson – Chief Executive Officer Eamonn Fennessy – Director Governance Pene Winslade – Director Place and Environment Joanna Bush – Unit Manager Urban Design Lachlan McGowan – Central Coburg Project Manager Phil Priest – Group Manager City Development Esha Rahman – Planning Coordinator
External participants	Nil

Items discussed		Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1	CEO and Councillor Discussion	-	-
2	LXRP Stage 2 Urban Design Framework	-	-
3	MPS/2025/279 – 2 Florence Street, Coburg	-	-
4	Latest Residential Planning Reforms	-	-

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

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

Record of Meeting

Meeting: Councillor Briefing

Date: 27 October 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	
Councillors	Cr Helen Davidson, Mayor Cr Adam Pulford Cr Liz Irvin Cr Ella Svensson Cr Nat Abboud Cr Chris Miles Cr Helen Politis, Deputy Mayor Cr Jay Iwasaki Cr Sue Bolton Cr Katerine Theodosis
Apologies	Cr Oscar Yildiz
Council Staff (name and position)	• Eamonn Fennessy, Acting Chief Executive Officer • Stefan Grun, Acting Director Community • Anita Curnow, Acting Director Business Transformation • Greg Rodwell, Acting Director City Infrastructure • Pene Winslade, Director Place and Environment • Richard Tolliday, Acting Head of Building Projects • Indivar Dhakal, Manager Capital Works Planning and Delivery • Leanne Giardina, Manager Aged and Community Support • Alayna Chapman, Unit Manager Strategic Planning • Caden McCarthy, Manager City Design and Economy • Gareth Tanner, Unit Manager Compliance Operations • Sandra Troise, Manager Amenity and Compliance • Joanna Bush, Unit Manager Urban Design
External participants	Principal from Russell Kennedy Lawyers

Items discussed		Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1	Aged Care Act Legal Session	-	
2	Capital Works Update	-	

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Items discussed		Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
3	C235mbek (increased public Open Space Contribution rate) – Gateway 2: Considering submissions prior to Minister's planning panel	-	
4	DAMP Report Back from Public Exhibition including Cat Curfew	-	
5	Preparing the draft Places for People Plan for community engagement	-	

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

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Merri-bek Civic Centre
Woi-wurrung Country
90 Bell Street, Coburg 3058
T: (03) 9240 1111

Postal Address
Woi-wurrung Country
Locked Bag 10, Brunswick 3056
merri-bek.vic.gov.au



Merri-bek
City Council

XRef: [REDACTED]
Doc. No. [REDACTED]
Enq: Greg Rodwell
Tel: 9240 1111

Wendy Hogg
[REDACTED]

Dear Wendy

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME ON NOTICE RESPONSE FROM AUGUST 2025 COUNCIL MEETING

I write in response to your question submitted to the 13 August Council meeting regarding governance relating to Council's consideration at that meeting of Dog Walking in Merri-bek.

Your question was taken on notice. A similar question was asked at the meeting. The questions on governance were ruled as inappropriate. The following general advice has been prepared by Council's governance team for your information and future reference.

The Local Government Act 2020 makes it clear that the identification and assessments of conflicts of interest is the responsibility of individuals and not something that officers or other Councillors determine. It is not for Council or officers to decide.

There are several Councillors appointed to represent Council on Committees, being appointed to those Committees by Council. Councillors are involved in those committees on behalf of Council and not in a personal capacity. As a general rule, it is not ordinarily considered to be a conflict of interest for a Councillor to be involved in debate and decision making on topics where a Committee they represent Council on is participating in community and stakeholder engagement or advocating a particular position.

If you require any further information, please don't hesitate to contact Greg Rodwell, Manager Open Space and Environment on 9240 1111.

Yours sincerely
[REDACTED]

Anita Curnow
DIRECTOR CITY INFRASTRUCTURE
24 October 2025

Speak with us in your language 

For more information visit merri-bek.vic.gov.au/your-language

Per maggiori informazioni nella tua lingua, chiama il numero 9280 1911	اپنی زبان میں مزید جاننے کے لیے پر کال کریں۔ 9280 1917	如需了解更多您语言版本的信息, 请致电 9280 0750
Για να μάθετε περισσότερα στη γλώσσα σας καλέστε το 9280 1912	तपाईंको भाषामा थप जानकारी लागि, 9280 1910 मा कल गर्नुहोस्	Para saber más en tu idioma llama al 9280 1916
لمعرفة المزيد بلغتك، اتصل بالرقم 9280 1913	Kendi dilinizde daha fazla bilgi edinmek için 9280 1914'ü arayın	Để tìm hiểu thêm bằng ngôn ngữ của bạn, hãy gọi 9280 1915

To speak with us in a language not listed here, please call **9280 1919**

From: Zoe McMaster
Sent: Thursday, 2 October 2025 9:31 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: CRS # [REDACTED] | 30km/h Trials - Council meeting question on notice

Hi Antonija,

Apologies for the delay in getting back to you on your question.

