Merri-bek City Council

COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

Wednesday 8 October 2025

Commencing 6.30 pm

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

Language Link

This is the Agenda for the Council meeting. For assistance with any of the agenda items, please telephone 9240 1111.

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

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

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

D25/533525

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

WELCOME

1. APOLOGIES/LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Cr Svensson has sought a leave of absence for the period 20 October to 9 November 2025 (inclusive).

2. DISCLOSURES OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

3. MINUTE CONFIRMATION

The minutes of the Council Meeting held on 10 September 2025 be confirmed.

4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND OTHER MATTERS

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9. NOTICE OF RESCISSION

Nil

10. FORESHADOWED ITEMS

11. URGENT BUSINESS

12. CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

12.1 CENTRAL COBURG PROGRAM

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

12.2 CONTRACT MATTERS

Pursuant to section 3(1)(g(i))(g(ii)), and 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 relates to trade secrets, and private commercial information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that if released, would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage.

12.3 PROGRAM REVIEW

Pursuant to section 3(1)(h) of the Local Government Act 2020 this report has been designated as confidential because it relates to confidential meeting information, being the records of meetings closed to the public under section 66(2)(a).

12.4 CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER EMPLOYMENT MATTERS

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

7. COUNCIL REPORTS

7.1 2024-25 MERRI-BEK CITY COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT

Director Community, Eamonn Fennessy

Customer, Communications and Engagement

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Formally receives the Merri-bek City Council Annual Report 2024-25, provided as Attachment 1.
2. Authorises the Director Community to make minor changes to the report if required.

REPORT

Executive Summary

The Merri-bek City Council Annual Report 2024-25 contains Council's audited Financial and Performance Statements and provides information on Council operations and services delivered to and for the community for the 2024-25 financial year.

The report, at Attachment 1, contains the key highlights and achievements of Council for the year.

Previous Council Decisions

Merri-bek City Council Annual Report 2023-24 – 9 October 2024

That Council:

1. Receives the Merri-bek City Council Annual Report 2023–24.

…

1. Policy Context

Sections 98, 99 and 100 of the Local Government Act 2020 and the Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020 provide the statutory framework for Council to prepare and consider its annual report for 2024-25.

2. Background

The Merri-bek City Council Annual Report 2024-25, at Attachment 1, contains the audited Performance and Financial Statements. Council's Audit and Risk Committee recommended to Council that the Financial and Performance Statements be adopted in principle and subsequently at the Council meeting on 10 September 2025, approved in principle the Financial and Performance Statements.

The annual report meets the State Government's performance reporting framework that became mandatory from 1 July 2014. All councils are required to report results as part of their annual reporting requirements. The framework was introduced to ensure all councils measure and report on their performance in a consistent way.

3. Issues

The intent of the annual report is to inform the Merri-bek community and stakeholders of Council's performance in 2024-25 against the strategic indicators, major initiatives, and priorities outlined in the Council Plan 2021-2025 and any other key highlights or legislated requirements as prescribed.

Community impact

The annual report is a statutory obligation. It will be available on request from Merri-bek City Council offices, libraries and on our website.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

No longer printing a long, professionally designed and printed version has environmental benefits.

Economic sustainability implications

There are no economic sustainability implications associated with this report.

Legal and risk considerations

There are no legal and risk considerations applicable.

Human Rights Consideration

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

4. Community consultation and engagement

The annual report will be published on Council's website and printed copies will be available on request from Council offices and libraries.

5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

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

6. Financial and Resources Implications

The funds required to prepare and publish Merri-bek Council's Annual Report 2024- 25 are included in the approved operating budget for 2024-25.

7. Implementation

The Annual Report will be published on Council's website on or after 9 October 2025.

Attachment/s

1⇩ Annual Report 2024-25 D25/524927

Merri-bek City Council Annual Report 2024-25



Welcome

This report tells you about our achievements from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025, which is the 2024-25 financial year.

The State Government requires all local councils to report on their performance every year. This document is our full annual report.

We want you to know the range of services we delivered for our community, and how we helped you deal with challenges.

You can find our annual report on our website at merri-bek.vic.gov.au/annual-reports

In this report we use 'First Peoples' and 'First Nations' to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We understand these terms are evolving and may change over time.

Acknowledgement of Country

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

Council Plan

Our Council Plan 2021-25 is the guiding document for this annual report.

To view our Council Plan, please:
- visit merri-bek.vic.gov.au/council-plan
- call us on 9240 1111
- visit one of our customer service centres or libraries.

We also welcome your feedback on this annual report. You can:
- call us on 9240 1111
- TTY on 133 677
- Voice Relay on 1300 555 727 and ask for (03) 9240 1111
- email us at info@merri-bek.vic.gov.au
- send us a direct message on Facebook @merribekcitycouncil
- write to us at Locked Bag 10, Brunswick, Victoria 3056.

Our Customer Service Centres are open from 8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday
- Coburg Civic Centre, 90 Bell Street, Coburg
- Brunswick Customer Service Centre, 233 Sydney Road, Brunswick
- Glenroy Customer Service Centre, Glenroy Community Hub, 50 Wheatsheaf Road, Glenroy

You can also follow us on:
- Facebook (@merribekcitycouncil)
- Instagram (@merri_bekcitycouncil)
- X (Twitter)(@merribekcouncil)
- LinkedIn (au.linkedin.com/company/merri-bekcitycouncil)

Front cover image:
A family enjoying the Dinotastic event held at Glenroy Hub and Bridget Shortell Reserve in April 2025.

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Mayor's message

Merri-bek is a thriving, diverse and resilient community. I am proud of the projects and services Council has delivered over the last year to ensure our community continues to flourish.

Here are some highlights from the past year.

Investing in community facilities and public spaces

We are committed to ensuring everyone in our community has access to quality, inclusive facilities. In March, we opened the doors to Brunswick's newest arts and community precinct, Balam Balam Place. The $30 million redevelopment features welcoming and affordable spaces for the community to use, as well as a new Maternal and Child Health centre. We also opened the $36.8 million Fawkner Leisure Centre redevelopment in December, delivering an accessible and environmentally friendly space for people of all ages to exercise, play and socialise.

I am pleased to see continued investment into our public spaces, a great example of which is the Love Sydney Road project where we partnered with local traders to remove graffiti and beautify the area.

Advocating for aged care services, transport and housing

As a Council, we recognise our responsibility to advocate at the highest levels on issues that affect our community. That is why we are continuing to ask the Federal Government to retain upfront Commonwealth block funding for the Commonwealth Home Support Program, which will allow us to continue to deliver vital services to older people in our community.

We are also working with several councils in Melbourne's north, through the Northern Council Alliance, to call on the State Government to invest in the duplication and extension of the Upfield rail line. Servicing the rapidly growing northern suburbs, these investments are needed now to resolve critical constraints on train services not only in Merri-bek, but also Hume, Whittlesea and Mitchell.

Council has also made a submission to the State Government's Activity Centres Program, where we have strongly advocated for the need for more affordable housing in Merri-bek.

Improving core services

While delivering major projects and advocating on behalf of our community are important, we also need to get the basics right. I'm proud of Council's commitment to providing high-quality core services, from street cleaning and waste management to vaccination programs. Over the past year, we've strengthened our capacity to respond swiftly to community issues, complete road reconstructions, and repair potholes with greater speed and efficiency. These services keep Merri-bek running smoothly and safely.

Our new Council Plan 2025-2029, shaped by the voices of our community, was adopted in September 2025. Thank you to all residents and businesses who participated in the engagement process – your insights are helping to guide Merri-bek's future. I am grateful to be Mayor of our wonderful city, helping to make a difference for our community.

Cr Helen Davidson
MAYOR

Chief Executive Officer's message

It's been a busy year across Merri-bek, and I am proud of all we have achieved together in delivering the final chapter of the Council Plan 2021-2025.

Thank you to everyone in our community for your support, ideas and involvement in helping to shape our municipality.

Thank you also to our dedicated staff, volunteers, committee members and Councillors. Despite economic challenges, you have helped deliver more than 150 essential services to our community, including:

- delivering 70,317 meals to Merri-bek residents
- planting 3879 trees
- loaning 1,226,119 books and electronic resources in our libraries
- sweeping 24,679 kilometres of streets
- collecting 27,215 tonnes of garbage
- collecting 2221 tonnes of glass and 10,352 tonnes of co-mingled recycling
- collecting 2247 tonnes of booked hard waste (358 tonnes were recycled)
- diverting 15,837 tonnes of food and garden waste from landfill
- vaccinating 4790 children aged under 5 years, 1136 high school students and 880 adults.

In addition to delivering these core services, I'm pleased to report that:

We've stayed financially responsible, recognising the pressures of rising living costs on our community and managing budgets carefully to deliver high-quality services and facilities.

We've invested in community infrastructure, completing major projects like the Fawkner Leisure Centre redevelopment ($36.8 million) and the new Balam Balam Place cultural hub ($30 million), delivering wonderful spaces for our community to enjoy. We expanded our early years facilities, including Derby Street Children's Centre and Oak Park Kindergarten, to meet the needs of our growing population. We have opened two new parks as part of our Park Close to Home program, as well as investing in playgrounds, open space, roads and streetscapes to support our community and environment to be safe, healthy and happy.

We've stayed focused on sustainability, delivering our Zero Carbon Action Plan 2020-25, supporting low-income households with solar and insulation grants, upgrading stormwater systems and planting over 2000 more trees. Our Climate Resilience Strategy is helping us plan smarter for the future.

Council remains committed to delivering core services, investing in vital infrastructure, leading environmental sustainability, and advocating for community wellbeing. I'm looking forward to continuing to work together to deliver our new Council Plan 2025-2029 to make Merri-bek even more vibrant, inclusive, and resilient for all members of our community.

Cathy Henderson
Chief Executive Officer

About our municipality

Here we talk about our municipality, how we are meeting the challenges we face and our focus for the future.

Merri-bek is a diverse and vibrant municipality located between 4 km and 14 km north of central Melbourne.

The City of Merri-bek includes the following suburbs:

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

Merri-bek is bordered by Merri Creek to the east, Moonee Ponds Creek to the west, Park Street to the south and the Western Ring Road to the north.

Challenges and future outlook

A growing population

By 2036, our municipality is expected to have a population of 222,733. We are continuing to plan for the services needed to support new residents, and greater pressure on infrastructure.

We have strategies on our key challenges:

- transport and how we move around our city
- maintaining and increasing parks and open spaces
- reaching our zero carbon targets by 2040
- housing accessibility and affordability.

A diverse population

In 2021, 33% of our residents were born overseas. At home, residents are most likely to speak Italian, Arabic, Greek or Urdu if not speaking English. In total, 34.5% of households in our community speak a language other than English at home (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

In 2023, there were an estimated 18,333 total GST-registered businesses in Merri-bek. Health Care and Social Assistance is the largest employer, generating 8680 local jobs in 2021-22.

Through our Community Connector program, we recruit volunteers to help facilitate meaningful engagement and communication between Council and our culturally diverse communities. Our Connectors ask our community what information they need, share information from Council and tell us

how to improve our messages and translations. This year, Council piloted a Youth Connectors program, which is now integrated into the wider Connectors program.

Merri-bek households

By 2026, it is predicted that people who live alone will make up the largest proportion of households with 28% in our municipality, followed by families making up 26% of households.

We have also seen a steady increase in townhouse and apartment living in recent years (in 2021, 48% of all homes).

We are working for the best possible planning outcomes for our community. We are focusing on higher quality building design, increased canopy tree planting, redevelopment that maintains or increases local employment opportunities and protecting our valued heritage places.

How we move around

Overreliance on cars poses challenges for our city when it comes to getting people to work, education or leisure safely and sustainably. About 3 in 4 homes in Merri-bek are within a 5-minute walk of public transport, yet private car use accounts for more 25 per cent of carbon emissions in our municipality. This indicates that those 5-minute walks aren't always convenient, and as our population grows, this challenge becomes more prevalent. It is important that we work to create safer and easier-to-use streets so people can choose to walk, ride, or catch public transport safely and conveniently to reduce those transport-related carbon emissions.

Open space

In parts of Merri-bek, residents do not have access to public open space that they can walk to. Forecast population growth will continue to put pressure on access to open space. Our A Park Close to Home initiative aims to ensure every Merri-bek resident lives within 500 m walking distance to a park or open space, and within 300 m for those living in our most populated areas. Through this initiative we purchase land to turn into parks – including Yubup Park at Frith Street, Brunswick and Michelle Guglielmo Park at Sydney Road, Brunswick – helping ensure all residents have access to quality open space close to where they work, live and play.

Merri-bek has over 133 existing public playgrounds and we are responsible for upgrading and renewing these important community assets for the future. This year we upgraded 6 parks and created a new dog park at Sewell Reserve.

The climate emergency

Climate change is a dangerous threat to life. We are already experiencing hotter summer days, more frequent floods and droughts. Climate change is a risk to our health and wellbeing, and the economy, not just the environment.

Merri-bek is proud to be a leader in responding to climate change. It is Council's adopted goal for Merri-bek to achieve 75% emissions reduction by 2030 (against 2011-12 baseline), net zero by 2035 and drawdown ('negative emissions') by 2040.

Burning fossil fuels for energy is the largest source of carbon emissions for our community. Our emissions come from electricity (38%), gas (29%), transport (21%) and waste (5%).

Council maintains the largest electric vehicle fleet of local governments in Victoria, which includes e-bikes. We are also expanding our public EV charging network, improving the energy efficiency of our facilities and installing solar power where feasible.

It is up to all of us to work together to be part of the solution to climate change. This includes demanding state and federal governments put in place policies to enable Australia to transition to a zero-carbon future.

Support for older people

We are committed to supporting our older residents to live and age well and to remain living independently at home for as long as possible. We are focused on supporting older residents to be connected to their community. This is part of the implementation of our Living and Ageing Well Framework.

The findings from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety and the Australian Government response continues to drive changes to aged care services. The Australian Government signalled a delayed start of the new Support at Home Program (the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) services that Council provide are not expected to move to the Support at Home model until 1 July 2027).

We will continue to deliver the Commonwealth Home Support Program aged care support services in the home. We are working to ensure we smoothly transition these services throughout upcoming significant federal government changes to the aged care system. We are continuing to advocate and are preparing our service model so we can be well placed to address the needs of our older residents.

Achievements of the year

Here is a summary of our achievements for the past year under the five themes from our Council Plan 2021-25.

Strategic objective 1: An environmentally proactive Merri-bek

To strive for maximum protection of people's health, plants and animals through leading an urgent response to the climate emergency and a regeneration of our natural environment.

Achievements:

- Together with our community, Council achieved or exceeded 10 ambitious targets of the goals of the Zero Carbon Merri-bek Action Plan 2020-25 and endorsed the draft Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025-30 and draft Circular Economy Strategy for community consultation.
- Delivered sustainability events, including the Women's Environmental Leadership Australia Stories of Change and World Environment Day multicultural celebration with over 150 attendees.
- Expanded the Ride & Stride program, repairing 200+ children's bikes, donating 17 bikes, and running bike education for teachers.
- Completed electrification works at 6 council sites, including the now fully electric Fawkner Leisure Centre, and commenced planning for upgrades to Oak Park Sports and Aquatic Centre.
- Finalised contracts to deliver the Brunswick Community Battery.
- Opened the Dunstan Reserve stormwater harvesting system and advanced feasibility studies for more wetland sites.
- Several Council events went plastic-free, including Fawkner Festa, Glenroy Festival, Ballerrt Moorroop Day and Environment Day for Multicultural Communities, diverting 1,800+ items from landfill.
- Continued to promote the solar and thermal subsidies program to low-income and diverse communities in the north. 51 homes were upgraded with insulation and/or draft-proofing, 7 homes received efficient electric heating and cooling (split systems), and 42 homes had solar PV installed (including 7 apartments).

Strategic objective 2: Moving and living safely in Merri-bek

To contribute to the health, safety, and security of everyone living in our diverse community and to increase safe, accessible, physically active and enjoyable ways to get around Merri-bek, especially via walking, cycling and public transport.

Achievements:

- Adopted our new Streets for People plan, which sets out our future network of safe, accessible, healthy, liveable and inclusive streets for everyone.
- Continued advocating for the duplication, electrification, and extension of the Upfield rail line, securing state and federal attention.
- Successfully influenced state budget improvements to bus services in the north of Merri-bek, including Sunday services on route 536.
- Committed to delivering safer speeds around schools and activity centres through endorsing two 30km/h trials.
- Developed the draft Transport Strategy Action Plan (community engagement to come).
- Supported more of our diverse community to ride through transport equity programs such as Wheel Sisters, E-bike Libraries, women's bike skills sessions and Ride & Stride
- Completed road renewal and resurfacing works, improving safety across key areas.
- Delivered active travel upgrades, including the Batman Avenue section of the Upfield Shared Path and South Street zebra crossing.

- Engaged with the community to progress designs for the Harding Street Bridge replacement, the O'Hea Street bike lane extension, and streetscape enhancements for Harding and Munro Streets, Breese Street, Hope Street and Albert Street.