The crash data that we used as part of the Council Report for the 30km/h trials is publicly available and can be accessed through the Victorian Road Crash database. I note that the maps provided in the report did not include the crash locations.

You can access the data here - <https://opendata.transport.vic.gov.au/dataset/victoria-road-crash-data/resource/5df1f373-0c90-48f5-80e1-7b2a35507134>

There is a link on the page to download the database, but you can also review it online.

You'll need to set filters to get a more digestible amount of data.

1. Column Q "LGA_NAME" - select MORELAND and MERRI-BEK
2. Column B "ACCIDENT_DATE" - select to only display between 2019 to 2023

You can either select all streets in column ROAD NAME (N) to refine the results to the trial areas, or set boundaries in the columns LATITUDE (S) or LONGITUDE (T). You'll be able to assess location, times, parties involved, and cause of accident.

We've detailed in the report a number of considerations we'll include as part of the monitoring and evaluation, and we'll ensure we include existing traffic calming infrastructure as part of our analysis when assessing the speed limit change and associated impacts.

Kind regards,
Zoe

Zoe McMaster (She/Her)
Acting Unit Manager Transport Planning
Merri-bek City Council

T +61 3 [REDACTED]
www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au



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XRef: D25/
 Doc. No. D25/
 Enq: Sandra Troise
 Tel: 9240 1111

Ms Chris Hagarty

Dear Chris

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME ON NOTICE RESPONSE FROM SEPTEMBER 2025 COUNCIL MEETING

I write to you in response to your question submitted to the 10 September Council meeting, as follows:

Question:

The proposed DAMP seeks to Control stay cat populations by proposing a 24 hour curfew for all cats in Merri-bek.

Could Council please provide a rationale for how limiting outdoor access to de-sexed, registered cats will have any impact on the stray cat population, given they are owned, loved, cared for and importantly, cannot produce offspring?

Thank you for your interest in community engagement and public participation. The answer to your question is set out below.

Response to your Question

Limiting outdoor access for owned cats is about more than dealing with cat overpopulation. It also addresses the killing of wildlife by those cats (estimated at 186 per year per domesticated cat) and protects the cats by reducing the spread of cat-borne diseases and the killing of cats by motorised vehicles,

Most cat owners would be shocked at the research that suggests that each domesticated cat that is allowed to roam and hunt kills 186 mammals, birds or reptiles each year.

Speak with us in your language		For more information visit merri-bek.vic.gov.au/your-language	
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I trust this answers your question however, if you require any further information, please don't hesitate to contact myself or Sandra Troise, Manager Amenity and Compliance on 9240 1111.

Yours sincerely

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Indivar Dhakal.

Indivar Dhakal
ACTING DIRECTOR CITY INFRASTRUCTURE

08 / 10 / 2025

Subject: FW: Data in the DAMP

From: Anita Curnow
Sent: Wednesday, 10 September 2025 7:09 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: Sandra Troise [REDACTED]
Subject: Data in the DAMP

Hi Jo,

Thanks for participating in Public Question Time tonight.

Here is an answer to the question you submitted on data in the DAMP. I hope this is helpful.

Please feel free to come back to me or Sandra Troise, Manager Amenity and Compliance, if you have any further questions.

Kind regards,
 Anita

The statistics requested are included in the DAMP already, although not in the exact form you mention.

Table 9 in the draft DAMP contains the numbers of cats and dogs impounded and subsequent outcomes over the last 4 financial years.

Table 9: Numbers of cats and dogs impounded and subsequent outcomes

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Dogs				
Impounded	198	192	189	228
Returned to owner	130	133	133	130
Euthanasia (feral or unsafe to rehome)	11	13	17	35
Rehomed	47	39	39	70
Cats				
Impounded	884	791	742	954
Returned to owner	66	46	43	57
Euthanasia (feral or unsafe to rehome)	203	223	228	334
Rehomed	527	484	471	570

From this data, you can calculate the percentage of cats rehomed and the percentage of cats not reclaimed.

70%	64%	64%	60%
-----	-----	-----	-----

Percentage rehomed from the above data

91%	94%	94%	94%
-----	-----	-----	-----

Percentage of cats not reclaimed from the above data

Cat cage requests are a good indicator of cat nuisance. The figures from the last 4 years are also in the DAMP in Table 13:

229 requests in 2021/22

156 requests in 2022/23

171 requests in 2023/24

245 requests in 2024/25

However, please note that cat cage requests are affected by the pound's capacity to receive cats. Where it is not possible for capacity reasons or if there is a contagious disease in the pound, we do not issue cat cages. This would have affected the numbers in 2022/23 and 2023/24, there were outbreaks in Dec 22, Feb 23 and April 24.