Strategic objective 3: A healthy and caring Merri-bek

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

Achievements:

- Expanding early years facilities, including Derby Street Children's Centre and Oak Park Kindergarten.
- Supported 400+ residents through the Aged Well navigation pilot, now extended for 2025-26.
- Advanced First Peoples Employment Plan, delivering cultural awareness training and annual wellbeing events.
- Supported over 160 residents at disability-friendly events and expanded inclusive arts and recreation.
- Delivered the Refugee & Migrant Business Development Series and co-developed the Anti-Racism Support Booklet with neighbouring councils.
- Supported LGBTIQA+ communities with events for IDAHOBIT, youth library takeovers, and allyship training.
- Implemented the Climate Risk Foundational Action Plan, integrating climate resilience into asset and capital planning.

Strategic objective 4: Vibrant spaces and places in Merri-bek

To create welcoming, unique spaces and places across Merri-bek that attract and connect everyone, improving access to community facilities and affordable housing and encouraging vibrant artistic, social and economic activity.

Achievements:

- Merri-bek Affordable Housing progressed delivery of 39 new social housing units at Wilkinson Street on former Council land, in partnership with Haven Home Safe.
- Supported local businesses through 13 workshops, 4 information sessions, and the Shopping Strip Renewal Program.
- Attracted strong community participation at a range of events: 70,000 people attended the Sydney Road Street Party and Brunswick Music Festival in March, 29,000 people joined the festivities at Coburg Night Market in December and many thousands joined in community celebrations at Carols by the Lake, Fawkner Festa, Glenroy Festival and new activations including Dinotastic Glenroy, Eid celebrations, and Michelle Guglielmo Park night-time light projections.
- Launched the fifth Love Merri-bek Trails Guide and hosted the inaugural Tourism Roundtable.
- Finalised a draft Development Contributions Plan, which was submitted to the Minister for approval to consult; progressed planning reforms such as the introduction of a stormwater overlay in the Planning Scheme.
- Advanced the Brunswick Design District profile through Melbourne Design Week and local studio activations.
- Worked with traders and local groups and organisations to improve community safety in Victoria Mall, Coburg and Glenroy Activity Centre.

Strategic objective 5: An empowered, collaborative Merri-bek

Build community trust through encouraging participation, evidence-based decision-making, stewardship of resources and being accessible and responsive.

Achievements:

- Secured $9 million in federal funding for local projects including Fawkner Netball Club, Fawkner Sports and Community Hub, Gillon Oval, and Edgars Creek vegetation works.
- Strengthened advocacy through submissions to the State Activity Centres Program, Climate Change Strategy, and Infrastructure Victoria's 30-Year Strategy.
- Expanded the CALD Connectors Program, improving translation services and accessibility on engagement platforms.
- Initiated Planning Scheme Amendment C235mbek to deliver a new open space contribution.
- Completed online complaints handling training and prepared rollout of a new customer experience program.
- Set up the Parking Fines Refund Scheme to fix an administrative error and reimburse affected drivers, ensuring fairness and transparency in our parking fine system.
- Continued collaborative partnerships with groups such as the Northern Councils Alliance, Melbourne 9 alliance of councils, Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment and Mayoral Taskforce for People Seeking Asylum.

Financial overview

The 'Financial Report' section in this report includes the comprehensive financial statements. These were prepared in accordance with relevant accounting standards and legislative requirements.

Some stakeholders and community members may find these detailed financial statements difficult to read and understand. This overview aims to simplify the key information about our financial performance for the financial year between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2025.

Operating income

Our total income for the year was $281.1 million.

This was an increase in income of $26.1 million compared to 2023-24. This was largely due to the growth in rates income and an increase in grant income. Our major source of income is rates and charges, which generated 69.4% of our total income ($195.1 million).

Other major sources of income included:
- government grants of $32.0 million (or 11.4% of total income)
- user fees and statutory fees and fines of $27.1 million (or 9.7% of total income).

Operating expenses

Our total operating expenses for the year were $250.6 million.

The largest fraction of this was employee costs. This was $115.7 million (46.2% of total expenses). The next biggest cost was materials and services of $78.4 million (31.3% of total expenses).

The key figure to look at is the surplus or deficit for the year. The accounting surplus or deficit is the total revenue less the total expenses. We are reporting an accounting surplus of $30.4 million for the financial year. It is important to note that this accounting surplus is not spare money that builds up in the bank. While Council may be generating a healthy accounting surplus, this is used to fund other items in our operations. This includes loan principal repayments, transfers to reserves to fund future projects and rates-funded projects in the capital works program.

Council had an underlying surplus of $21.9 million. This surplus is required to contribute towards our rates-funded capital works program, transfers to reserves and loan repayments.

Reserves are already committed to future capital works expenditure or other important one-off items.

The underlying operating result is an important measure of financial sustainability. This measure demonstrates Council's ability to self-fund its operations and excludes funding relating to the capital works program.

Operating expenditure profile for 2024-25

Operating Category	Percentage
Asset depreciation	16.7%
Administration	14.6%
Waste collection and recycling	9.7%
Aged, disability and social services	8.0%
Parks and street trees	7.8%
Planning and economic development	5.5%
Local laws and regulations	5.4%
Arts, culture and libraries	4.7%
Systems and communications	3.9%
Health and immunisation	2.9%
Customer service	2.9%
Street cleansing	2.7%
Roads and footpaths	2.3%
Youth and children's services	2.1%
Transport	2.0%
Asset maintenance	2.0%
Sustainable communities and environment	1.9%
Governance	1.6%
Recreation and leisure	1.4%
Capital works	1.0%
Property services	0.5%
Asset management	0.4%
Grand Total	**100.0%**

Capital expenses

Our total completed capital expenditure for the year was $91.2 million.

We continued to address our capital works program across a wide range of projects. Our total completed capital work spend was $51.9 million above the depreciation for the year.

Capital works by category delivered in 2024-25

Asset class	Amount
Buildings	$29.2m
Parks, open space and streetscapes	$21.4m
Roads	$18.8m
Land	$5.0m
Plant, machinery and equipment	$4.3m
Building improvements	$4.1m
Footpaths and cycleways	$2.5m
Drainage	$1.8m
Other infrastructure	$1.3m
Library books	$1.1m
Computers and telecommunications	$0.9m
Bridges	$0.3m
Fixtures, fittings and furniture	$0.2m
Waste management	$0.2m

Delivering services to you

We provide more than 150 services to our community every year.

Here are key figures about the services provided to our community from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025:

- waste management
- delivering meals
- libraries and leisure centres
- parks and open spaces
- supporting local businesses
- regulating traffic
- supporting older people in their homes
- overseeing the planning permit process
- animal registrations
- street cleaning
- children and family services.

These services, and our community infrastructure, support the wellbeing and prosperity of our community.

We also plan for development and ensure we are accountable for the money we spend.

Please read the 'Our performance' section of this report on page 41 to learn more about our achievements, how we delivered them and the challenges we faced.

Snapshot of key services in 2024–25

- 1100 planning permit applications determined
- 70,317 meals delivered to Merri-bek residents
- 24,679 kilometres of streets swept
- 11,491 reports of illegally dumped rubbish managed
- 1847 reports of graffiti responded to
- 3879 trees planted
- 673,729 visitors to libraries
- 1,226,119 loans of library materials including physical items and e-resources
- 5,1927 people attended library program sessions
- 985 program sessions were offered for children and young people, including Storytimes in Italian, Greek, Spanish, Turkish, French, Woi-wurrung and Nepali languages, as well as rainbow and drag Storytimes.
- 2354 program sessions were offered for adults, including conversation clubs, chatty cafés, craft groups, workshops and lectures, makerspace drop-in, digital literacy sessions and book groups
- 1,179,365 total attendances at Active Merri-bek Aquatic and Leisure Centres
- 130,419 attendees at Active Merri-bek Aquatic and Leisure Centres water safety and learn-to-swim programs
- 139,246 total aquatic visits to seasonal outdoor pools (including swim carnivals and swim lessons)
- 107,632 casual swims at the seasonal outdoor pools
- 10,123 Active Merri-bek Aquatic and Leisure Centres members at 30 June 2025
- 13,722 dogs registered
- 8607 cats registered
- 2221 tonnes of glass collected
- 10,352 tonnes of comingled recycling collected

- 15,837 tonnes of food and garden waste collected
- 2369 tonnes of booked hard waste collected (with a portion recycled)
- 27,215 tonnes of garbage collected
- 4790 total number of children, including Aboriginal children, who access MCH services at least once in a year
- Total number of people immunised:
    - 4790 under 5 years of age
    - 1136 high school students
    - 880 adults.

Community satisfaction

Every year we ask our community how they feel about our services. This is our Community Satisfaction Survey. A total of 600 members of our community were interviewed from 14 May 2025 to 17 June 2025.

The survey asks questions about these services:
- waste management and environmental sustainability
- parking, roads and footpaths
- recreational facilities
- planning
- consultation and engagement, decision-making and lobbying
- support services and libraries
- customer service.

In 2025, our top 4 service areas ranked highest for performance by the community were:
- library services (8.5/10)
- bookable hard rubbish (8.5/10)
- regular weekly garbage collection (8.4/10)
- services for children from birth to 5 years (8.3/10).

Our top-performing service area over the past 4 years is consistently library services.

In 2025, the results showed a significant improvement in service areas including waste management and maintenance of playgrounds. Overall satisfaction with Council was 68/100, which was the same result derived in 2024. This result demonstrates stability in the improved findings.

We know Council has an important role to play in ensuring Merri-bek is a vibrant place to live. We are taking the results of this survey seriously and are continuing to work hard to improve our service delivery, while also balancing many important initiatives and projects.

When asked about satisfaction with governance and leadership:
- Satisfaction with Council's support of diversity, inclusion, and human rights was rated 75 out of 100.
- Rating of Council having a sound direction for the future was 66 out of 100.
- Consultation and engagement scored an improved 68 out of 100.
- Responsiveness of Council to local community needs was rated 68 out of 100.
- Making decisions in the interests of the community was rated 66 out of 100.

Awards and citations

Winner, 2025 AILA VIC Landscape Architecture Award for Parks and Open Space - Michelle Guglielmo Park

Winner, 2025 AILA VIC Climate Positive Design Award – Michelle Guglielmo Park

Winner, 2025 Master Builders Victoria Excellence in Civil Construction under $10 million Award, Building Engineering – Yubup Park, Brunswick

Winner, 2024 Resilient Australia National Local Government Award for 'The Adaptation Game – building climate resilience in Merri-bek'

High Commendation, 2025 LGPro Award for Excellence in Service Delivery, My Smart Garden (multi-council partnership)

High Commendation, Institute of Public Works Engineers Australia Vic Excellence in Public Works Project Award (>5m) value, Balam Balam Place

High Commendation, 2025 Parks Leisure Australia/Vic/Tas Community Facility of the Year – Fawkner Leisure Centre

Order of Timor-Leste Medal 2025, recognition of 25 years of Friends of Aileu

Our council

On 26 October 2024, our community elected 11 councillors to represent them. These councillors are elected from 11 wards across our municipality: Bababi Djinanang, Box Forest Ward, Brunswick West Ward, Bulleke-bek Ward, Djirri-Djirri Ward, Harmony Park Ward, Pascoe Vale South Ward, Pentridge Ward, Randazzo Ward, Warrk-Warrk Ward and Westbreen Ward.

Councillors

Merri-bek residents and ratepayers elect our councillors every four years. Together our councillors make decisions in the interests of the whole municipality. The next election is in October 2028.

The councillors elect a mayor and a deputy mayor each year. Cr Adam Pulford held the office of Mayor for the first part of the 2024-25 reporting period, up to 26 October 2024. In November 2024, Council elected Cr Helen Davidson as Mayor and Cr Helen Politis as Deputy Mayor. They will hold these offices until November 2025.

Councillors play an essential representative role and participate in a range of committees or groups. These include:

- committees established by Council (advisory committees)
- peak bodies or sector associations
- local and regional forums.

Some councillors are appointed by Council to take the lead in areas of interest, as the 'councillor responsible for' roles. They ensure key information is available to Council when decisions are made in these areas.

Our Councillors for the 2024-25 year were:

Bababi Djinanang Ward
Councillor Sue Bolton

Box Forest Ward
Councillor Chris Miles

Brunswick West Ward
Councillor Ella Svensson

Bulleke-bek Ward
Councillor Dr Jay Iwasaki

Djirri-Djirri Ward
Councillor / Mayor Helen Davidson

Harmony Park Ward
Councillor / Deputy Mayor Helen Politis

Pascoe Vale South Ward
Councillor Oscar Yildiz JP

Pentridge Ward
Councillor Nat Abboud

Randazzo Ward
Councillor Liz Irvin

Warrk-Warrk Ward
Councillor Adam Pulford

Westbreen Ward
Councillor Katerine Theodosis

Six other councillors represented Merri-bek during part of the 2024-25 year, before local elections on 26 October 2024. They were:

- Councillor Annalivia Carli Hannan
- Councillor Helen Pavlidis-Mihalakos
- Councillor Angelica Panopoulos
- Councillor Monica Harte
- Councillor James Conlan
- Councillor Mark Riley

We thank them for their valued contributions during the previous term of Council.

Councillors, committees and responsibilities during 2024-25

All councillors are members of the Chief Executive Officer Employment and Remuneration Matters Committee.

Mayor, Cr Helen Davidson



Elected to Council in 2012, 2016, 2020 and 2024, elected Mayor in 2016 and 2024 and Deputy Mayor in 2022.

Advisory committees: Audit and Risk Committee, Coburg Revitalisation Oversight Committee, Community Planning – Councillor Reference Group, Glenroy Advisory Group

External committees: Municipal Association of Victoria (substitute), M9 Committee, Northern Councils Alliance

Councillor responsible for: Sport and Recreation

M 0403 709 948

E hdavidson@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Deputy Mayor, Cr Helen Politis



Elected to Council in 2024 and elected Deputy Mayor in 2024.

Advisory committees: Audit and Risk Committee, Coburg Revitalisation Oversight Committee, Coburg Advisory Group, Merri-bek Community Recognition Committee (Merri-bek Awards)

External committees: Nil

Councillor responsible for: Economic Development, Multiculturalism, Sport and Recreation

M 0456 357 280

E hpolitis@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Cr Nat Abboud



Elected to Council in 2016 and 2024. Elected Deputy Mayor in 2017 and Mayor in 2018.
Advisory committees: Arts Advisory Committee, Coburg Advisory Group, Coburg Revitalisation Oversight Committee, Community Planning – Councillor Reference Group, Human Rights and Inclusion Advisory Committee, Gender Equality Reference Group, Merri-bek Community Recognition Committee (Merri-bek Awards)
External committees: Merri Creek Management Committee
Councillor responsible for: Arts and Culture, Economic Development, Women
M 0487 258 044
E nabboud@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Cr Sue Bolton



Elected to Council in 2012, 2016, 2020 and 2024.
Advisory committees: First Nations Advisory Committee, Disability Reference Group, Heritage and Local History Reference Group
External committees: Nil
Councillor responsible for: Nil
M 0417 583 664
E sbolton@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Cr Liz Irvin



Elected to Council in 2024.
Advisory committees: Brunswick Advisory Group, Sustainable Transport Advisory Committee (chair)
External committees: Merri Creek Management Committee (substitute), Metropolitan Transport Forum (substitute)
Councillor responsible for: Sport and Recreation, Transport and Getting Around, Urban Planning
M 0472 846 861
E lirvin@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Cr Dr Jay Iwasaki



Elected to Council in 2024.
Advisory committees: Coburg Advisory Group, Coburg Revitalisation Oversight Committee, Brunswick Advisory Group, Merri-bek Community Recognition Committee (Merri-bek Awards), Arts Advisory Committee (chair), Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee (chair)
External committees: Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action Executive
Councillor responsible for: Arts and Culture; Climate and Nature; Multiculturalism; Urban Planning
M 0429 431 760
E jiwasaki@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Cr Chris Miles



Elected to Council in 2024.
Advisory committees: Community Planning – Councillor Reference Group, Glenroy Advisory Group
External committees: Friends of Aileu Community Committee, Metropolitan Transport Forum
Councillor responsible for: Economic Development; Older Persons; Sport and Recreation; Transport and Getting Around; Urban Planning
M 0439 685 801
E cmiles@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Cr Adam Pulford



Elected to Council in 2020 and 2024 and elected Mayor in 2023.
Advisory committees: Community Planning – Councillor Reference Group, Brunswick Advisory Group, LGBTIQA+ Reference Group
External committees: Friends of Aileu Community Committee, Municipal Association of Victoria
Councillor responsible for: Arts and Culture, Economic Development, Transport and Getting Around
M 0417 835 793
E apulford@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Cr Ella Svensson



Elected to Council in 2024.
Advisory committees: Audit and Risk Committee, Community Planning – Councillor Reference Group, Brunswick Advisory Group, Affordable Housing Reference Group, Human Rights and Inclusion Advisory Committee, LGBTIQA+ Reference Group
External committees: Northen Alliance for Greenhouse Action Executive (substitute)
Councillor responsible for: Climate and Nature, Early Years, Human Rights, Urban Planning, Young People
M 0467 498 665
E esvensson@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Cr Katerine Theodosis



Elected to Council in 2024.
Advisory committees: Glenroy Advisory Group, Gender Equality Reference Group
External committees: Nil
Councillor responsible for: Multiculturalism, Sport and Recreation, Women
M 0459 959 298
E ktheodosis@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Cr Oscar Yildiz JP