Table 13: Cat and dog complaints to Council from 2021/22 to 2024/25

Nature of Complaint	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Dog Attack	131	117	139	149
Dog at Large	87	107	153	122
Barking Dog	214	192	252	226
Dog Rush	69	66	66	76
Animal Violation (other)	328	369	468	457
Cat cage requests	229	156	171	245

Anita Curnow (she/her)

Director City Infrastructure

Merri-bek City Council

T +61 3 [REDACTED] M [REDACTED]
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XRef: D25/
 Doc. No. D25/
 Enq: Sandra Troise
 Tel: 9240 1111

Ms Karen Price

Dear Karen

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME ON NOTICE RESPONSE FROM SEPTEMBER 2025 COUNCIL MEETING

I write to you in response to your question submitted to the 10 September Council meeting, as follows:

Question:

Why as a registered cat owner of 30 plus years has council never actively sort to include me in this important debate, who were the residents that were chosen to be consulted, and if people like myself were excluded surely that would mean the data collected to date has been advantageously skewed?

Thank you for your interest in community engagement and public participation. I apologise for the delay in responding. The answer to your question is set out below.

Council's engagement ahead of the September Council meeting for the Domestic Animal Management Plan was open to all residents and included a question about introducing a cat curfew. Following the September Council meeting, the draft Plan was exhibited on our Conversations Merri-bek website for residents to review ([Home | Conversations Merri-bek](#)) and additional questions were asked in a survey on the website. This consultation and survey have now closed.

If you missed the opportunity to comment both of these times, you are welcome to contact Gareth Tanner via 9240 111 or at [redacted] to pass on your feedback.

Speak with us in your language		For more information visit merri-bek.vic.gov.au/your-language	
Per maggiori informazioni nella tua lingua, chiama il numero 9280 1911	اپنی زبان میں مزید جاننے کے لیے پر کال کریں۔ 9280 1917	如需了解更多您语言版本的信息, 请致电 9280 0750	अपनी भाषा में अधिक जानने के लिए 9280 1918 पर कॉल करें
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It is proposed that the Domestic Animal Management Plan will be presented for adoption and a decision on a cat curfew will be made at the November 2025 Council meeting and final deliberations are currently underway.

I trust this answers your question and I do apologise for not providing you with a response prior to the recent consultation.

Yours sincerely



Anita Curnow
DIRECTOR CITY INFRASTRUCTURE

20 / 10 / 2025



XRef: D25/ [REDACTED]
 Doc. No. D25/ [REDACTED]
 Enq: Sandra Troise
 Tel: 9240 1111

Yaser Yousry
 [REDACTED]

Dear Yaser

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME ON NOTICE RESPONSE FROM SEPTEMBER 2025 COUNCIL MEETING

I write to you in response to your questions submitted to the 10 September Council meeting, as follows:

Question 1:

Older cats already in homes that have always lived part indoor and part outdoor, as well as at-risk cats from shelters that have lived outdoors, often cannot realistically adapt to sudden full confinement. What assessment has been made of how a 24 hour cat curfew will affect these cats and their adoptability, and does Council accept that this risks driving up stress, health problems, and euthanasia while undermining the work of shelters, rescues, and veterinarians?

Question 2:

Why are we benchmarking against regional councils with very different land use and wildlife pressures, instead of inner-city councils more like Merri-bek, such as Banyule?

Thank you for your interest in community engagement and public participation. The answers to your questions are set out below.

Response to Question 1:

There has been a lot of work done by cat and wildlife welfare groups on helping cats to adapt. There are resources available from Zoos Victoria, the RSPCA, Animal Welfare Victoria and several Councils. Merri-bek has information already available to support this, and if a 24 hour curfew is adopted, we will work to increase the availability and accessibility of this information for cat owners.

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It is not intended for the cat curfew to be systematically enforced. In fact, enforcement would be a last resort with the approach to compliance being about education, support and warnings. Council's enforcement framework is sector-leading in its application of compassion and consideration of special circumstances, and this would also apply to enforcing a cat curfew.

Your question comes with an underlying assumption that a cat curfew will drive animal surrenders and/or dissuade people from adopting a cat that needs a home, putting pressure on the pound and animal rescue groups. There is strong support for cat curfews from the Wat djerring Animal Facility, where Merri-bek's animals are taken, and from the Cat Protection Society and the RSPCA, among other rescue groups. Rather than undermining the work of these groups and vets, a cat curfew supports the work they do and allows them to focus on cats that do not have homes, to have them placed into homes.

When an Animal Management Officer is attending to stray cats, rather than taking them straight to the pound, they check for a microchip or identification. They are then returned to their owners (which would include a reminder about the curfew and checking on support needed to contain the animal) rather than being taken to the pound. If they are not identifiable, we seek to find out from the person reporting or others in the neighbourhood which property the cat seems to 'belong' to, and speak to people at that property about whether they would like to have the cat as their own, being desexed, vaccinated, microchipped and with the first year of registration all at no cost.

This reduces, rather than increases, the burden on the facility and the rescue groups. In addition, using the example of Whittlesea, which introduced a 24 hour curfew, the number of cat nuisance calls has reduced by 40% so Animal Management Officers can direct their time to work that brings about sustainable change instead of attending to stray cats.