Elected to Council in 2008, 2012, 2016, 2020 and 2024, elected Mayor in 2010, 2012 and 2014 and elected Deputy Mayor in 2019.
Advisory committees: Community Planning – Councillor Reference Group, Glenroy Advisory Group, Merri-bek Community Recognition Committee (Merri-bek Awards), Age Friendly (Older People) Reference Group
External committees: Northern Councils Alliance (substitute)
Councillor responsible for: Early Years, Economic Development, Multiculturalism, Older Persons, Sport and Recreation, Young People
M 0413 850 357
E oyildiz@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Councillors from 1 July 2024 until the conclusion of their term on 26 October 2024

Cr Annalivia Carli Hannan

Elected to Council in 2016 and 2020 and elected Mayor in 2020.
Advisory committees: Coburg Advisory Group, Coburg Revitalisation Oversight Committee.
External committees: Nil
Councillor responsible for: Early years

Cr James Conlan

Elected to Council in 2020 (resigned 14 August 2024).
Advisory committees: Brunswick Advisory Group, First Nations Advisory Committee, LGBTIQA+ Reference Group, Saxon Street Oversight Committee
External committees: Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) Executive (substitute)
Councillor responsible for: Nil

Cr Monica Harte

Elected to Council in 2022.
Advisory committees: Audit and Risk committee, Affordable Housing Reference Group, Age-Friendly (Older People) Reference Group, Arts Advisory Committee, Glenroy Advisory Group
External committees: Nil
Councillor responsible for: Arts and Culture, Older Persons

Cr Angelica Panopoulos

Elected to Council in 2020 and elected Mayor in 2022.
Advisory committees: Coburg Revitalisation Oversight Committee, Affordable Housing Reference Group, Glenroy Advisory Group
External committees: Merri Creek Management Committee
Councillor responsible for: Climate and Nature, Economic Development, Urban Planning, Young People

Cr Helen Pavlidis-Mihalakos

Elected to Council in 2020.
Advisory committees: Coburg Revitalisation Oversight Committee, Coburg Advisory Group, Merri-bek Community Recognition Committee, Arts Advisory Committee, Age-Friendly (Older People) Reference Group
External committees: Municipal Association of Victoria (substitute)
Councillor responsible for: Arts and Culture, Older Persons, Sport and Recreation, and Women

Cr Mark Riley

Elected to Council in 2016 and 2020, elected Deputy Mayor in 2018 and 2020, and elected Mayor in 2021.
Advisory committees: Saxon Street Oversight Committee, Brunswick Advisory Group, Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee, Human Rights and Inclusion Advisory Committee, Gender Equality Reference Group
External committees: Metropolitan Transport Forum, Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) Executive
Councillor responsible for: Multiculturalism

Cr Lambros Tapinos

Elected to Council in 2008, 2012, 2016 and 2020, elected Mayor in 2008, 2013 and 2019, and elected Deputy Mayor in 2021 and 2023.
Advisory committees: Audit and Risk Committee, Brunswick Advisory Group, Merri-bek Community Recognition Committee, Saxon Street Oversight Committee, Heritage and Local History Reference Group
External committees: Nil
Councillor responsible for: Arts and Culture

Our people

Merri-bek City Council is led by a Chief Executive Officer and managed by a highly skilled and experienced executive and senior management team.

Our executive team

Our managers translate Council's strategic direction and goals into organisational plans. Our executive team monitors and coordinates our progress against these plans. Supporting this work is our organisational vision 'One team, brave and diverse, making a difference'.

Chief Executive Officer – Cathy Henderson
Our senior officers report through their Directors to the Chief Executive Officer. The Branches and areas of responsibility throughout 2024-25 are outlined below.

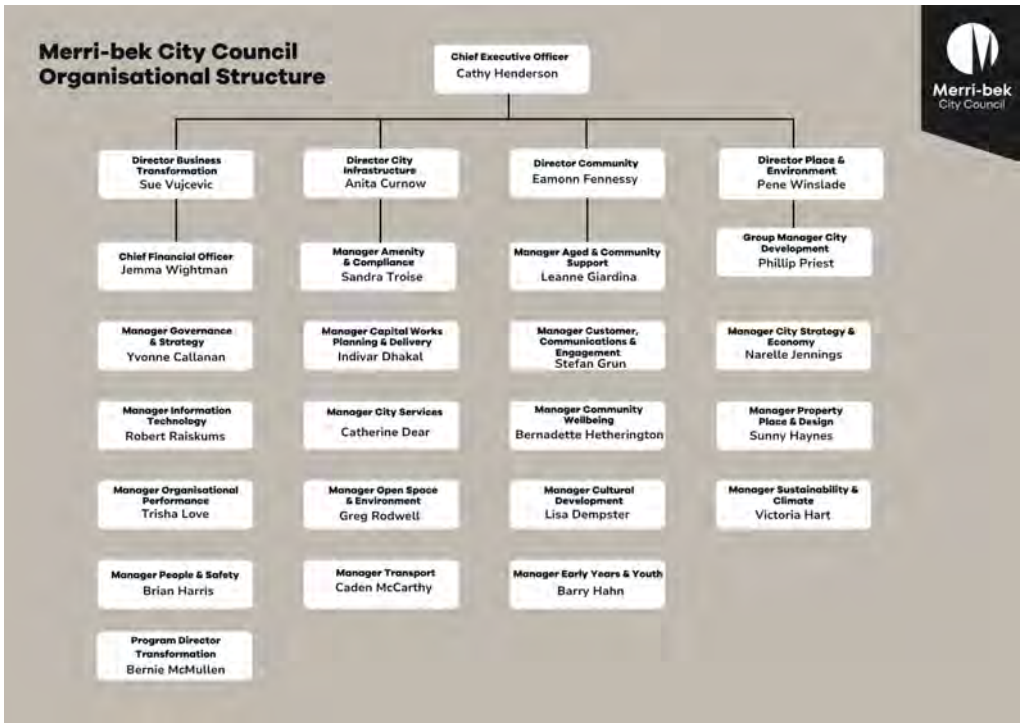
Director Business Transformation – Sue Vujcevic
Responsible for the corporate functions of Council including:
- Finance and Procurement
- Governance and Strategy
- Information Technology
- Organisational Performance
- People and Safety
- Transformation Program

Director City Infrastructure – Anita Curnow
Responsible for the following branches:
- Amenity and Compliance
- Capital Works Planning and Delivery
- City Services
- Open Space and Environment
- Transport

Director Community – Eamonn Fennessy
Responsible for the following branches:
- Aged and Community Support
- Community Wellbeing
- Cultural Development
- Customer, Communications and Engagement
- Early Years and Youth

Director Place and Environment – Pene Winslade
Responsible for the following branches:
- City Development
- City Strategy and Economy
- Property, Place, and Design
- Sustainability and Climate

Merri-bek City Council organisational structure for 2024-25



Our staffing profile

A summary of the number of FTE (full-time equivalent) staff, categorised by employment classification and gender.

Structure	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Band 5	Band 6	Band 7	Band 8	SO/SEO/ other	Total
Classification	**FTE**	**FTE**	**FTE**	**FTE**	**FTE**	**FTE**	**FTE**	**FTE**	**FTE**	**FTE**
Permanent full time – female	0.00	2.00	8.00	52.00	50.00	49.79	47.00	19.00	11.00	238.79
Permanent full time – male	0.00	0.00	43.00	77.00	79.00	48.93	41.00	13.00	17.00	318.93
Permanent full time – gender diverse	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	2.00
Permanent part time – female	12.87	44.94	11.45	18.81	32.39	21.43	24.39	8.24	0.95	175.47
Permanent part time – male	8.33	8.22	4.78	5.18	7.76	3.50	0.60	0.00	1.79	40.16
Permanent part time – gender diverse	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.80	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.80
Temporary female	0.00	0.70	1.94	7.38	3.23	8.80	4.99	2.80	13.40	43.24
Temporary male	0.00	0.60	1.81	2.00	2.77	9.84	9.64	1.00	11.44	39.10
Temporary – gender diverse	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Casual	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total FTE	21.20	56.46	70.98	163.17	175.15	143.29	128.62	44.04	55.58	858.49

A summary of the number of FTE staff categorised by directorate, employment status and gender.

Directorate	Business Transformation	Chief Executive Office	City Infrastructure	Community	Place and Environment	Total
Employment status	**FTE**	**FTE**	**FTE**	**FTE**	**FTE**	**FTE**
Permanent full time – female	47.00	1.00	42.00	93.79	55.00	238.79
Permanent full time – male	34.00	0.00	207.84	35.00	42.09	318.93
Permanent full time – gender diverse	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	2.00
Permanent part time – female	12.34	0.00	13.17	138.63	11.33	175.47
Permanent part time – male	0.51	0.00	11.48	25.88	2.29	40.16
Permanent part time – gender diverse	0.80	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.80
Temporary female	9.70	1.00	9.34	12.76	10.44	43.24
Temporary male	6.60	0.00	10.84	9.09	12.57	39.10
Temporary – gender diverse	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Casual	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total FTE	110.95	2.00	295.67	316.15	133.72	858.49

Inclusive employment

Council is proud to ensure our employees work in a supportive, understanding and considerate environment and has several plans in place that support an inclusive working environment. These include our Council Action Plan, Gender Equality Action Plan, Workforce Plan and First Peoples Employment Plan.

Key actions and achievements in 2024-25 include:

Strengthening disability inclusion

- Expanded cultural awareness and leadership programs to foster inclusion for people with disabilities
- Secured access to the SBS Disability Inclusion course for all staff in FY26, laying important foundations for disability awareness
- Planned activities for Disability Pride Month (July 2025), including new intranet resources (Disability 101, Neurodiversity 101) and events such as Basic Auslan training
- Released a new Workplace Adjustments Policy and Procedure, with a leadership awareness campaign scheduled for early FY25-26
- Launched an Accessible Word Documents intranet page to promote accessible internal communications.

Advancing gender equality and flexible work

- Introduced a comprehensive Flexible Work Arrangements Policy, supporting gender equality and inclusivity
- Updated the Flexible Working Arrangements intranet page with user-friendly, plain language content.

Improving data collection for diversity

- Enhanced demographic data collection, to ensure safer, more inclusive, and accurate recording of employee identity information
- Enabled staff to view and update their demographic information at any time, with new employees providing details during onboarding via fully accessible forms
- Updated restricted access to sensitive information to protect privacy and communicated these changes widely to staff.

Supporting gender diversity and pronoun use

- Launched a Pronouns and Gender Inclusive Language intranet page, providing practical guidance and information for staff
- Displayed educational posters at key worksites and acknowledged Trans Awareness Week with a presentation by Transgender Victoria
- Distributed pronoun pins at the IDAHOBIT celebration to promote gender inclusion.

Creating gender-inclusive facilities

- Installed new all-gender bathrooms as part of new end-of-trip facilities for staff at Coburg
- Updated signage on accessible bathrooms at the Civic Centre to reflect all-gender access.

Creating multi-faith and wellness facilities

- Created a multi-faith prayer room and a wellness/breastfeeding room at the Hadfield Operations Centre.

Promoting equal pay and recognition

- Developed streamlined reporting mechanisms for pay gap analysis, enabling ongoing monitoring by the People & Safety team.

Ongoing initiatives

- Continued review and development of recruitment practices and hiring manager training to ensure inclusive hiring
- Ongoing collection and analysis of staff demographic data to identify gaps and inform future diversity initiatives.

Council remains dedicated to building a workplace where every employee feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute.

First Peoples

Council is dedicated to being an employer of choice for First Peoples. We strive to create a culturally safe and inclusive workplace that supports the diverse identities, values, and aspirations of First Peoples.

Guided by our Statement of Commitment to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and the broader First Peoples communities, we prioritise opportunities for growth, self-determination, and meaningful participation at all levels of the organisation.

Our First Peoples Employment Plan 2022-25, aligned with Council's Action Plan, sets out to:

- Increase First Peoples representation across the workforce
- Identify and remove barriers in policy and practice
- Build cultural safety and competence throughout the organisation
- Consult and collaborate to develop sustainable employment pathways.

Key actions and achievements in 2024–25 include:

Workplace capabilities and cultural competence

- Mandatory cultural awareness training for all staff, with a 96.6% completion rate, ensures foundational understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures
- Ongoing in-person and online workshops, facilitated by Aboriginal-owned organisations, which were well attended with strong demand and positive feedback
- First Peoples' Wellbeing Calendar: Launched in July 2024, this employee-led initiative has engaged over 500 staff in cultural events, training, and celebrations, reinforcing inclusion and wellbeing.

Recruitment and retention

- Best-practice recruitment processes: inclusive position descriptions, targeted advertising, and the presence of First Peoples leaders on interview panels ensure culturally appropriate hiring
- Special Measures Guide: supports managers to increase identified roles and attract First Peoples candidates
- Active candidate pool: maintained for ongoing engagement and future opportunities
- Enhanced application review: all First Peoples applications are directly shared with hiring managers for careful consideration and support.
- Onboarding and ongoing support: structured check-ins and tailored resources for new starters and their managers
- People Leader Guide: assists supervisors in understanding cultural responsibilities, including Sorry Business.

Pathways and career development

- Leadership and development programs: promoted to First Peoples staff for professional growth
- Mentoring: new First Peoples employees can access an external mentor or coach for 26 weeks, with ongoing support available
- Individual career planning: one-on-one development meetings and coaching facilitate career progression.

Workplace support and engagement

- First Peoples' Working Group: Provides a platform for discussion, advocacy, and continuous improvement of workplace wellbeing
- Recognition and celebration: First Peoples staff achievements are widely acknowledged through awards and internal communications
- Monthly Mob Meets and 'Mob only' events: strengthen cultural and spiritual connection, health, and wellbeing
- Accessible support resources: developed for both staff and supervisors to manage wellbeing and cultural load.

Partnerships and organisational support

Council maintains strong partnerships with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, neighbouring councils, and First Peoples employment networks.

Organisational support is evident through the endorsement of our First Peoples Employment Plan, advocacy from the First Nations Advisory Committee, and commitment from the CEO and executive team.

Across all levels, our staff are champions for culturally safe, inclusive hiring and development. The momentum generated by the First Peoples' Working Group and positive feedback from staff continues to drive new initiatives, ensuring Council remains a leader in First Peoples employment and cultural inclusion.

Equal opportunity

Council is committed to equal employment opportunities in our policies and programs. These are designed to end discrimination and promote equal opportunity in employment for women and people in designated groups.

We aim to ensure there is no discrimination about the characteristics listed under the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*.

We also aim to ensure the workplace is free from bullying and harassment. All employees are required to complete equal opportunity training and bystander training.

This year we supported and promoted equal opportunity in employment by:

- Delivering unconscious bias training for people leaders to help recognise unconscious biases and the effects, which can impact hiring, promotions and daily interactions
- Delivering bystander training for all staff
- Ensuring our Contact Officers are suitably trained, with touchpoints over the year.

Service recognition awards

Our service recognition awards acknowledge the significant dedication and contribution of our employees to our organisation and the community. In 2024-25, we presented service recognition awards to 123 employees for 5 to 40 years of service.

Building our organisational capability

This year we have uplifted the capability of our Senior Management team with a focus on use of artificial intelligence, change, diversity and working with First Nations people. We delivered our third comprehensive Leader Development Program with a focus on coaching and supporting new leaders, and a full training calendar available to all staff that covered wellbeing, compliance, safety and both social and technical skills development.

We are committed to continuous improvement and continue to learn from the success of our programs and seek innovative ways to provide enriching professional development for people leaders across Council.

Senior Management Team development

Our Senior Management Team completed a series of professional development sessions including:

- A visit to Coranderrk Station to continue our learning around working with First Nations people
- Presentation skills
- Artificial Intelligence tools and approach
- Continued work to support diversity and inclusion
- A charity cooking day, supporting learning around food waste and preparing meals for people in need
- Change Management to support the delivery of our customer and digital transformation program
- Understanding results of staff feedback
- Reviewing results of the feedback program for Level 3 Branch managers.

Leader Development Program

This year we delivered out third comprehensive Leader Development Program including:

- Two rounds of the ‘Coaching for Leaders’ program with 20 coaches and 20 coachees; this six-month program builds coaching capability for mid to senior managers as a core leadership skill.
- ‘Learning to Lead’ for 20 first-time people leaders is a six-month development program. It included the Swinburne New Supervisors training course and focused workshops facilitated by Merri-bek subject matter experts on key leadership skills such as finance, governance, and recruitment.
- Developing a field-based people leader version of the Learning to Lead program for 2025-26.
- The final round of ‘Leadership Fundamentals’ for 15 existing frontline people leaders, a three-month development program supporting consistency in leadership practice.
- ‘The Merri-bek Challenge,’ a six-month experience for exceptional performers with the LGPro Management Challenge and a ‘back to business’ team project.
- LGPro calendar of leadership programs suited to a range of levels of experience and development needs.

We also continued the Unit Leader calendar of events, in collaboration with a working group of Unit Managers from each Directorate, including a professional development and relationship building session.

Training for all staff

This year we delivered a learning and development calendar of events for all staff, including a key focus on delivering Unconscious Bias training through face-to-face sessions and an online event.

Across the year-long training calendar we delivered 72 courses to 874 staff face-to-face and online. Some of these programs included training on plain English, collaborating more effectively using MS Teams, contractor management, responding to family violence and homelessness awareness.

New and existing staff completed 10,834 online training modules across 61 topics, with many compulsory modules for all staff including Cultural Safety.

Project Management upskilling

A cohort of 15 Project Managers graduated from the Swinburne Certificate IV in Project Management Practices in May 2025. Swinburne University also conducted a two-day Foundations in Project Management course for 13 project managers and staff involved in project delivery. This is the fourth year of the course offering to staff.

Capability uplift

Team and Leader Development
This year we offered 360-degree feedback surveys to our level 4 leaders to assist them to build on strengths and opportunity areas. We conducted team development workshops across Council aimed at harnessing individual and team strengths, to support staff to recognise their unique talents, build cohesive team dynamics, and leadership effectiveness. We also conducted team workshops to equip our leaders and teams with the tools and insights needed to build high-performing teams.

Earn and Learn program
In early 2025, the Victorian State Government partnered with select Victorian universities to create a suite of accredited training programs for local government capability building called Earn and Learn. So far, Merri-bek has been successful in placing three staff in the Mental Health Resilience stream.

Occupational health and safety

We are committed to providing a healthy and safe environment for all employees, contractors, visitors, members of the public, and children.

We recognise that our employees are our most important asset and supporting them to work safely is our highest priority. Our safe work procedures are designed to be practical, relevant, and easy to follow, supporting consistent and safe practices across all work areas.

We are dedicated to continuously improving our health and safety systems and standards. We aim to prevent and minimise workplace injuries and illnesses, as far as reasonably practicable. We also recognise the importance of managing psychosocial hazards and promoting the psychological health and wellbeing of our employees.

Safety management system

Council continues to support the organisation in adhering to its safety management system. This system enables us to meet our obligations under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* ('the OHS Act') and associated regulations.

Our Safety and Wellbeing team works with leaders and staff across Council to help them understand and meet their occupational health and safety (OHS) responsibilities, ensuring compliance with relevant legislation and standards.

In 2024-25, we maintained our focus on high-risk work areas, and business units at greater risk of workers compensation claims, aligning with our areas of safety focus.

Consultation on safety incidents and workplace changes occur at all levels of the organisation. We oversee safety-related training and drive continuous improvement initiatives to effectively manage risks and maintain a high standard of health and safety compliance.

Activities included:

- enhancements to the incident management system
- development and updates of safety-related processes
- ongoing monitoring and review of health and safety data to inform decision making.

Key safety initiatives undertaken during 2024-25 included:

- preparing for the introduction of Psychological Health Regulations due to come into effect in December 2025, including development of a working group focused on psychosocial hazards, staff surveys, risk assessment and tailored training for our staff and people leaders
- implementing a Fit for Work Policy and associated procedure, outlining Council's approach to managing alcohol and other drug use in the workplace and supporting employees to remain fit for work
- continued systems development for managing workplace incidents and investigations
- ongoing review and consolidation of our safety management procedures
- expansion of our OHS training program, including Mental Health First Aid training for leaders.

Occupational Health and Safety training 2024-25

Course	Number of sessions completed	Number of participants attended
Initial HSR 5 Day Training	8	9
Injury Management Training	1	10
Managing Team Wellbeing	2	15
Asbestos Awareness	1	11
Noise Awareness	2	42
First Aid	2	14
SunSmart UV Safety	3	50
Plant Safety	1	7
Handling Dangerous Goods and Hazardous Substances	2	15
Fire and Emergency Warden Training	2	15
Chief Warden Training	1	2
Mental Health and Crisis Support	1	10
OHS for Managers/Supervisors	1	13
Contractor Management	1	12
HSR Refresher	1	11
CPR Training	2	25
Occupational Violence Prevention	1	13
Work Safely from Heights	1	9
Traffic Management and Traffic Control	1	15
Mental Health Awareness	2	36
Drug, Alcohol and Mental Health	1	17
Deaf Awareness	1	9
Introduction to Responding to Family Violence	2	21
Total sessions run	**40**	**381**

Injury Management

Incidents reported (including injuries)	677
Injuries reported	193
Claims received (Standard)	13
Average claim cost	$19,770
Employees returned to work	10
Staff who remain unfit	3

Our Occupational Rehabilitation and Wellbeing Advisor continues to support and coordinate the return-to-work processes including injury management plans and workers' compensation. They also provide ongoing support and guidance to employees and leaders.

We acknowledge the importance of early intervention, timely treatment, and support for staff when a workplace injury occurs. Prompt medical care and actively supported return-to-work activities led by the employee's manager or supervisor assist injured workers in returning to their usual work and daily life productively and safely.

Our early intervention program for 2024-25 included:

- onsite physiotherapy assessment
- offering of suitable alternative duties
- developing tailored return to work plans that align with medical advice and restrictions.

Employee Health and Wellbeing

Our health and wellbeing initiatives for 2024-25 continue to focus strongly on mental health support, complemented by a range of general health activities, which included:

- select complimentary fitness classes at the Coburg Leisure Centre and Oak Park Sports and Aquatic Centre
- ongoing access to our employee assistance provider, offering individual support and team debriefs
- ongoing promotion of Manager Assist as a valuable resource for our people leaders.

Child Safety

Council is committed to being a child-safe organisation. We believe all children and young people have the right to be and feel safe, and that ensuring their safety and wellbeing is a shared responsibility.

Our staff work together to protect children and young people from harm and abuse. Key strategies include training, clear child-safe reporting mechanisms, identifying and monitoring roles that require Working with Children Check.

Our Child Safe Advisor provides information and guidance across Council to ensure compliance with Child Safety and Wellbeing legislation, including empowering children and young people to understand their rights and consulting them on matters that affect them.

In 2024 and early 2025, we reviewed and updated our Working with Children Check requirements, developed tools, conducted assessments and began implementing these changes across the organisation. Council is committed to a best practice approach.

Risk management

Risk management is embedded in Council's business practices and culture. We are committed to continuously improving and strengthening our risk culture to ensure our risk management approach remains integrated, structured, and customised to Council's needs.

Our risk management planning encompasses all levels of the organisation, addressing strategic and operational risks including climate, fraud, privacy, and environmental risks. This work is guided by our Enterprise Risk Management Framework and Risk Management Policy, which set out our objectives, responsibilities, and timeframes for risk review and reporting.

We have made significant advances in enhancing ownership and oversight of operational and strategic risks. Regular review of strategic and operational risks has allowed us to reinforce the effectiveness of existing controls and establish new ones. To ensure ongoing monitoring and discussion of risks, the Risk Management Committee convenes bi-monthly. We continue to educate staff in risk management, business continuity planning and fraud and corruption prevention.

The Audit and Risk Committee plays a critical role in overseeing the governance of audits, accounting controls, and risk management. This year the committee met four times, providing valuable and independent risk management advice. Our internal audit program completed 8 audits across the organisation, with the findings directly informing risk controls and updates to Council's Operational Risk Register.

Our performance

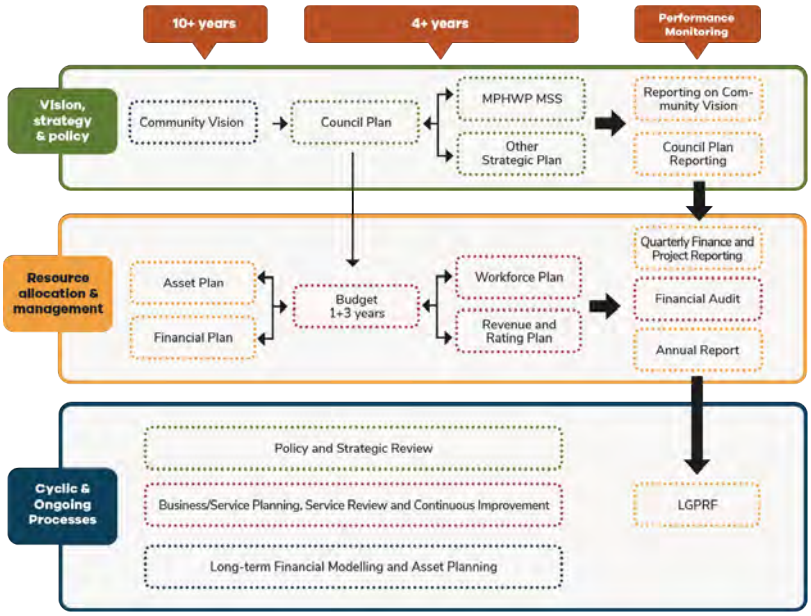
Integrated planning and reporting framework

Our integrated planning framework shows the relationship between our vision, strategies, plans, budgets and programs that drive our service delivery, projects and how we allocate resources.

The integrated planning framework guides Council in identifying community needs and aspirations over the long term through our Community Vision, Financial Plan and Asset Plan. Medium-term community needs and aspirations are recorded in our Council Plan, Workforce Plan, and Revenue and Rating Plan, and short-term in our Budget and Council Action Plan. The framework supports Council accountability through the Annual Report and quarterly reporting.

The diagram below depicts the integrated planning and reporting framework that applies to local government in Victoria. Each stage of the integrated planning and reporting framework includes opportunities for community and stakeholder input. This is important to ensure transparency and accountability to both residents and ratepayers.

In the chart below, MPHWP MSS refers to the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan Municipal Strategic Statement, and LGPRF refers to the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework.



Vision

The deliberative Imagine Merri-bek Community Panel identified the vision statement below, as well as the key themes that would be used to achieve this vision and reflect the 'aspirations of our diverse and growing community in 2031.'

"Merri-bek is our home.
We respect and look after our land, air, waterways and animals.
We care for our people and celebrate our diverse stories, cultures, and identities.
Merri-bek is enhanced by all of us supporting our local businesses, arts communities and social organisations.
We work together proactively and transparently to continue to create a vibrant, safe, healthy, resilient, innovative, and regenerative community. Many faces, one Merri-bek."

Council plan

Our Council Plan 2021-25 sets a strategic direction for the related 4-year council term. This plan has been shaped by the voice of the community and is the result of deliberative engagement with a broad cross-section of the community, the Imagine Merri-bek 2021-31 Community Vision.

Our Council Plan 2021-25 is set out under 5 themes:

- An environmentally proactive Merri-bek
- Moving and living safely in Merri-bek
- A healthy and caring Merri-bek
- Vibrant spaces and places in Merri-bek
- An empowered and collaborative Merri-bek.

These themes guide our progress towards achieving the Community Vision and set out ways to achieve these objectives through delivery of major initiatives and priorities. Our plan also includes indicators for measuring our progress over the next 4 years and outlines how Council will protect, improve, and promote public health and wellbeing within the municipality.

The plan outlines 5 strategic objectives, one for each theme, which represent the strategic direction of Council over the next 4 years to implement the Community Vision.

The 5 strategic objectives are:

1. To strive for maximum protection of people's health, plants and animals through leading an urgent response to the climate emergency and a regeneration of our natural environment.

2. To contribute to the health, safety, and security of everyone living in our diverse community and to increase safe, accessible, physically active and enjoyable ways to get around Merri-bek, especially via walking, cycling and public transport.

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

4. To create welcoming, unique spaces and places across Merri-bek that attract and connect everyone, improving access to community facilities and affordable housing and encouraging vibrant artistic, social, and economic activity.

5. To build community trust through encouraging participation, evidence-based decision-making, stewardship of resources and being accessible and responsive.

In achieving each strategic objective, the Council Plan 2021-25 sets out:

- Strategies – the main methods to achieve our objectives in the next 4 years.
- Major Initiatives and Priorities – the critical pieces of work that support the delivery of the Council Plan.
- Strategic Indicators – the measures to monitor progress against the objectives.
- Related Strategies and Plans – other strategic planning documents that support delivery of the Council Plan.

The Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP) is incorporated in the Council Plan.

The *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* (PHWA) requires local government to develop a MPHWP every 4 years, based on an analysis of health and wellbeing in the municipality.

An annual council action plan is developed each year to identify priority actions for delivering the Strategic Objectives, Strategies and Major Initiatives contained in the Council Plan 2021-25.

Council plan on a page

The table below provides a high-level, plain-English summary of the strategic objectives and strategies outlined in our council plan.

Strategic Objective	Strategies
An environmentally proactive Merri-bek Strive to protect people's health, plants and animals. Respond now to the climate emergency. Regenerate nature.	**We will:** • cut carbon emissions from energy, transport and waste • protect existing trees and plant more trees • care for open space and ecosystems, including waterways • provide better access to parks, playgrounds and facilities • reduce the amount of waste going into landfill • develop a healthy and affordable local food system.
Moving and living safely in Merri-bek Improve the safety of everyone in our community. Make it safer and easier to get around.	**We will:** • build better paths for people to get around without a car • advocate for better access to public transport for everyone • encourage more people to walk, cycle, or take public transport • consult the community before removing parking or road space • improve the safety of our roads and paths for everyone.
A healthy and caring Merri-bek Support Merri-bek to become a more inclusive, connected, healthy and caring community.	**We will:** • provide services that respond well to diverse and changing needs • build community resilience to the impacts of climate change • help residents to be healthier and more active, more often • support good mental health and help people connect • work closer with First Peoples communities • reduce the harm caused by gambling and tobacco • work to prevent family violence and support victims • help more people volunteer in the community • work with others to support people in insecure housing • advocate for better use of digital technology for everyone.
Vibrant spaces and places in Merri-bek Create welcoming, unique spaces across Merri-bek that are for everyone. Improve access to services and housing. Encourage artistic, social and economic activity.	**We will:** • provide accessible facilities to meet community needs • design safe neighbourhoods and pleasant places for all • create a sense of place and protect valued heritage • promote clean, attractive and useful public spaces • create engaging spaces for children, young people and families • increase local affordable housing • work for better quality private developments • improve our shopping strips while keeping their local identities • increase local jobs by supporting local, micro, and social business • make Merri-bek a creative and cultural destination.
An empowered and collaborative Merri-bek Build community trust. Encourage everyone to get involved in council decision-making. Make good use of our resources. Be accessible and responsive to our community.	**We will:** • improve access to council information for everyone • increase community participation in council decision-making • involve our community in matters that directly impact their lives • improve the way we respond to community requests and issues • advocate for our community • secure more developer funding to respond to population growth • manage our funds fairly and transparently for the long term • manage assets to meet changing needs over the long term.

Report of operations

Performance against our objectives

Council's performance for the 2024–25 year has been reported against each strategic objective to demonstrate how we are performing in achieving the 2021–25 Council Plan. Performance was measured as follows:

- results achieved in relation to the strategic indicators in the council plan
- progress in relation to the major initiatives identified in the budget and council plan for the year
- services funded in the budget and the persons or sections of the community who are provided those services
- results against the prescribed service performance indicators and measures.

We monitor and report on our performance through quarterly and annual reports. This ensures we are accountable, transparent and comply with legislation.

Here we have reported our performance against our 5 strategic objectives which were:

- An environmentally proactive Merri-bek
- Moving and living safely in Merri-bek
- A healthy and caring Merri-bek
- Vibrant spaces and places in Merri-bek
- An empowered and collaborative Merri-bek.

With the completion of this Council Action Plan, this annual report provides the final update on the implementation of the Council Plan 2021-25. Over the past four years, Council has successfully delivered 357 individual actions that have all significantly contributed to achieving the strategic objectives of the plan through the delivery of the strategies, initiatives and priorities as outlined in the Council Plan 2021-25.

Some of the key initiatives have included the development of new Open Space and Transport strategies, the opening of major capital projects such as Glenroy Hub, Fawkner Leisure Centre, and Balam Balam Place in Brunswick.

Local Government Performance Reporting Framework

This is what is included in Local Government Performance Reporting Framework (LGPRF) reporting:

- aquatic facilities
- animal management
- food safety
- governance
- libraries
- Maternal and Child Health (MCH)
- roads
- statutory planning
- waste collection.

Some of the information below is repeated in the 'Performance Statement' section of this report. This includes commentary and figures in addition to the LGPRF requirements met in the Performance Statement, which is auditable by the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO).

Strategic Indicator/measure	Target or desired trend	2024-25 Result	Comments
Council greenhouse gas emissions from baseline year	80%-100% reduction by 2030 against 2011–12 (baseline)	63% reduction (2023–24 from 2011–12 baseline) 2023–24 emissions were 7,795 tCO2e. 2011–12 baseline was 21,253 tCO2e	2023–24 is Council's most recent annual carbon footprint, but this is awaiting Climate Active certification. Factors which influenced the change in emissions from 2022–23 to 2023–24 include: • Higher number of road-construction projects • Slightly higher diesel consumption by Council's waste contractor Key actions to meet Council's 2030 carbon target: • Electrification of Oak Park Sports and Aquatic Centre, scheduled for winter 2026. This is part-funded by the Federal Community Energy Upgrades Fund. Upgrade of electrical capacity at Council's Hadfield Depot, scheduled for FY2025/26, to support transition of light and heavy vehicle fleet to zero-carbon technologies
Community greenhouse gas emissions	% Reduction (from baseline year) 1,672kt (CO2-e).	37.5% reduction 1,045 kt (CO2-e)	The most recent community emissions profile is 1,045 kt CO2-e for the 2022–23 period, representing a 37.5% reduction against the 2013–14 baseline of 1,672kt (CO2-e). This data was sourced from snapshotclimate.com.au and adheres to international standards for emissions reporting for cities and local governments.
Juvenile tree retention on public land (1-3-year-old trees) in the municipality.	85% retention rate	86.9%	A total of 13.0% of trees that were planted in 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 Financial Years have been lost.
Number of trees planted on public land in the municipality	10,000 over the 4-year period plus replacement of trees removed in this period	3,879 trees were planted this financial year on public land in the municipality.	The number of trees planted for 2024–25 was 3,879 and the number of trees removed was 1,658 (based on Tree Inventory data). The total number of trees planted over the last 4-years is 16,254 which exceeds the set target by 62.5%.