Response to Question 2:

Merri-bek is not benchmarking against regional Councils. We have paid particular attention to the Inner city M9 group of Councils and the Northern Councils Alliance Councils, which includes Banyule.

Banyule, Darebin, Yarra and Melbourne all have a night-time cat curfew. A 24 hour curfew is in place at Whittlesea, and Merri-bek officers are aware that there are other Councils considering a 24 hour curfew. Merri-bek is committed to increasing biodiversity and protecting wildlife throughout the municipality and particularly in creek corridors. In partnership with Council, volunteers have made a massive difference to biodiversity in these corridors, including the recent creation of wetlands as well as restoration of heavily degraded creek banks through decades of work.

Cats that are domesticated in urban areas are exposed to the risk of disease and the risk of being run over by a vehicle. So in addition to protecting wildlife, the combination of a cat curfew with an expanded desexing and cat homing program will be effective in improving outcomes for the cats themselves.

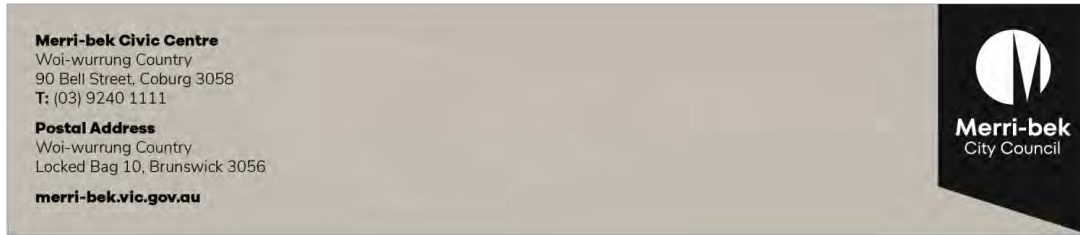
I trust this answers your questions however, if you require any further information, please don't hesitate to contact myself or Sandra Troise, Amenity and Compliance on 9240 1111.

Yours sincerely



Anita Curnow
DIRECTOR CITY INFRASTRUCTURE

20 / 10 / 2025



XRef: D25/
 Doc. No. D25/
 Enq: Sandra Troise
 Tel: 9240 1111

Mr Simon Xue

Dear Simon

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME ON NOTICE RESPONSE FROM SEPTEMBER 2025 COUNCIL MEETING

I write to you in response to your questions submitted to the 10 September Council meeting, as follows:

Question 1:

Can the council point to any peer-reviewed studies or local data showing that cat curfews reduce wildlife deaths or nuisance issues, given that several councils who have introduced them report little evidence of effectiveness?

Question 2:

Has the council estimated the cost of enforcing a cat curfew, and how will those costs be covered without increasing rates or reducing other community services?

Thank you for your interest in community engagement and public participation. The answers to your questions are set out below.

Response to Question 1:

There are many peer-reviewed studies that show that cats that are free to roam and hunt cause significant injury and death to wildlife. In a peer reviewed research paper by Woinarski, Murphy, & Legge 2020, information was assembled across 66 studies of predation by pet cats worldwide (including 24 Australian studies) to estimate the predation toll of pet cats in Australia, plus the predation pressure per unit area in residential areas.

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It found the average Australian pet cat who roams and hunts is estimated to kill 186 vertebrate animals per year, the majority of which are native lizards and birds, as well as a proportion of native mammals. The per capita kill rate of pet cats is 25% that of feral cats. However, pet cats live at much higher densities, so the predation rate of pets per square kilometre in residential areas is 28–52 times larger than predation rates by feral cats in natural environments, and 1.3–2.3 times greater than predation rates per km² by feral cats living in urban areas.

Every domesticated cat that roams is estimated to kill 186 mammals, birds or reptiles every year.

It is recognised that a cat curfew is a useful tool for achieving this among owned cats who have a home. It is also recognised that further measures are needed to find homes for unowned cats, and the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan recommended by officers also includes an expansion of the cat desexing program to pick up on the model introduced in Banyule City Council to target areas with the highest numbers of reports of nuisance cats.

If Merri-bek introduces a curfew, we will seek to partner with researchers who may be interested in undertaking before and after research into the impacts of the curfew on sensitive wildlife areas.

Response to Question 2:

The cost of implementing a cat curfew will be undertaken with existing resourcing. Communications with cat owners about the curfew will be combined with the annual animal registration process, in addition to use of our normal website and social media channels. It is not intended to increase the number of Animal Management Officers to enforce a curfew – in fact, enforcement would be a last resort with the approach being about education, support and warnings. Council's enforcement framework is sector-leading in its application of compassion and consideration of special circumstances, and this would also apply to enforcing a cat curfew.

Council already has cat cages that are the primary tool for identifying stray cats and cats trapped in cages are returned to their owners before being taken to the pound, if they are microchipped or have identification on them. If they are not identifiable, we seek to find out from the person reporting or others in the neighbourhood which property the cat seems to 'belong' to, and speak to people at that property about whether they would like to have the cat as their own, being desexed, vaccinated, microchipped and with the first year of registration all at no cost.