Tonnes of kerbside waste and recycling collected	% Reduction (Baseline measurement 57,551 tonnes)	55,626.54 tonnes	Overall, across all streams, there was a 3.3% net decrease in the tonnes of waste and recycling collected compared to the prior year. The breakdown is as follows: • Tonnes of comingled recycling (10352) and glass (2221.7). Total decrease of 240 tonnes compared with previous year which is a 3% reduction on prior year. • Tonnes of food and garden waste collected (15837.18). A decrease of 1484 tonnes on the previous year. An 8.5% decrease on the prior year. • Tonnes of garbage collected: (27215.66). An increase of 785 tonnes of the previous year which is a 2.8% increase on the prior year. The results show that Council is making progress in encouraging community behaviours that reduce the volume of material sent to landfill.
Municipal waste diverted from landfill *(Local Government Performance Framework Indicator)*	% Increase by previous year result:	51.07%	While Council introduced weekly Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) collection in the previous reporting period and has included glass diversion in this report period, ongoing community education and engagement efforts to achieve the desired results from kerbside waste reform are a work in progress. This includes a trial of fortnightly rubbish that is occurring in 2025-26 aimed at landfill diversion. Council remains committed to refining our services and continuing community engagement to improve waste diversion outcomes.
Capacity of water harvesting systems for re-use/irrigation	Increase (Baseline measurement 39 ML/year)	10/ML increase	The increase is attributed to the delivery of the Dunstan Reserve Stormwater Harvesting System, which provides an average water saving of 10 ML per year, with a total capacity of 49 ML annually.
Area of catchment treated by water sensitive urban design approaches	Increase (Baseline measure 256 hectares)	0 hectares increase.	Planning and design of several water sensitive urban design projects were progressed in 2024–25. Delivery of the designed projects will progress to construction in 2026-27. Currently, the area of catchment treated by water sensitive urban design remains the same as last year at 284Ha. Several streetscape raingardens have been constructed; however, their contribution to the catchment is negligible.

Action No.	Initiatives and Priorities: Council Action Plan Year 4 Actions	Progress
1	Continue to implement the Zero Carbon Merri-bek Climate Emergency Action Plan and develop new Zero Carbon Merri-bek Action Plan to commence 2025	This year marked the final year of implementation of the Zero Carbon Merri-bek Action Plan (2020–2025). Together with our community, Council has achieved — and in many cases exceeded — 10 of the ambitious goals set for 2025. In June 2025, Council also endorsed the draft Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025–2030 for community consultation, setting the next phase of our climate action agenda. Highlights from 2024–25 included: • Hosting major sustainability engagement events, including the *WELA Stories of Change* storytelling event and a *World Environment Day celebration for multicultural communities* attended by more than 150 people. • The Victorian Government's landmark announcements on building electrification regulations (requiring all new homes to be all-electric) and new Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards for rental and public housing (effective March 2027). • Completion of a review of Local Government Home Energy Upgrade programs across Victoria to inform future collaboration and scaling. • Launch of a study into Distributed Energy Resources (DERs) with relevance to the Merri-bek community. • Electrification milestones, including completion at *Fawkner Leisure Centre* and six smaller Council sites, and commencement of the procurement process for *Oak Park Sports and Aquatic Centre*. • Publication of a five-year outcomes summary for the Zero Carbon Merri-bek Action Plan.
2	Continue the delivery of the Integrated Behaviour Change Program including the Ride and Stride program with schools	Over the financial year, Merri-bek delivered around 30 key initiatives to support active and inclusive transport. • Ride & Stride expanded to 12 primary schools, introducing new initiatives such as Volunteer-led Open Streets at five schools, the launch of Bike Buses, free AusCycling incursions, teacher training in

		bike education, and large-scale bike checks that repaired over 200 bikes and donated 17 to children in need. • Community programs grew significantly, with *Wheel Sisters* teaching more than 60 women from diverse backgrounds to ride, and over 100 women and gender-diverse residents gained bike maintenance skills to build confidence and independence. • The E-bike Library pilot at Sussex and Fawkner Neighbourhood Houses was a huge success, with all bikes booked out for months, leading to an extension and plans for expansion. An additional round of e-bike subsidies was also delivered. • Research and innovation remained strong, with the PETAL research project on young women and cycling completed in partnership with Monash University and others, and Merri-bek's programs recognised internationally in the *Global Designing Cities Initiative* best-practice guide. Together, these initiatives are helping to make cycling, walking, and sustainable transport more accessible and inclusive across Merri-bek.
3	Urban forest strategy - implementation of annual tree planting program including identifying ways to support the community to preserve and plant new trees on private and public land	The 2024 Annual Tree Planting Program successfully planted 3,506 trees. This initiative focused on enhancing our urban environment, with approximately 85% of the trees planted along streets to improve air quality, provide shade, and beautify our roadways. The remaining 15% were planted in parks, contributing to these recreational areas' overall greenery and ecological health.
14	Continue the implementation of the Plastic Wise Policy for community and council initiatives, including festivals, events and facilities	Council delivered its second plastic-free Glenroy Festival and its second plastic-free Ballert Moorroop event, diverting over 1,800 items from landfill across both events. Plastic-wise catering was also provided at the World Environment Day event for multicultural communities in Fawkner. This marks the close of a successful year for leaders in this space, enabling the community to understand how sustainability can be integrated into smaller Council festivals and events.
120	Continue to implement the reformed kerbside waste service	All actions scheduled in financial year have been completed, with the Fortnightly Garbage Trial ready to commence in the first week of 2025/26.

123	Continue to deliver improved safety and thermal comfort of low-income residents at home through solar and energy efficiency subsidies initiative	The solar and thermal subsidies program continued with enhanced strategies, including promotional outreach to low-income and diverse communities in the north, and letters from the Mayor to low-income households. Despite a promotional pause across the second quarter of the year due to the council election period, total participation numbers across the financial year were: • 51 homes upgraded for thermal comfort (insulation and/or draft-proofing) • 7 homes installed efficient electric heating and cooling (split systems) • 42 homes installed solar PV (including 7 apartments)
161	Construction of Dunstan Reserve (Brunswick West) stormwater harvesting system, subject to external funding	The construction of the Dunstan Reserve (Brunswick West) stormwater harvesting system has been completed. Commissioning and testing of filtration and irrigation systems are underway. The final steps include reconnecting the power supply, which is dependent on Citipower.
164	Community and Neighbourhood Batteries - deploy the Brunswick Community Battery and continue investigation of locations and commercial models for potential future neighbourhood batteries	Council finalised and signed contracts for the supply and installation of Brunswick's Community Battery. It also established contracts for the required grid connection and upgrade with network provider Citipower. The signing of the supply contract enabled the ordering of the battery, a crucial part of the project timeline. Following approval of an extension to the federal funding agreement, the project is now on track for delivery by end of October 2025.
198	Undertake feasibility and detailed design of stormwater harvesting/wetlands sites at; De Chene Reserve, Coburg, Oak Park Reserve, Oak Park and CB Smith, Reserve, Fawkner in order to deliver on the Integrated Water Management Strategy 2040 outcomes	A feasibility analysis has been completed for the Oak Park, De Chene, and CB Smith stormwater harvesting and wetlands sites. This analysis ensures that these sites align with the outcomes outlined in the Integrated Water Management Strategy 2040.
199	Development of a Circular Economy Strategy: Towards a Zero Waste Merri-bek	Draft Circular Economy Strategy has been completed. The Draft Strategy was presented at the June 2025 Council Meeting and endorsed for consultation with the community. Stage two community consultation has been completed and the final draft has been developed and will be presented to Council in September 2025 for endorsement.

200	Develop new Integrated Water Management Action Plan, including priority actions from Yarra and Maribyrnong IWM Forums, to commence in 2025	A new draft Integrated Water Management (IWM) Action Plan has been developed, and community consultation has been undertaken. The final draft has been developed and will be presented to Council in September 2025 for endorsement. This includes priority actions from the IWM Forums.
201	Develop new Open Space Strategy Action Plan to commence in 2025	The Open Space Action Plan 2025-29 is currently under development, based on actions already adopted by the Council in 2024. It is expected to be finalised in the second half of 2025.
202	Develop new Merri-bek Nature Plan Action Plan to commence in 2025	The Open Space Action Plan 2025-29 is under development, and will include actions already adopted by the Council in 2024. It is expected to be finalised in the second half of 2025.
203	Delivery of the tricky places tree planting project for 2024-2025	There were 85 new tree plots constructed in priority areas of low canopy cover and high urban heat islands at the following locations: -Collier Crescent (25 plots) in Brunswick West - Hunter Street (25 plots) in Brunswick West - Centennial Avenue (20 plots) in Brunswick West - Michael Street (8 plots) in Brunswick - Black Street Car Park (7 plots). Trees will be planted in these plots in the 2025 planting season, starting in May 2025 and concluding by October 2025. Twenty-seven tree plots were planned for completion in Guthrie Street, Brunswick West, by 30 June 2025. However, this project has been deferred to the new financial year. This concludes the 'Tricky Places' tree planting project for 2024-2025.

Services		
The following statement provides information in relation to the services funded in the 2024-25 budget and the persons or sections of the community who are provided the service.		
Service	**Description**	**Net Cost** **Actual** **Budget** **Variance** **$000**
Open Space Design & Development	Open Space Design and Development Partnering with the community, this service protects and enhances our green public open space which includes parks, reserves, playgrounds, sports fields, creek corridors and streetscapes. The service responsibilities of this service unit are: open space strategic planning and policy; bushland conservation; and park capital works planning, design and delivery	(2,832) (2,839) 8
Open Space Maintenance	Open Space Maintenance This service maintains open space assets such as playgrounds, sporting infrastructure, and park furniture; streetscapes such as street trees, roadside garden beds and street/footpath/laneway weeds; and grounds in community centres, child care centres and kindergartens located in Merri-bek. » Actively maintain open space – parks, reserves, plantations, nature strips: 618 hectares per annum » Number of street trees maintained: 68,361 per annum » Grass sportsfields maintained: 57 hectares per annum » Number of playgrounds maintained: 133 per annum	(14,803) (14,182) (621)
Sustainable Built Environment	This service is responsible for developing, implementing, monitoring reporting on strategies, policies, programs and partnerships relating to Merri-bek's environmental sustainability, in particular relating to integrated water management, sustainable management of Council's buildings and infrastructure, promoting a sustainable built environment in new development, and promotion and expansion of our electric vehicle fleet and charging network	(1,343) (1,496 152
Sustainable Communities	Sustainable Communities This service is responsible for developing, implementing, monitoring and reporting on strategies, policies, programs and partnerships relating	(2,584) (3,109)

	to Merri-bek's environmental sustainability, in particular fostering community climate action and advocacy for zero net emissions, zero waste and a circular economy in Merri-bek.	525
Community Development & Social Policy	Community Development and Social Policy This service contributes to social justice and community wellbeing by advocating for equitable and inclusive Council policies, services, facilities and programs. Further, by facilitating consultation and collaboration across Council and with community partners to address current and emerging community needs and supporting local actions to promote human rights, accessibility for all, volunteering, community service networks, food security, social cohesion, reconciliation, gender equality, family violence prevention, gambling harm prevention.	(2,325) (2,517) 192
Waste Services	The waste collection service provides weekly general rubbish and food and garden organics collections, fortnightly mixed recycling collections, 4-weekly glass recycling collections and booked kerbside hard waste collections. » Volume of waste collected: 56,635 tonnes per annum » Volume of waste diverted away from landfill: 29,450 tonnes per annum (52%)	(22,299) (24,414) 2,115

Service performance indicators					
The following statement provides the results of the prescribed service performance indicators and measures including explanation of results in the comments.					
LGPRF under this section	**Results**				
Service/ *Indicator/ measure*	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**	**Comments**
Service standard **Kerbside collection bins missed** *[Number of kerbside garbage and recycling collection bins missed / Number of scheduled*	12.51	14.65	16.54	16.67	Missed service collections have remained stable, even with the addition of the expanded 4-bin service to our reporting framework for all waste streams for this reporting year. The majority of missed collections have occurred with the weekly general rubbish service. Note that leniency is generally applied to this waste stream when the customer does not put the bin out on time. This is reflected in the data, which is counted as a missed collection according to the guidance on this metric.

kerbside garbage and recycling collection bin lifts] x10,000					
Service cost **Cost of kerbside garbage bin collection service** *[Direct cost of the kerbside garbage bin collection service / Number of kerbside garbage collection bins]*	$114.00	$122.31	$120.97	$131.16	The increase in costs is mostly attributed to an increase of 2.7% in the waste levy and a 2.8% increase in tonnes of waste to landfill.
Service cost **Cost of kerbside recyclables collection service** *[Direct cost of the kerbside recyclables bin collection service / Number of kerbside recyclables collection bins]*	$70.95	$74.17	$75.25	$44.40	For 2024/25 the cost is calculated as all recycling costs divided by number of glass and comingled recycling bins while the 2023/24 and prior year figures were calculated as all recycling costs divided by number of comingled recycling bins only. While the variance appears to be a significant reduction in cost per bin, it is actually largely unchanged. It would represent a 6.3% cost increase year on year if the same methodology was applied.
Waste diversion **Kerbside collection waste diverted from landfill** *[Weight of recyclables and green organics collected from kerbside bins / Weight of garbage, recyclables and green organics collected from kerbside bins] x100*	48.34%	48.42%	53.42%	51.07%	While the Council introduced weekly Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) collection in the previous reporting period and has included glass diversion in this report period, ongoing community education and engagement efforts to achieve the desired results from kerbside waste reform are a work in progress. This includes a trial of fortnightly rubbish in 2025-26 aimed at landfill diversion. Council remains committed to refining our services and continuing community engagement to improve waste diversion outcomes.

Strategic objective 2: Moving and living safely in Merri-bek **To contribute to the health, safety, and security of everyone living in our diverse community and to increase safe, accessible, physically active and enjoyable ways to get around Merri-bek, especially via walking, cycling and public transport.**			
Strategic indicators The following statement reviews the performance of Council against the council plan including results achieved in relation to the strategic indicators included in the council plan.			
Strategic Indicator/measure	**Target or desired trend**	**2024-25 Result**	**Comments**
Expenditure per capita on bike and pedestrian infrastructure	Maintain baseline (With an aim to increase, subject to budget process)	$13.53	Council's baseline expenditure per capita on bike and pedestrian infrastructure is $10 per head of population. Actual spending was $13.53 per head.
Number of transport related injuries and fatalities	Decrease	3 fatalities, 174 serious injuries, and 524 other injury crashes	Crash history from 2023-24 indicates 3 fatalities, 174 serious injuries and 5424 other injury crashes. This represents an increase in serious and other injury crashes compared with 2022-23, despite a reduction in fatalities. The increase is consistent with the statewide trends. Note** *There is a lag in available data used to measure this indicator*
Proportion of trips made by public transport, bicycle or on foot	Increase	12.86% by public transport, 2.01% by bicycle, 29.01% on foot.	According to the Victorian Integrated Survey of Travel & Activity (VISTA), 2023-24 data for trips originating in Merri-bek show that 43.88% of trips were made by sustainable modes – 12.86% by public transport, 2.01% by bicycle, and 29.01% on foot.

Number of kilometres of new, separated, dedicated cycling infrastructure / safe places to ride	Maintain baseline (With an aim to increase, subject to budget process)	730m increase	Council completed the construction of three shared zones that have improved the safety for people riding in the municipality. Carlise Street (230m), Batman Avenue (150m), and Stewart Street (150m). These shared zones improve connections for people riding bicycles particularly Batman Avenue as it forms part of the Upfield Trail. Additional shared paths have been constructed that make more places for people to ride. Council also completed 200m of protected bike lanes on De Carle St through road reconstruction. Projects that have commenced construction that will add to total include Albert/Victoria Shared Zones, Wilson Avenue shared Zones and the Upfield Trail extension to the M80 ring road (700m). Several additional projects are in design for delivery including Victoria Street separated bicycle lanes (900m), O'hea Street in Coburg and the Harding Street Bridge.
Number of pedestrian crossings installed per year	Maintain baseline (With an aim to increase, subject to budget process) 2-3 per year	19 installations	Council installed 19 pedestrian crossing treatments (coloured and/or textured road surface treatments that contrast with adjacent roadway, zebra crossings, pedestrian operated signals, pedestrian islands) after receiving more State and Federal funding, which is 2 more than in 2023–24.

Action No.	Initiatives and Priorities: Council Action Plan Year 4 Actions	Progress
27	Continue to advocate to improve public and sustainable transport capacity and equitable access across Merri-bek	Council continued to advocate strongly for major transport infrastructure improvements throughout the year. This included engagement with the Advisor to the Victorian Transport Infrastructure Minister and departmental representatives on the $7.05 million federally funded Northern Rail Plan, and ongoing advocacy for the duplication, extension, and electrification of the Upfield rail line to Wallan. The Merri-bek Mayor, as Chair of the Northern Council Alliance, publicly reinforced these priorities through media advocacy.

		The Victorian State Budget delivered positive outcomes for local bus services, with improvements to services in northern Merri-bek, including the introduction of Sunday services on Route 536. Council also provided a detailed submission to Infrastructure Victoria's draft 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy, outlining Merri-bek's position on a range of transport priorities, including the Upfield line duplication and extension, reconfiguration of the city loop, bus reform, accessible tram stop upgrades, tram line extensions, expansion of cycle networks, and improved pedestrian safety.
165	Deliver roads and car park capital works renewal and road resurfacing capital works program	All projects planned under the roads and footpath capital works program were completed for the financial year.
167	Deliver active travel capital works program	Council progressed a range of 'Streets for People' projects during the year, with design works advancing for O'Hea Street and a number of other pedestrian and bicycle improvement initiatives. Construction was completed on the South Street pedestrian upgrade and the Batman Avenue section of the Upfield Shared Path, with the South Street zebra crossing also delivered (pending power connection). Contracts were awarded for the shared zones on Albert and Victoria Streets, while planning and engagement were undertaken for the final design of the Harding Street Bridge Replacement, the O'Hea Street bike lane extension, and streetscape improvements across Harding and Munro Streets, Breese Street, Hope Street, and Albert Street. Council also resolved not to proceed with additional separated bike lanes on De Carle Street following community consultation.
204	Develop the Transport Strategy Action Plan to commence in 2025	The action plan has been developed, with a draft completed. It is scheduled for Council engagement in September, with finalisation expected by December 2025.

Services		
The following statement provides information in relation to the services funded in the 2024-25 budget and the persons or sections of the community who are provided the service.		
Service	**Description**	**Net Cost** **Actual** **Budget** **Variance** **$000**
Engineering Services	This service develops and coordinates the detailed planning, design, tendering and construction of Council's road and drainage asset capital works programs, and manages the design and reconstruction of Council's drainage network.	(1,176) (1,062) (114)
Road Construction and Maintenance	This service aims to create a more liveable city by providing a range of services to maintain and improve the safety and integrity of the City's Road Network. Specific services include: pothole patching, road resheeting and various civil infrastructure maintenance activities. • Roads maintained: 613 Kms • Footpaths maintained: 1,027 Kms	(4,981) (5,152) 171
Transport Development	This service provides strategic transport planning and transport engineering to support a liveable city by ensuring that the community has access to a variety of modes to travel around and that consideration is given to what is best for the environment, community and the economy. Specific services include strategic transport planning, transport engineering, road safety and accessibility, transport permits, and transport advocacy.	(2,307) (2,826) 519

Service performance indicators					
The following statement provides the results of the prescribed service performance indicators and measures including explanation of results in the comments.					
LGPRF under this section	**Results**				
Service/ Indicator/ measure	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**	**Comments**
Roads **Satisfaction of use** **Sealed local road requests** *[Number of sealed local road requests / Kilometres of sealed local roads] x100*	98.78	142.53	137.50	105.82	Sealed road requests have decreased over the past two years due to maximising the council-allocated budget and a proactive maintenance program.
Condition **Sealed local roads maintained to condition standards** *[Number of kilometres of sealed local roads below the renewal intervention level set by Council / Kilometres of sealed local roads] x100*	95.36%	93.34%	92.37%	89.12%	The percentage of sealed local roads below the intervention level has decreased slightly compared to previous years' results; however, the results remain within the expected range for ageing assets.
Service cost **Cost of sealed local road reconstruction** *[Direct cost of sealed local road reconstruction / Square metres of sealed local roads reconstructed]*	$299.69	$347.04	$435.16	$308.44	Road reconstruction costs in 2024-25 were slightly reduced due to more efficient project delivery, including well documented designs, going to tender earlier in the year and along with the larger than usual program it enabled competitive prices.

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Service Cost **Cost of sealed local road resealing** *[Direct cost of sealed local road resealing / Square metres of sealed local roads resealed]*	$22.10	$28.13	$32.20	$42.80	The increased cost reflects the current inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and the construction industry, as well as the higher level of patching being undertaken before resurfacing.
Satisfaction **Satisfaction with sealed local roads** *[Community satisfaction rating out of 100 with how council has performed on the condition of sealed local roads]*	57.00	51.00	68.00	68.00	The score for Merri-bek in 2025, at 68 maintains the better performance achieved in 2024 compared to prior years. This continued improved result is due to significant investment made in road reconstruction and resurfacing throughout Merri-bek.

Strategic objective 3: A healthy and caring Merri-bek

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

Strategic indicators

The following statement reviews the performance of Council against the council plan including results achieved in relation to the strategic indicators included in the council plan.

Strategic Indicator/measure	Target or desired trend	2024-25 Result	Comments
Number of visits to aquatic facilities per head of municipal population *(Local Government Performance Framework Indicator).* *Noting construction periods and irregular opening hours may impact on number of visits.*	Increase	5.75	There has been a modest increase in attendance across the centres, including two standalone seasonal outdoor pools, as well as an overall rise linked to the reopening of the Fawkner Leisure Centre.
Active library borrowers in municipality *(Local Government Performance Framework Indicator)*	Increase	24.07%	Merri-bek Libraries' Makerspaces provide a range of equipment for library members to use for a wide range of creative activities. New regular programs like drop-in social sewing sessions and introduction to 3D printing have been very popular and contributed to a small growth in membership this year.
Participation in the MCH service *(Local Government Performance Framework Indicator)*	Increase	75.19%	Participation in Merri-bek's Maternal Child Health service remains consistent, reflecting the value the community places on early support for families, anticipatory guidance, assessment, and referrals.

Participation in community playgroups kindergarten and childhood immunisation programs.	Increase	Four-year-old kindergarten participation: 92% Three-year-old kindergarten participation: 89%	The 4-year-old kindergarten participation rate of 92%, represents a 5% decrease and is below the State participation rate of 96%. The 3-year-old kindergarten participation rate of 89% is slightly below the State participation rate of 90%. Council continues efforts to engage families and children in early learning programs through promotion, engagement and outreach activities.
	Increase	Childhood Immunisation programs: Total number of people immunised Under 5s:	In 2024–25, 4,790 children under 5 years of age were immunised through Council's program, representing a 19.5% increase on the previous year. This strong result builds on the positive trend seen in 2023–24 and reflects growing confidence in immunisation within the community, despite some ongoing vaccine hesitancy.
Increase Merri-bek Council's active partnerships with First Nations Business and community organisations	Increase	47.9% of target achieved	Council procurement aims to spend 1% of its total procurement activities year-on-year through partnerships with First Nations Businesses. • Council achieved 47.9% of its target. There is an increase of spending between 2023-2024 ($623,171) and 2024-2025 ($935,771). Council deepened its engagement with First Nations businesses in 2024–25, working with over 25 active suppliers across sectors such as art, catering, consulting, engineering, and cultural events. Kinaway Chamber of Commerce and Supply Nation have supported Council in identifying and connecting with First Nations suppliers, helping to diversify and strengthen our procurement practices.

			Key organisational partnerships have also progressed. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation offered a formal partnership agreement, reinforcing our shared commitment to cultural heritage and self-determination. Aboriginal Health Services and Aboriginal Housing Victoria have become active collaborators, and Council looks forward to formalising these relationships in the coming year to support community wellbeing and housing outcomes.

Action No.	Initiatives and Priorities: Council Action Plan Year 4 Actions	Progress
34	Deliver Early Years Infrastructure Projects as listed in the 5-year Capital Works Program	Key highlights of the early years infrastructure projects throughout the year have included, expanding capacity and improving accessibility across several sites. The Oak Park Kindergarten was completed in December 2024, providing an additional 33 kindergarten places and enhanced staff amenities, while the Derby Street Children's Centre was finalised in early 2025, delivering 27 new kindergarten places and improved facilities. Planning advanced on a number of major projects, including the expansion of the Dunstan Reserve Child Care Centre (22 additional places), the Northwest Brunswick Kindergarten accessibility upgrade, and the redevelopment of the HE Kane Kindergarten and Volga Street Maternal and Child Health Centre in Hadfield. Early planning also commenced for the Dawson Street Children's Co-operative expansion, which will deliver six additional licensed kindergartens by 2029.
48	Continue implementation, monitor and evaluate the Social Cohesion Plan	Council advanced the Social Cohesion Plan through diverse projects that strengthened inclusion, civic participation, and anti-racism initiatives. Key highlights included the Refugee and Migrant Business Development Series, engaging over 80 participants; the People's Report, empowering community researchers to address discrimination; and the Democracy Lab, which supported civic leadership. Collaborative efforts resulted in the Anti-Racism Support Booklet being delivered to neighbouring councils, while programs such as Seeds of Change

		and interfaith events further promoted connection, diversity, and belonging across Merri-bek.
49	Finalise the navigation pilot - Aged Well planning to support older people to access services	Due to the program's success, it has been extended for the 2025-26 year. Council has supported over 400 residents this year through one-to-one support and community education sessions.
50	Continue to implement to improve new outdoor help and services for older people	This year, we have 262 residents and another 69 residents who will have work completed in July. This program has been extended for the 2025-26 financial year.
52	Continue the implementation of the First People's Employment Plan	A new First Peoples Employment Plan is currently in development. Key initiatives completed under the existing plan include delivering cultural awareness training and organising events across the organisation as part of our annual wellbeing calendar.
131	Continue the implementation of the Gender Equity Action Plan	Key highlights have included: A depot-based Women and Gender Diverse Network has been launched, to support an inclusive environment. An annual diversity and inclusion calendar was developed and distributed to leaders, facilitating awareness and engagement. A project aimed at enhancing the collection of staff demographic data is in final testing stage, supporting more accurate representation for our diverse workforce to inform action planning.
168	Continue implementation of the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan to meet the requirements of the Disability Act 2006	Council progressed implementation of the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan, delivering programs and advocacy to improve equity, accessibility, and participation. Highlights included Communication Access accreditation for the Customer Service team, the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program, accessible upgrades at Yubup Park, and the introduction of new multi-arts and music programs at Glenroy Hub. The Council hosted events for the International Day of People with Disabilities, convened disability networks, provided accessibility advice on major projects, and advocated for systemic issues impacting people with disabilities.
175	Advocate to secure long-term support to establish the Ballerrt Mooroop Community Hub	Development of the Ballerrt Mooroop site continues to progress, with work underway to support the Business Case and long-term planning. This includes preparation of a site masterplan, design review, and development of culturally appropriate signage and presentation materials. Council completed the Ballerrt Mooroop History Study, a landmark report

		exploring the cultural, educational and social significance of the site on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country. The study includes a short history of Ballerrt Mooroop, informed by extensive research and interviews with key community members. Planning is also underway for temporary site activation, including exploration of a modular building option and funding opportunities.
180	Complete the Pilot Library Social Worker to support community wellbeing	The Pilot Library Social Worker program was undertaken, and service was provided to library users with challenging and complex needs. The pilot program is now concluded, and an evaluation has been completed. Following the Library Social Worker trial, Coburg Library Staff are being supported through targeted sessions with a clinician from, Council's Employee Assistance Program provider, to build skills in reflective practice. Vulnerable, unhoused Merri-bek community members continue to be supported by temporary additional support from MOSS – Merri-Outreach Services and the ongoing assertive outreach provided by Vincentcare.
181	Implementation of the LGBTIQA+ Action Plan with key stakeholders	Council advanced the LGBTIQA+ Action Plan through events, programs, and advocacy that celebrated diversity and promoted inclusion. Highlights included participation in Midsumma Carnival, the launch of the *Queer Histories/Queer Futures* audio tour, and growing engagement in the MY Rainbow youth program. Council delivered allyship and anti-discrimination training, hosted Trans Awareness Week initiatives, and supported Transgender Victoria's Job Fair. Partnerships with community organisations strengthened efforts to address service gaps and foster a sense of belonging for LGBTIQA+ people across Merri-bek.
205	Complete the Fawkner Leisure Centre upgrade	Following an investment of $36.8 million in redevelopment, the Fawkner Leisure Centre reopened on Sunday, December 8, in time for the 2024/25 summer season. The open day included family-friendly activities and engaging programs and was a successful community event. The redevelopment has included: • A new outdoor 50m pool • A new outdoor family water play pool, landscape works, barbeques, and a barbeque shelter

		• A new indoor sauna, steam room, and spa • An updated indoor 25m pool and learn-to-swim zone • Updated change facilities • A new gym and gym equipment, along with new program spaces • A new foyer, reception, and café lounge area • An all-electric site, aligning with the Council's zero carbon objectives
206	Continue to implement the Climate Risk Foundational Action Plan and develop a new Climate Risk Action Plan to commence in 2025	The implementation of the Climate Risk Foundational Action Plan was completed in June 2025. Through its progress scorecard rating process, Council confirmed that targets were met across the five goals of the Climate Risk Strategy. More details will be included in the 2024-2025 annual report. By concluding the plan, Council improved its understanding of what climate change means for Merri-bek, including its impacts on infrastructure, open spaces, natural environments, and community services. A better understanding was also achieved regarding how climate risks may affect the health and well-being of the community. Council will continue to focus on key action areas, such as enhancing the integration of climate risk into capital works planning and asset management processes, as well as ongoing assessment of the financial impacts of climate change. The climate risk and resilience actions to be implemented from 2025 to 2030 are integrated into the Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025-2030, which is expected to be considered for adoption by Councillors in September.
207	Implement Year 1 of the Homelessness Action Plan	In 2024–25, Council progressed Year 1 of the Homelessness Action Plan. The Functional Zero service coordination program continued with regular stakeholder and hotspot meetings, while the Merri Assertive Community Outreach program delivered consistent on-the-ground support, guided by quarterly reporting and weekly coordination to keep activities on track.
208	Implement Year 4 Sport and Active Recreation Strategy	The implementation of the fourth year of the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy actions has now been completed. An evaluation of the strategy was undertaken in the previous quarter, which will inform the development of a new strategy due for review in the next financial year, 2025-26.

209	Commence construction of Brunswick Early Years Centre	It was proposed and endorsed at the August 2025 Council meeting to withdraw this action from the current Council Action Plan, as it could not be achieved due to factors outside of the Council's control. However, it was reconsidered for inclusion in the 2025/26 Council Action Plan. The project has been delayed due to the review processes undertaken by the State Government. It has subsequently been confirmed that the completion date for the project has been revised from January 2027 to January 2028, one year later than initially anticipated; therefore, this action was unable to be completed on time. This rescheduling can be accommodated as the existing services will remain operational until the new Centre is open and may be considered as a future Council Action Plan item.

Services		
The following statement provides information in relation to the services funded in the 2024-25 budget and the persons or sections of the community who are provided the service.		
Service	**Description**	**Net Cost** **Actual** **Budget** **Variance** **$000**
Aquatic & Community Facilities	Aquatic and Community Facilities This service provides for the management, operations and service delivery of Merri-bek's six Aquatic and Leisure Centres through an external contracted service provider; including direction and oversight of the Active Merri-bek program and service development; compliance auditing across a range of functions to deliver the objectives and outcomes required of the contract; capital maintenance and infrastructure improvement planning and project supervision; and, policy development and review. This service also provides accessible well utilised Council managed community venues for hire facilities that meet community needs, through the management of the 20	(355) (1,164) 809

	venues including small halls, senior citizen centres and external meeting rooms. The increased expenditure is associated with the reopening of the Fawkner Leisure Centre. • No. of aquatic and leisure centre attendances 983,000 per annum • No. of aquatic and leisure centre members 6,700 • No. of swim lesson students enrolled 7,400	
Assessment Services	This service provides Home Support Assessments for the older people, people with a disability or illness and their carers, they provide referrals to and information about other related services, and assistance with care coordination. Clients are then either linked to support services as part of the Commonwealth Home Support Program or the Home and Community Care Program for Younger People. • Total referrals: 3,500 per annum • Total new assessments: 2,000 per annum	(715) (972) 257
Children's Services	This service provides years early advocacy and planning, infrastructure management, professional training, network facilitation, resourcing and support to child care, kindergarten and playgroup providers. This unit also provides services and programs for families, including Supported Playgroups, Family Day Care, Primary School Holiday Programs, Kindergarten Central Enrolment and Child Care Central Registration to access Merri-bek programs, inclusion support to kindergartens through the Preschool Field Officer Program, and information on early years services.	(1,396) (1,779) 383
Environmental Health	This service works to prevent food-borne illness by ensuring the supply of safe and suitable food through inspecting food premises, manage infectious disease outbreaks, ensure prescribed accommodation is provided at required standards, nuisance complaint investigation and resolution, proactively manage tobacco control activities, manage residential noise complaints, provide support to the Municipal Emergency Management Plan and provide public health-related information to the community. • Registration/inspections of food premises: 1,336 per annum • Registration/inspections of public health premises: 195 per annum	373 178 195
Home Care	This service aims to assist eligible residents to remain living at home independently and in a safe and secure environment. Specific services include home maintenance and modifications, general home care and support, respite care, assistance with shopping and other activities and personal support. • No. of home support hours: 101,500 per annum	(1,752) (2,466) 714