I trust this answers your questions, however, if you require any further information, please don't hesitate to contact myself or Sandra Troise, Amenities and Compliance on 9240 1111.

Yours sincerely



Anita Curnow
DIRECTOR CITY INFRASTRUCTURE

20 / 10 / 2025

Subject: Response *For your information* 2025-2026 Community Sports Grant | CRS# [REDACTED]

From: Christina Grayland
Sent: Wednesday, 10 September 2025 12:36 PM
To: Peter Leahy [REDACTED]
Cc: Cr Nat Abboud <NAbboud@merri-bek.vic.gov.au>; Merri-bek Civic & CEO Office [REDACTED]
Subject: Response *For your information* 2025-2026 Community Sports Grant | CRS# [REDACTED]

Afternoon Peter,

Hope you are well,

The Local Sports Infrastructure Fund (LSIF) is a dollar-for-dollar funding program, meaning that Council must contribute funding equal to the grant being sought for the project. As there is currently no budget allocation for the athletics track, it means unfortunately Council is not in a position to put this project forward for funding through LSIF at this time.

Council will be considering current budget priorities when deciding which projects to nominate for the LSIF grant this round. In the meantime, we have a meeting scheduled with the grounds committee and athletics clubs to inspect the track and go over the short-term development plans set out in the masterplan, and to look at a way forward together. Council had a condition report done on the track late last year for the Masterplan work which has been shared with the grounds committee, it will also guide the determinants of the work required. As this was almost a year ago, we will look to obtain another condition report if required.

With regard to basketball, funding for the feasibility work on a future location has been included in the 2026/27 budget. However, given the high demand for courts, Council officers are already progressing work within existing resources so that planning can begin ahead of that allocation.

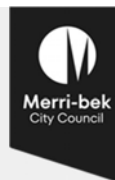
Thanks again for your interest and advocacy for the track.

If you have any questions please let me know,

Chrissy

Christina Grayland
Acting Manager Community Well-being
Merri-bek City Council

T [REDACTED]
www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au



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merri-bek.vic.gov.au



XRef: D25/527577
Doc. No. D25/551645
Enq: Tanya Taylor /
Sandra Troise
Tel: 9240 1111

Ms Amelia Frantza
[REDACTED]

Dear Amelia

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME ON NOTICE RESPONSE FROM OCTOBER 2025 COUNCIL MEETING

I write to you in response to your questions on Cat Curfew and Illegal Dumping of Rubbish submitted to the 8 October Council meeting. I will address your questions as follows:

Question 1 – Cat Curfew:

Council has recently raised the issue of a cat curfew. I am in full support of this curfew. The issue of cats outside has got me questioning how many feral cats are projected to live in Merri-bek and is Council considering a plan to reduce the feral cat population?

Thank you for your question. The answer to your question is set out below.

Answer to Question 1:

The Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) outlines a range of programs and initiatives aimed at addressing cat overpopulation, reducing high euthanasia rates, and managing the stray and feral cat population across Merri-bek. A full list of proposed activities and actions can be found in the DAMP which is being presented to Council at the 12 November 2025 meeting for adoption.

While it's difficult to quantify the number of stray and feral cats currently living in Merri-bek, the 2023 pet census estimated there are around 914,000 owned cats in Victoria, with an unknown number of stray and feral cats. We know that cats can begin breeding from as early as four months of age and may produce up to three litters per year, so it's important that we encourage cat care givers to desex cats as this will significantly impact the number of cats in our community.

Speak with us in your language		For more information visit merri-bek.vic.gov.au/your-language	
Per maggiori informazioni nella tua lingua, chiama il numero 9280 1911	اپنی زبان میں مزید جاننے کے لیے پر کال کریں۔ 9280 1917	如需了解更多您语言版本的信息, 请致电 9280 0750	अपनी भाषा में अधिक जानने के लिए, 9280 1918 पर कॉल करें
Για να μάθετε περισσότερα στη γλώσσα σας, καλέστε το 9280 1912	तपाईंको भाषामा थप जान्नको लागि, 9280 1910 मा कल गर्नुहोस्	Para saber más en tu idioma llama al 9280 1916	To speak with us in a language not listed here, please call 9280 1919
لمعرفة المزيد بلغتك، اتصل بالرقم 9280 1913	Kendi dilinizde daha fazla bilgi edinmek için 9280 1914 'ü arayın	Để tìm hiểu thêm bằng ngôn ngữ của bạn, hãy gọi 9280 1915	

We believe that introducing a cat curfew and continuing to offer and expand our desexing programs will help reduce the number of feral and unowned cats in our community over time.

Question 2 – Illegal Dumping of Hard Rubbish:

Hard rubbish gets illegally dumped on nature strips in Pascoe Vale. In my opinion, this does not make Pascoe Vale look inviting and is unsafe. It is also unhygienic as sometimes these items are related to the toilet, including pet toilets. It is dangerous as I have seen a vacuum cleaner left in the rain and then short circuit when it was rained on. Sometimes it has been requested to be picked up with hard rubbish collections but has remained on the nature strip.

Can Council please put further actions in place to address this illegal dumping?

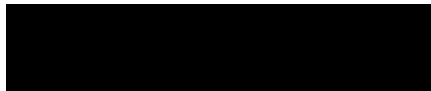
Answer to Question 2:

Illegally dumped rubbish is a huge issue not just within Merri-bek but within the whole of Melbourne, currently council aim to respond to reports within 5 days. Council provides booked hard waste collections to residents that pay a waste charge as well as the provision of paid collection services of hard rubbish. Council has installed signage at many of our parks and parking lots to discourage illegal dumping. Council is also working on promotions on our communications pages to encourage the community to report incidents of dumping, as well as working to educate our community have a better awareness of their options rather than choosing to illegally dump.

Thank you again for your feedback and for your commitment to a cleaner and more sustainable community.

I trust this answers your questions, however, if you require any further information, please don't hesitate to contact myself, Sandra Troise, Manager Amenity and Compliance or Tanya Taylor, Unit Manager Street Cleansing on 9240 1111.

Yours sincerely



Greg Rodwell

ACTING DIRECTOR CITY INFRASTRUCTURE

31 / 10 / 2025



Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation
(Planning and Environment Act 1987 only)

Planning Officers – November 2025

S11A Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation (Planning and Environment Act 1987)

Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation

In this instrument 'officer' means

- Aileen Chin
- Alex Osborne
- Anna Fraser
- Ariadne Hasiotis
- Caleb Cootes
- Dee Erdogan
- Denise Turner
- Devlin Morton
- Diahnn McIntosh
- Edward (Ned) Dumaresq
- Ekta Shah
- Emily Williams
- Esha Rahman
- Evan Strouss
- Gina Settle
- Graeme Linsell
- Houston Watt
- Jessica Henwood-White
- Jessica Weymouth
- Karmen Wheeler
- Kosta Vassilacopoulos
- Lachlan McGowan
- Lawson Peters
- Leanne Stockley
- Lucas Wearne
- Mark Hughes
- Michelle Rowe
- Niall O'Brien
- Phi Tran
- Phil Priest
- Rachel Clarke
- Renee Wilson
- Robert Wallis
- Rosie Ivers
- Ryan Hay
- Vicki Lu
- Vita Galante
- Wyatt Griffiths
- Umesh Upreti

S11A Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation (Planning and Environment Act 1987)

1. under section 147(4) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* authorises the officers to carry out the duties or functions and to exercise the powers of an authorised officer under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*; and
2. under section 313 of the *Local Government Act 2020* authorises the officer generally to institute proceedings for offences against the Acts and regulations described in this instrument.

- comes into force immediately upon its execution;
- remains in force until varied or revoked.

The COMMON SEAL of)
MERRI-BEK CITY COUNCIL)
was affixed on ____ November 2025)
with the authority of the Council:)

Mayor, Councillor Helen Davidson

8. Appendix 'A' Maintenance & Inspection Standards RMP 2025

1.0 SCHEDULE OF INTERVENTION LEVELS – ROAD PAVEMENTS						
ITEM	OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY	INTERVENTION LEVEL	RESPONSE TIME			
			L	C	A	CL
1.1	Pothole Patching on sealed trafficable lane or on-road bike lane	When a pothole ≥ 40 mm in depth and ≥ 300 mm in diameter	2W	3W	4W	4W
1.2	Regulation of wheel ruts and depression	When rutting depression and vertical displacement is ≥ 50 mm over a 3m long straight edge in the trafficable path	2W	3W	4W	4W
1.3	Bike Lane - Linear Pavement Cracks	When linear pavement cracks ≥ 20 mm width and ≥ 200 mm in length	2W	3W	4W	4W
1.4	Unsealed Pavement	Repair unsealed roads when rutting, potholing and corrugations ≥ 100 mm depth and ≥ 1000 mm in diameter.	Not applicable	Not applicable	4W	4W
1.5	Segmental (paved or bluestone) within the road pavement	When segmental pavement ≥ 50 mm vertical displacement; adjacent paver/bluestone; or missing	4W	4W	4W	3M
1.6	Missing and Damaged Pit Lids	When missing or damaged	1D	1D	5D	10D