People and Safety	This service provides advice and support to the organisation regarding: the attraction, recruitment and selection for its employees; payroll; performance management; employee and industrial relations; development and implementation of HR policies, systems and processes including workforce planning; gender equity action planning; learning and development; and oversight of the health and safety processes including management of WorkCover claims and the return to work of sick and injured employees. In addition, there is a focus on the provision of health and well-being activities, induction and workplace training which supports a proactive approach to workplace safety.	(4,084) (4,055) (29)
Maternal Child Health and Immunisation	The Maternal and Child Health (and Immunisations) service supports the optimal health and development of young children and families in their parenting role. Specific activities include: parenting support and education; breastfeeding support, sleep and settling, health promotion; immunisations for children, youth and adults; monitoring of growth and development in children; and, early identification and attention to child and family health issues. Our Immunisation service provides a schedule of vaccines offered free under the National Immunisation Program and Victorian immunisation programs for children, adolescents and adults at scheduled ages. Number of immunisations: • 3,673 babies per annum • 2,239 school children per annum • 830 adults per annum • No. of key ages & stages visits: 18,400 per annum • Sleep & Settling community education sessions: 200 per annum	(4,383) (4,304) (79)
Recreation Services	This service aims to improve sport and physical activity participation for people of all ages gender, background and ability by promoting the use of recreation facilities and enhancing the capacity of local recreation, sporting clubs and community organisations to deliver services.	(1,423) (1,439) 17
Social Support Services	Social Support Services This service delivers a number of specific social support programs, including Community Transport, Food Services, Social Support Connection Options (which provides activities, outings for socially isolated eligible residents), and	(1,795) (1,375) (420)

	the provision of information and support to older community residents and senior citizens groups • No. of meals delivered: 53,178 per annum (Merri-bek only) • No. of trips by Community Transport: 14,960 per annum •	
Youth Services	This service aims to improve the lives of young people through the provision of safe, supportive and inclusive programs and spaces that promote youth participation and wellbeing. Specific service activities include: service planning and delivery; facility management and working in partnership with young people and the community to engage and empower young people in Merri-bek.	(1,589) (1,443) (147)

Service performance indicators					
The following statement provides the results of the prescribed service performance indicators and measures including explanation of results in the comments.					
	Results				
Service/ *Indicator/ measure*	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**	**Comments**
Aquatic Facilities **Service standard** **Health inspections of aquatic facilities** *[Number of authorised officer inspections of Council aquatic facilities / Number of Council aquatic facilities]*	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	Council's Environmental Health Officers conducted inspections on all council-owned aquatic facilities within the reporting period.
Utilisation **Utilisation of aquatic facilities**	3.55	5.64	5.28	5.75	There has been a modest increase in attendance across the centres, including two standalone seasonal outdoor pools,

[Number of visits to aquatic facilities / Municipal population]					as well as an overall rise linked to the reopening of the Fawkner Leisure Centre.
Service cost **Cost of aquatic facilities** *[Direct cost of aquatic facilities less income received / Number of visits to aquatic facilities]*	$7.04	$2.37	$0.43	$1.17	The increased costs are primarily due to the reopening and commissioning expenses of Fawkner Leisure Centre, along with a general rise in utility and supply expenses, and the operation of two stand-alone seasonal pools.
Food Safety **Timeliness** **Time taken to action food complaints** *[Number of days between receipt and first response action for all food complaints / Number of food complaints]*	2.91	2.92	2.18	1.92	The average number of days to respond to food-related complaints has improved from 2.18 last year to 1.92 this year. Council continues to prioritise reports from the public regarding food safety matters.
Service standard **Food safety assessments** *[Number of registered class 1 food premises and class 2 food premises that receive an annual food safety assessment in accordance with the Food Act 1984 / Number of registered class 1 food premises and class 2 food premises that require an*	55.63%	71.82%	71.71%	96.34%	Action taken to address non-compliance has resulted in improved assessment completion rates from 71.7% in 2023/24 to 96.34% for this reporting period.

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annual food safety assessment in accordance with the Food Act 1984] x100					
Food safety samples *[Number of food samples obtained / Required number of food samples] × 100*	New	New	106%	100.00%	Council achieved the required target during the reporting period.
Service cost **Cost of food safety service** *[Direct cost of the food safety service / Number of food premises registered or notified in accordance with the Food Act 1984]*	$551.37	$586.59	$643.40	$347.64	Council has undertaken a review (in alignment with the guidelines) which has noticeably increased the number of premises now included in the reporting, through the incorporation of Class 4 and temporary and mobile premises notifications. There has also been some increase in the amount of fixed Class 1, 2 & 3 premises which is also influencing the results, as the overall cost of service is now more accurately distributed across a much higher number of premises.
Health and safety **Critical and major non-compliance outcome notifications** *[Number of critical non-compliance outcome notifications and major non-compliance notifications about a food premises followed up / Number of critical non-compliance outcome notifications and major non-compliance notifications about a food premises] x100*	100.00%	100.00%	99.43%	100.00%	100% of major/critical notifications were followed up and remain above the statewide Council average, reflecting a commitment to ensure business associated with high risk is inspected and monitored.

Maternal and Child Health (MCH) **Service standard** **Infant enrolments in the MCH service** *[Number of infants enrolled in the MCH service (from birth notifications received) / Number of birth notifications received] x100*	100.73%	100.98%	100.67%	100.71%	Enrolments continue to be high and consistently greater than 100 per cent due to the number of babies for whom the Council do not receive a birth notice; yet, the baby is enrolled in the service following notification that they have relocated to Merri-bek. Enrolment numbers demonstrate ongoing demand, a high level of awareness and engagement with the Maternal and Child Health Service.
Service cost **Cost of the MCH service** *[Cost of the MCH service / Hours worked by MCH nurses]*	$86.34	$69.28	$72.38	$77.52	Council investment in M&CH has increased as has enrolments and community need.
Participation **Participation in the MCH service** *[Number of children who attend the MCH service at least once (in the year) / Number of children enrolled in the MCH service] x100*	71.95%	74.60%	75.51%	75.19%	Participation in Merri-bek's Maternal Child Health service remains consistent, reflecting the value the community places on early support for families, anticipatory guidance, assessment, and referrals.
Participation **Participation in the MCH service by Aboriginal children** *[Number of Aboriginal children who attend the MCH service at least once (in the year) / Number of Aboriginal*	71.52%	73.81%	80.00%	69.23%	Council has seen a decline in the overall participation rates of Aboriginal families choosing to participate in our service over the last financial year. The Maternal Child Health department is working collaboratively with local Aboriginal Community-controlled Organisation to increase participation through program trials such as 'Welcome Baby to Country'.

children enrolled in the MCH service] x100					
Satisfaction **Participation in 4-week Key Age and Stage visit** *[Number of 4-week key age and stage visits / Number of birth notifications received] x100*	88.69%	87.73%	87.87%	88.45%	Participation in the 4-week Key Age and Stage (KAS) consultation remains high at 88.45% reflecting strong community trust in the value of the Maternal Child Health service and importance families place on early support and connection.

Strategic objective 4: Vibrant spaces and places in Merri-bek **To create welcoming, unique spaces and places across Merri-bek that attract and connect everyone, improving access to community facilities and affordable housing and encouraging vibrant artistic, social and economic activity.**			
Strategic indicators The following statement reviews the performance of Council against the council plan including results achieved in relation to the strategic indicators included in the council plan.			
Strategic Indicator/measure	**Target or desired trend**	**2024-25 Result**	**Comments**
Number of businesses in the municipality	Increase	16,456	The figure represents businesses registered with the Australian Taxation Office, registered for Goods and Services Tax (GST) and hold an Australian Business Number (ABN) actively used within the financial year June 2023- June 2024. The figure represents an increase of 387 jobs or 2.4% on the previous year's figure of 16,063.
Proportion of residents employed in the municipality	Increase	19% *(no change)*	The most recent Census conducted in 2021 shows 19% of Merri-bek's employed residents work in a job located in Merri-bek which equates to 17,658 people. This is a small increase compared to the previous result in the 2016 Census data. There has been no new Census data since the previous report.
Number of affordable housing projects delivered	Increase	4 projects delivered with 409 affordable dwellings	In 2024/25 four developments with 409 affordable dwellings were completed, and eight planning permits for 389 affordable dwellings were issued for future delivery. This is a marked increase from 2023–24 where two developments containing 34 affordable dwellings were completed.
Participation in arts/ cultural events	Increase	117,447 people participated	There was a 2.3% decrease in Participation in arts cultural events for the 2024/25 reporting year. Counihan Gallery was attended by 7,412 visitors including on site public programs. There were 148 exhibiting artists and 56 artists involved in public programs. The festivals program was attended by 110,035 people, with 653 artists involved and 486 stallholders.
Increase number of jobs within the municipality	Increase	52,735	This is an increase of 3.3% on the previous year's figure of 51,064 jobs in Merri-bek.

Action No.	Initiatives and Priorities: Council Action Plan Year 4 Actions	Progress
76	Continue to support Merri-bek Affordable Housing Ltd partnership	Key highlights have included work progressing on potential future projects on council land. In March 2025, a Settlement was reached on the sale of land at 2-12 Wilkinson St to Merri-bek Affordable Housing, and the site was prepared for the construction of 39 units of social housing in partnership with Haven Home Safe. A joint communications plan is in place between project partners for the Wilkinson project.
80	Continue to advocate for zero carbon in the planning scheme through the Council Alliance for Sustainable Built Environments (CASBE)	Advocacy is ongoing, including through Council's submission to Phase 1 community engagement on the State Government's Activity Centres Program (Merri-bek Cluster). Council officers are working with the Council Alliance for Sustainable Built Environments (CASBE) to understand the implications of recently announced reforms to residential development standards.
94	Continue to integrate and implement business development programs into the Shopping Strip Renewal Program (SSRP)	Council continued integrating business development programs into the Shopping Strip Renewal Program. The West Street Shop Front Improvement Program was completed, delivering upgrades for 10 businesses, while the West Street Trader Association received targeted support, including help with social media management. Preparatory work began on a new Shop Front Improvement project in Melville Road, alongside promotion of Council's Parklet Grant. Evaluation of the Shopping Strip Renewal Program for 2024–25 also commenced, ensuring its continued success and impact since its inception in 2014.
96	Continue to implement adaptive training and support programs for micro and small businesses	In 2024–25, Council continued to deliver adaptive training and support programs for micro and small businesses, providing a total of 13 business skills training workshops and four business information sessions. Topics included AI for business, marketing, government grants, and strategic planning, alongside networking events such as the Brunswick Design District gathering and the Love Sydney Road Street Show. Council also partnered with neighbouring councils for joint sessions and hosted the Victorian Government's Small Business Bus in Coburg.
97	Continue to support the Love Merri-bek Buy Local campaign	Council continued to support the Love Merri-bek Buy Local campaign, with several businesses supported to list themselves on the Love Merri-bek business online directory. Work to finalise a new Trail Map, showcasing 'Northern Discoveries' in Merri-bek, was also completed.

98	Collaborate with local traders, residents, agencies and creatives to develop and implement an activation program for Brunswick, Glenroy and Coburg	Council collaborated with traders, residents, agencies, and creatives to deliver a diverse activation program across Brunswick, Glenroy, and Coburg. More than a dozen events and activations were held, including the opening of Michelle Guglielmo Park, Summer StoryFest, a projection series, Harmony Day Story Time, and Eid celebrations in Coburg. Highlights included the Dinotastic event in Glenroy, which attracted double the expected crowds, and collaborations with Schoolhouse Studios in Coburg to activate community spaces.
108	Implement two key visitor attraction activities - To raise awareness of Merri-bek as a great place to visit, work, and to run a business, implement additional 'trail maps' showcasing visitor destinations and hold an annual roundtable with prominent tourism operators to discuss opportunities for collaboration	Council delivered two new and updated Love Merri-bek Trail Guides, including Northern Discoveries and Breweries & Distilleries, with further work progressing on the Hidden Northern Gems Map. Partnerships with Visit Victoria and local business associations secured statewide promotion of Sydney Road to 1.1M followers, boosting awareness of Merri-bek as a visitor destination. An inaugural Annual Tourism Roundtable brought together 14 industry representatives, generating strong commitment to continued collaboration and growth in the visitor economy.
134	Continue preparation of a new Development Contributions Plan	On 14 May 2025, Council endorsed the new Development Contributions Plan and resolved to commence Amendment C236mbek to implement it. The Amendment has been submitted to the Minister for Planning for authorisation and is awaiting a decision.
148	Progress a planning scheme amendment to include stormwater drainage modelling within the Planning Scheme	An Independent Panel Hearing to consider Amendment C196 to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme (local stormwater mapping) and submissions was held over two days in mid-June 2025. Council expects to receive the Panel Report in mid-to-late July, with public release on its website in August, in line with statutory requirements.
152	Implement the Affordable Housing Action Plan	Council advanced delivery of the Affordable Housing Action Plan through referral advice on more than a dozen planning permit applications supporting affordable housing in both private and not-for-profit developments. Key initiatives included securing a $350k Commonwealth grant for the Coburg Revitalisation project, commissioning housing needs research, and co-designing guidance on Build-to-Rent contributions with the City of Melbourne. Council also convened multiple Affordable Housing Reference Group meetings and contributed to state and national housing inquiries and research projects.

153	Finalise development plans for construction of a new storage annex, refurbishment of the Coburg Historical Society Bluestone Cottage and creation of a heritage garden in consultation with Historical Society	Significant consultation was undertaken with the Coburg Historical Society to inform concept designs and detailed designs for the Coburg Bluestone Cottage site. Consultation with the Wurunderji Council and other stakeholders was undertaken to inform the establishment of a First Nations garden and recognition of Aboriginal history (pre- and post-colonial) as part of the precinct.
182	Through the Brunswick Design District partnership, continue to elevate Brunswick's profile as a design district	Through the Brunswick Design District partnership, Council delivered a range of initiatives to elevate Brunswick's profile as a leading design hub. Highlights included five new business profile videos, the launch of the *"What is the Brunswick Design District" b*rochure, and a major networking event that attracted 82 participants from 67 businesses. Officers also planned and delivered a Melbourne Design Week tour of three key sites and commenced a new bi-monthly 'open studio' networking series.
183	Implement two key activities to support business and job growth within Merri-bek's key (e.g. top 5) and/or emerging industry sectors	The first activity was completed in March 2025 - A health tour in conjunction with RMIT University and Merri-bek's emerging biomedtech ecosystem. Various other meetings and a biomedhealth-tech networking event throughout the back half of the financial year complemented the event. The second activity - twin events - were completed in May and June 2025; a Food Waste Summit (15 May 2025) and a food industry networking event 'Brewing Success' at a local Brunswick East brewer (12 Jun 2025) - both in conjunction with Melbourne's North Food Group.
193	Local History Maintenance & Conservation: deliver Heritage and Local History implementation action plan items	Heritage and Local History implementation action plan items scheduled for this financial year have been completed. The queer history of Merri-bek audio tour was launched with partners 3CR at the Midsumma Festival in February 2025. The First Nations history project addressing the contemporary history of the Ballert Moorroop site was completed in June 2025.
210	Finalise construction of the Saxon Street Brunswick facility and open space	Balam Balam Place (Saxon Street Brunswick sight) was opened to the public on Monday, 3 March 2025. The significant $30 million redevelopment has created a state-of-the-art cultural, creative, and accessible hub with welcoming and affordable spaces for creatives, artists, and the Brunswick community. This significant investment in our city's cultural future ensures that Merri-bek continues to thrive as an inclusive and creative place to live, work, and connect. Alongside artistic and innovative opportunities, the hub will also feature vital community

		services such as Maternal and Child Health (MCH), further enriching the community's access to essential resources.
211	As part of a new partnership model with Cladding Safety Victoria implement an expanded Combustible Cladding Rectification Project including an additional 69 buildings returned from the Victorian Building Authority to Council for resolution	As a results of Council's combustible cladding rectification program throughout this year there are now only 23 building remaining with outstanding compliance notices. The program is therefore anticipated to conclude within with the next 12 - 18 months and is consider as ongoing business as usual.
212	Progress a Planning Scheme amendment for an Activity Centre Zone for the Brunswick Activity Centre and commence a review of built form controls in the Brunswick Activity Centre	Amendment C230mbek, which proposes to introduce the Activity Centre Zone in Brunswick to guide land use, attract investment, and support local employment, is still awaiting authorisation from the Minister for Planning. Council resolved in May 2023 to undertake a comprehensive Built Form Review of the Brunswick Activity Centre. While well advanced, the review is currently on hold to avoid duplication with the State Government's Activity Centres Program and reduce community confusion. This was noted in the 11 June 2025 Council Meeting Agenda.
213	Finalise and implement a new Economic Development Action Plan to guide Council's economic development-related work over future years	Significant progress has been made in implementing the Economic Development Action Plan 2024-2027 including; • Economic Research: Completing major activity centre precinct profiles to support informed decision-making. • Brunswick Design District Promotion: Highlighting local businesses through initiatives such as the Melbourne Design Week Walk in May 2025. • Business Approvals Merri-bek Service: Continuing coordination and promotion, including the distribution of a promotional postcard. • Business Skill Workshops: Developing and delivering a program with three workshops in the past three months and a total of 13 throughout the financial year. • Networking Events: We have held regular networking sessions, including seven events, three business information sessions, and three joint NorthLink events, in the past quarter. • Shopfront Improvement Initiative: Educating and upskilling business owners, demonstrated by the Love Sydney Road StreetShow on 1 April 2025.