7.10 CONTRACT RFT-2025-42 ROAD RECONSTRUCTION, TINNING STREET, BRUNSWICK FROM GARNET STREET TO WALTERS STREET

Acting Director City Infrastructure, Greg Rodwell

Capital Works Planning and Delivery

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to:
 - a) Make a formal offer to **Presta Construction Group Pty Ltd and ACN 096 137 745 (Contractor)** to award the Contractor contract **RFT-2025-42 Road Reconstruction Tinning Street, Brunswick (Garnet Street to Walters Street) (Contract)** on the following terms and otherwise subject to and in accordance with paragraph 1(b) of this Resolution:
 - i. For the total Contract value of \$1,347,456.00 (excluding GST), comprising of fixed lump sum of \$1,162,424.00 (excluding GST) and provisional amount of \$185,032.00 (excluding GST).
 - b) Negotiate and finalise the terms of the Contract between Council and the Contractor provided that:
 - i. the terms specified in paragraph 1(a) of this Resolution shall not be altered without a further Resolution of Council; and
 - ii. other than terms referred to in paragraph 1(a) of this Resolution, the terms of the Contract are acceptable to the Chief Executive Officer.
2. Conditional on acceptance of the Contract by the Contractor in accordance with the terms of this Resolution:
 - a) Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to execute the Contract and any required documentation for the Contract; and
 - b) Advises all tenderers of Council's decision in relation to the Contract.
3. Refers the budget savings of \$202,044 to the quarterly review process.

REPORT

Executive Summary

The road reconstruction of Tinning Street in Brunswick, from Garnet Street to Walters Street, has been included in the 2025–2026 Capital Works Program under the Roads and Carparks Program. The project forms part of Council's current Development Contributions Plan (DCP).

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

Following the tender evaluation process, Presta Construction Group Pty Ltd has been identified as the preferred tenderer based on the strength of their submission. Subject to contract award on 12 November 2025, the contractor has confirmed readiness to commence offsite preparatory works from 12 January 2026. (immediately after end of year break).

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

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

Previous Council Decisions

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

1. Policy Context

This report is in keeping with Council's commitment to accountability and sound financial management. It also addresses the requirement under section 109(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* which requires Council to adhere to its Procurement Policy when entering into contracts for the purchasing of goods or services, or the carrying out of works. Council adopted the Procurement Policy on 11 June 2025 which sets the threshold for conducting a public tender for goods, services and works where once-off or ongoing cumulative spend over the life of the contract is expected to exceed \$350,000 (incl GST).

2. Background

The purpose of the report is to award a tender to a suitably qualified contractor to undertake the Road Reconstruction of Tinning Street, Brunswick (Garnet Street to Walters Street) as per the detailed drawings and specifications.

The tender was advertised via Council Procurement portal and in *The Age* newspaper on 16 August 2025, inviting tenderers via the e-tender portal from suitably experienced contractors to undertake the works.

The tender closed at 3pm on Friday 12 September 2025, with tenders received from following 10 contractors. All 10 tenderers were deemed conforming.

	Tenderers	ABN
1	ADP Constructions Pty Ltd	46 118 588 097
2	CDN Construction Pty Ltd	62 884 294 341
3	Cole Civil (Metro Asphalt Pty Ltd)	27 593 149 786
4	GP Bluestone Pty Ltd	21 664 700 435
5	Merlo Civil & Concreting	18 150 942 920
6	Kaizen Civil Pty Ltd	18 619 423 068
7	Kalow Holdings Pty Ltd	51 006 811 641
8	MJ Construction Group Pty Ltd	56 092 432 730
9	Presta Construction Group Pty Ltd	56 096 137 745
10	SME Earthmoving	21 673 232 570

Tender Evaluation

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

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

The membership of the tender evaluation panel was as follows:

Title	Generalist or Nominated Speciality	Full Voting / Advisory Member
Senior Construction Engineer	Engineering Services (Chair)	Full Voting
Project Engineer Roads and Drainage	Engineering Services	Full Voting
Active Transport Officer	Generalist	Full Voting
Acting Procurement Partner	Procurement	Procurement Compliance

In assessing the tenders, consideration was given to the following pre-defined criteria:

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

The evaluation process identified as the preferred supplier based on the results of the evaluation matrix, as identified in **Confidential Attachment 1**.

3. Issues

Collaboration

Note that section 109(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires that any report to the Council that recommends entering into a procurement agreement must include information in relation to any opportunities for collaboration with other councils or public bodies which may be available.

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

Social Implications

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

Local Implications

Presta Construction Group is in Reservoir within the NCA area. Demonstrating a strong commitment to supporting the local economy, the company regularly engages local suppliers in its operations and has identified three local businesses to be involved in the upcoming Tinning Street Road Reconstruction project.

Environmental Implications

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

Human Rights Consideration

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

4. Consultation / Recommendation from Management

As part of the design phase, community consultation was carried out in March 2025 via a letter drop to property owners and residents, along Tinning Street, Brunswick (Garnet Street to Walters Street). Several residents expressed their support for the proposed works, and their feedback has been carefully considered in the final road design.

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

5. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council Officers, external consultants and all other parties involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

6. Financial and Resources Implications

A total budget of \$1,609,500.00 has been allocated in Council Capital Works Program for the financial year of 2025/26 for the Road Reconstruction Works of Tinning Street, Brunswick from Garnet Street to Walter Street.

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

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

Project Name (Roads Reconstruction)	Allocated Budget (Excluding GST)
Road Reconstruction, Tinning Street, Brunswick (Garnet Street to Patterson Street)	\$471,750.00
Road Reconstruction, Tinning Street, Brunswick (Patterson Street to Walter Street)	\$1,137,750.00
Total Budget	\$1,609,500.00
Less	
Recommended contract award RFT-2025-42 Road Reconstruction, Tinning Street, Brunswick (Garnet Street to Walter Street)	\$1,347,456.00
Provision for latent conditions or unforeseen costs	\$60,000.00

Project Name (Roads Reconstruction)	Allocated Budget (Excluding GST)
Savings to be referred to quarterly forecast process	\$202,044.00

7. Implementation and Timeline

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

The contract will commence as soon as possible following Council endorsement by 12 November 2025.

Construction works are planned to commence in January 2026 immediately after the end of year break and completed by early May 2026.

Attachment/s

- 1 CONFIDENTIAL: RFT-2025-42 - Tender Recommendation Report D25/510083

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

8. NOTICES OF MOTION

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

Cr Helen Politis

Motion

That Council:

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

1. Background

Cr Politis' background:

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

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

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

2. Policy context

Officer's comments:

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

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

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

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

3. Financial implications

Officer's comments:

An advocacy letter can be completed with existing budget.

4. Resources implications

Officer's comments:

An advocacy letter can be completed with existing staffing.

8.2 RAMADAN NIGHTS @ BONWICK STREET, FAWKNER 2026

Cr Sue Bolton

Motion

That Council:

1. Receives a future report investigating the establishment of a 'Ramadan Nights' event, that outlines operational, financial and logistical requirements for delivery including:
 - a) Considerations for holding this event on an annual basis from 2027 as a multicultural community celebration.
 - b) Assesses the suitability of hosting the event in Bonwick Street, Fawkner during the month of Ramadan.
 - c) Outlines engagement considerations and opportunities to include Muslim Women's Council Victoria, local business owners, restaurants, and community groups to collaboratively plan and deliver the event in a way that celebrates cultural diversity and strengthens social cohesion.
 - d) Identify external funding opportunities, including relevant State and Federal Government multicultural and community event grants, to support event delivery.

1. Background

Cr Bolton's background:

The proposed Ramadan Nights Fawkner 2026 is inspired by the success of Lakemba Nights during Ramadan in Sydney, which attracts over a million visitors annually and is recognised nationally as one of Australia's most vibrant multicultural events. Lakemba Nights during Ramadan is a partnership between the Canterbury-Bankstown Council and the local community, with grants from the NSW government.

The proposed Ramadan Nights Fawkner 2026 aims to transform Bonwick Street, Fawkner, into a lively night market every weekend during Ramadan, offering a range of cultural food stalls, entertainment, and family-friendly activities. It will provide an inclusive and welcoming environment for both Muslim and non-Muslim residents to experience the traditions of Ramadan and the diversity of Merri-bek's community.

Ramadan Nights Fawkner will:

- Promote community harmony and cultural understanding
- Activate the Bonwick Street precinct, supporting local restaurants and small businesses and community groups
- Encourage tourism and local economic activity
- Strengthen Merri-bek's reputation as a leader in multicultural celebration and inclusivity.

It is likely that there would be external funding opportunities through State Government multicultural and events grants. Discussion about the potential for the event began in 2025, with the Muslim Women's Council of Victoria indicating that they would be prepared to do the exploratory work of engaging with the Bonwick St traders and restaurants and other community groups. Such an event would work best if it was a partnership between the Council and the local community.

This event aligns strongly with Merri-bek City Council's Community Vision, Multicultural Policy, and Economic Development Strategy. Ramadan Nights Fawkner 2026 will be a landmark celebration for Merri-bek, promoting unity, diversity, and local pride.

The event has the potential to grow into one of Victoria's most significant multicultural festivals, building on the success of similar initiatives interstate.

2. Policy Context

Officer's comments:

Social Cohesion Plan 2020–2025

Themes:

Social and Cultural Connection (Council will promote social and cultural inclusion by creating opportunities for social connection and cultural exchange).

Economic Participation (Council will support a strong and diverse local economy and increase economic participation).

Council's Social Cohesion Plan supports initiatives fostering community harmony, cultural understanding and inclusivity. Fawkner's population includes a significant Muslim community with 34.6 per cent practicing Islam (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021), representing diverse cultural backgrounds within the Muslim population. This diversity calls for careful planning to ensure the event is inclusive and reflective of the various traditions and cultural practices within Fawkner's Muslim community.

Partnering with the local Muslim community, engaging local businesses and community groups will ensure that Ramadan Nights at Bonwick Street can be culturally sensitive, support social cohesion and promote local pride.

3. Financial Implications

Officer's comments:

The cost of developing a future report can be undertaken within existing budget allocations.

The cost of running community events of this nature can be significant and cannot be accurately estimated prior to consultation with the community and key stakeholders. To make this event sustainable, external funding sources may be necessary and will be explored to support operational, financial and logistical requirements.

4. Resources Implications

Officer's comments:

Development of a future report can be undertaken within existing resources.