		• Local Safety Initiatives: Promoting trader and Council participation in safety efforts, including two meetings with Victoria Police and traders in Glenroy and Coburg Central • Tourism Operator Roundtable: Holding an annual roundtable to explore opportunities with key tourism operators • Lover Merri-bek Trail Map: Completing the Northern Discoveries trail map to enhance local tourism. • Circular Economy Strategy: Contributing to the establishment of the Council's first Circular Economy Strategy, which remains ongoing.
214	Implement a shopfront improvement initiative for Sydney Road to educate and upskill business owners on how to improve the visual presentation of shopfronts and facades	The Love Sydney Road StreetShow took place on 1 April 2025 at Brunswick Town Hall. Over 55 business owners and operators attended and heard from a panel of three retail experts. Post-event surveys confirmed that participating businesses found it highly informative and helpful. Post-event initiatives included shop front cleansing, bespoke visual merchandising advice for participating businesses & limited one-time-only graffiti removal from shop fronts. The initiative empowered local business owners with knowledge and skills to elevate their shopfront aesthetics, contributing to a more vibrant and appealing streetscape.
215	Commence construction on the West Street streetscape renewal project	It was proposed and endorsed at the August 2025 Council meeting to withdraw this action from the current Council Action Plan, as it could not be achieved due to factors outside of the Council's control. However, it was reconsidered for inclusion in the 2025/26 Council Action Plan. The project reached detailed design phase but has a delayed design schedule as a result of changing requirements from Melbourne Water. Pending resolution of Melbourne Water policy changes, a tender is now anticipated in the second half 2025, with construction expected to commence in 2025-26.
216	Progress construction of the Wheatsheaf Road Glenroy streetscape improvement project	It was proposed and endorsed at the August 2025 Council meeting to withdraw this action from the current Council Action Plan, as it could not be achieved due to factors outside of Council's control. It was reconsidered for inclusion in the 2025/26 Council Action Plan. Works still on hold pending final approvals from Department of Transport and Planning. Work is ongoing to resolve proposed alignment of drainage infrastructure and underground services; rescoping possible.
217	Progress construction of the Stewart Street Brunswick streetscape improvement project	Construction is largely complete, and the street is open to the public for use.

218	Commence detailed design for Louisa Street Coburg Streetscape improvement project	Detailed design for Louisa Street streetscape improvement has commenced.
219	Complete construction for 260 Sydney Road Brunswick (Park Close To Home)	All works at the new park are now complete, with the stormwater connection works completed in March to finalise this project. The Michelle Guglielmo Park is open for all to enjoy, and event bookings are live.
220	Commence construction of York Street Pascoe Vale South (Park Close to Home)	The contract award for this project was presented to Council for decision in July 2025, with construction expected to commence in August 2025, two months later than the original target date. Despite the minor delay in construction commencement, the project is still on track for its planned completion in the 2025/26 financial year.
221	Carry out research, technical studies, strategic planning, partnership building, engagement planning and affordable housing to guide the future of central Coburg	The central Coburg program is progressing with a range of technical studies, strategic planning and engagement planning underway to examine various scenarios. Councillors have been engaged through briefings and Council reports. A Council resolution in March 2025 has provided direction to continue this work. A precinct scenario is expected to be presented to Council by mid-late 2025.
222	Develop a funding and delivery strategy for new library in central Coburg. Initial Concept Plan will include functional brief for future library services, potential co-located uses, adjacent open space and public realm.	Council endorsed a vision and brief for a new Coburg Library and Piazza in February 2025. The endorsed brief includes a vision, objectives, a funding and delivery strategy, functional briefs, and proposed location (pending testing).

Services		
The following statement provides information in relation to the services funded in the 2024-25 budget and the persons or sections of the community who are provided the service.		
Service	**Description**	**Net Cost** **Actual** **Budget** **Variance** **$000**
Amenity and Compliance	This service aims to improve the safety, amenity and access within the municipality. Specific services include: parking and road safety enforcement, local laws, animal management, business support, prosecutions and school crossings service. • No. of supervised school crossings: • 77 No. of fines issued: 66,000 per annum • No. of animals registered: 22,000 per annum	5,553 5,501 52
Arts and Culture	This unit is responsible for enhancing opportunities for artistic and cultural experiences for the Merri-bek community and growing the capacity of Merri-bek's creative sector and local artists. Merri-bek has developed a strong reputation for the arts and our creative community is well-established and plays a significant role in contributing to the identity, community well-being and economic success of Merri-bek.	(3,087) (3,094) 7
Asset Management	This service aims to provide sound stewardship of Council's $3.1 billion asset base, undertaken through the development and implementation of Asset Management policies, strategies and plans and the provision of high quality Asset Management data to support informed decision making.	(983) (925) (58)
Building Projects	This service delivers Council's Capital Works Program for buildings and structures and provides construction advisory services across the organisation and to its stakeholders.	(958) (1,123) 166

Building Maintenance	This service maintains Council buildings to appropriate standards and regulations, including responsibility of Essential Safety Measures in Council owned and managed buildings. • No. of responses to work requests: 7,400 per annum • No. of buildings maintained: 288	(4,612) (3,800) (812)
Building Services	This service aims to provide a safe and habitable buildings for all stakeholders by meeting Council's statutory obligations under the Building Act 1993 and subordinate legislation. • Building permits issued and consents granted: 720 per annum • Enforcement matters resolved: 650 per annum	(742) (575) (167)
City Strategy and Economy	This service is responsible for leading Council's response to population growth and land use and development trends to create sustainable neighbourhoods. The branch does this by keeping the Merri-bek Planning Scheme current and responsive to change, undertaking research to understand housing capacity and demand and implementing actions aimed at increasing the supply of social and affordable housing. This service also includes investment, industry and retail facilitation, business development and supporting local business, to enhance the reputation of Merri-bek as a progressive and prosperous municipality.	(4,181) (4,020) (161)
Library Services & Resources	This service provides library lending with books and other items in a variety of formats, and also includes literacy, digital and community programs, information services, makerspace equipment, internet access and Wi-Fi; and printing and scanning facilities across Council's five libraries. • No. of library members: 32,000 • No. of people visiting libraries: 520,000 per annum • No. of items borrowed: 1,100,000 per annum	(6,026) (5,194) (832)
Property, Place and Design	This service delivers a wide array of projects, partnerships and internal services that define, strengthen, protect and celebrate Merri-bek's unique sense of place. The branch's primary functions are buying, selling and leasing Council's substantial portfolio of land and buildings, delivering place activation programs in our activity centres, conceptualising and delivering major urban revitalisation projects on Council's land, and designing and delivering upgrades to streetscapes, civic spaces and shopping strips.	(2,264) (1,597) (667)

Street Cleansing	This service aims to maintain and enhance the quality of life for people who live and work in, and travel through Merri-bek, by improving the cleanliness and presentation of public spaces. This includes graffiti removal, pit and drain cleaning, street sweeping, street and park litter bin collection, shopping strip cleaning and removal of illegal dumped rubbish. • Streets cleaned: 31,253 kilometres	(6,209) (6,283) 73
Urban Planning and Planning Enforcement	The Urban Planning service assesses and determines planning permit applications and other related matters as well as representing Council at hearings before the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal including applications for use, development and subdivision of land and fast-track services for simple matters and a commercial priority services to assist new and expanding businesses. investment decisions. The Planning Enforcement service oversees compliance with the Merri-bek Planning Scheme and planning permits through responses to complaints, proactively monitoring compliance with a select number of planning permits each year, and monitoring permits with legal agreements and land contamination considerations. • Planning permit applications received: 1,280 per annum • Planning permit applications determined: 1,206 per annum • Planning enforcement matters resolved: 360	10,015 5,640 4,375

Service performance indicators					
The following statement provides the results of the prescribed service performance indicators and measures including explanation of results in the comments.					
	Results				
Service/ Indicator/ measure	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**	**Comments**
Animal Management Timeliness **Time taken to action animal management requests** *[Number of days between receipt and first response action for all animal management requests / Number of animal management requests]*	3.72	2.03	2.64	4.32	The number of animal management requests received has increased compared to the previous year, 2023/24. As a result, the average number of days between the time taken to action an animal management request has increased. The method of calculating the indicator in 2024-25 is slightly different to that used in 2022-23 and 2023-24, partly explaining the difference in performance. Council is proactively addressing the increased time taken to action requests through a focus on operational efficiencies and a comprehensive review of our practices to ensure improved outcomes moving forward.
Service standard **Animals reclaimed** *[Number of animals reclaimed / Number of animals collected] x100*	23.09%	34.99%	29.64%	19.18%	There has been a notable increase in the number of animals collected compared to the previous year due to changes in Local Government Victoria's reporting requirements, which now include all animals impounded by Authorised Officers and an organisation authorised to collect animals on Council's behalf. This includes surrendered, stray and lost animals collected by Authorised Officers and those handed into the pound by members of the public. There has been an increase in the number of surrendered animals due to factors such as financial hardship, and a significant increase in the number of stray, unowned or semi-owned cats brought into the pound. While there is a high chance that dogs are reclaimed, the prospect of cats being reclaimed is low, which impacts the overall reclaim rate for the Council.

Animals rehomed *[Number of animals rehomed / Number of animals collected] x100*	61.37%	51.69%	63.64%	45.54%	All efforts are made to reunite animals with their owners before offering them for adoption or transferring them to rescue groups. While this measure focuses on animals adopted directly from the facility and does not include animals transferred to rescue groups, note that the wat djerring Animal Facility has agreements with over 50 rescue groups to rehome animals. These partnerships provide animals with a better chance of finding a new home through reputable rescue organisations with a broad community reach, which is a positive outcome for animal welfare. Within this reporting year, 259 animals were transferred to rescue groups (33% of unclaimed animals).
Service cost *Cost of animal management service per population*	$6.46	$7.25	$8.32	$7.27	Council continues to refine the delivery model for animal management services. Service improvements and efficiencies have reduced overall service costs.
Health and safety **Animal management prosecutions** *[Number of successful animal management prosecutions / Number of animal management prosecutions] x 100*	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	66.67%	Of the three matters presented for the magistrates court, only one matter was not found in favour of the Council and struck out by the Courts.
Libraries **Resource currency** **Recently purchased library collection** *[Number of library collection items purchased in the last 5 years / Number of library collection items] x100*	68.29%	74.85%	70.54%	68.78%	Investment remains consistent in collections purchased within the last five years. The slight decrease is due to the longevity of our digital materials, which increased considerably during the pandemic.

Service cost **Cost of library service per population** *[Direct cost of the library service / Population]*	$29.31	$32.18	$34.73	$35.04	A minor increase in the cost of library service per population is related to increased costs of goods and services but the increase of .89% is below the Consumer Price Index (CPI).
Utilisation **Loans per head of population** *[Number of library collection item loans / Population]*	New	New	6.50	6.57	Merri-bek Libraries continued to expand our Library of Things this year, offering board games for loan supported by regular events at libraries. We also increased our investment in eaudiobooks available on the Libby platform, with simultaneous use licenses allowing more borrowers to access popular titles.
Participation *Library membership* *[Number of registered library members / Population] x100*	New	New	22%	24.07%	Merri-bek Libraries' Makerspaces provide a range of equipment for library members to use for a wide range of creative activities. New regular programs like drop-in social sewing sessions and introduction to 3D printing have been very popular and contributed to a small growth in membership this year.
Library visits per head of population *[Number of library visits / Population]*	New	New	3.22	3.61	Visits to Merri-bek Libraries increased this year along with our population. We increased the number of adult programs on offer with additional Chatty Cafés, Conversation Clubs and the introduction of the regular LGBTIQA+ event Lee's Café providing a variety of ways for the community to connect with each other.
Statutory Planning Timeliness **Time taken to decide planning applications** *[The median number of days between receipt of a planning application and a decision on the application]*	112.50	106.00	86.00	80.00	The median days have decreased notably over the past few years, indicating improved performance, partly supported by a reduction in planning permit applications.

Service standard **Planning applications decided within required time frames** *[Number of regular planning application decisions made within 60 days) + (Number of VicSmart planning application decisions made within 10 days) / Number of planning application decisions made] x100*	58.10%	59.87%	74.91%	76.73%	The urban planning service has now returned to a high level of performance following disruptions caused by the pandemic. The percentage of decisions made within the statutory timeframe has increased from 58.10% in 2021-22 to 76.73% being in excess of averages for inner and middle suburb metropolitan Councils.
Service cost **Cost of statutory planning service** *[Direct cost of the statutory planning service / Number of planning applications received]*	$2,423.15	$2,447.28	$2,943.24	$2,275.83	Despite reduced application numbers, reduced relative value of applications lodged, and planning reform resulting in high value applications being lodged with the Minister for Planning, all resulting in reduced fee revenue, there has been an 22.68% reduction in the cost of the service due to associate adjustments in resourcing.
Decision making **Council planning decisions upheld at VCAT** *[Number of VCAT decisions that did not set aside council's decision in relation to a planning application / Number of VCAT decisions in relation to planning applications] x100*	56.67%	64.29%	85.29%	80.00%	Results are reflective of good decision-making and the change in Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) practices leading to an increased number of consent orders following mediated outcomes.

Strategic objective 5: An empowered and collaborative Merri-bek **Build community trust through encouraging participation, evidence-based decision making, stewardship of resources and being accessible and responsive.**			
Strategic indicators The following statement reviews the performance of Council against the council plan including results achieved in relation to the strategic indicators included in the council plan.			
Strategic Indicator/measure	**Target or desired trend**	**2024–25 Result**	**Comments**
Community Satisfaction Survey - Overall satisfaction, aim to increase to meet or exceed metropolitan average Victorian Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey Results (published annually on Council's website)	Increase metropolitan average:	68/100	According to the Community Satisfaction Survey, the overall satisfaction result has stabilised with a consistent result of 68/100 in 24/25, the same result obtained in 23/24. In 24/25 the metropolitan average was 71, so there is a three-point decline in Merri-bek's result in comparison to metropolitan Melbourne.
Community Satisfaction Survey - Customer Service, aim to increase to meet or exceed metropolitan average Victorian Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey Results (published annually on Council's website)	Increase metropolitan average:	74/100	According to the Community Satisfaction Survey, community satisfaction for customer service has increased to 74 in 24/25 as opposed to 72 in 23/24. This is a 2 point increase in satisfaction in customer service from 12 months ago. In 24/25, the metropolitan average was 77, so there was a three-point decline in Merri-bek's result in comparison to metropolitan Melbourne.
Community Satisfaction Survey - Consultation and Engagement, aim to increase to meet or exceed metropolitan average *Victorian Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey Results (published annually on Council's website)*	Increase metropolitan average:	68/100	The score for Merri-bek in 2025 is 68 which is consistent with our score in 2024 (69). This is the second year that Metropolis has completed the Customer Satisfaction Survey for Merri-bek. Metropolis' reporting typically shows a decline in outcomes across other Councils. As this was not found in Merri-bek, this is a very positive result.

Community Satisfaction Survey - Informing the Community, aim to increase to meet or exceed metropolitan average *Victorian Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey Results (published annually on Council's website)*	Increase metropolitan average	75/100	According to the Community Satisfaction Survey, community satisfaction for informing the community with accurate information has increased to 75 in 24/25 as opposed to 71 in 23/24. This is a four-point increase in informing the community. In 24/25, the metropolitan average was 78, so there is three-point decline in Merri-bek's result in comparison to metropolitan Melbourne.
Council decisions made at meetings closed to the public *(Local Government Performance Framework Indicator)* *To decrease from Merri-bek 2021 baseline measure of 4.62%*	Decrease	5.00%	A total of 260 decisions were made at Council meetings held in the last financial year, with 13 decisions being made in meetings closed to the public (primarily due to being commercial in nature). This is an increase over previous years' results; however, the result is well below the expected range for this indicator and continues to demonstrate transparent decision-making in line with the definition of confidential information in the Local Government Act.
Community satisfaction with Council decisions *(Local Government Performance Framework Indicator)* *to increase to meet or exceed metropolitan average*	Increase metropolitan average	69/100	The score for Merri-bek in 2025, at 69, is consistent with the result of 68 obtained in 2024. This finding suggests that satisfaction ratings are stable.
Adjusted underlying surplus (or deficit) as a percentage of underlying revenue *(Local Government Performance Framework Indicator)* *aiming for surplus*	Surplus	8.82%	The adjusted underlying surplus increased from 7.91% to 8.82%, reflecting an improvement in Council's operating position. This is primarily due to the early payment of the 2025/26 financial assistance grant.
Asset renewal and asset upgrade as a percentage of depreciation *(Local Government Performance Framework Indicator)* *Increase from Merri-bek 2021 baseline measure of 95.57%*	Increase	182.88%	The ratio decreased marginally, indicating Council continues to invest in renewing and upgrading assets at a rate well above annual depreciation. The small reduction reflects a minor shift in capital expenditure timing but still demonstrates a strong commitment to asset sustainability, remaining as low-risk as per the Victorian Auditor-General Officer (VAGO).
Governance and management: Compliant measures that are in place (*Local Government Performance Framework Indicator) aim of 100% compliance*	100% Compliance	100%	Merri-bek was 100% compliant with the Governance and Management check list.

Action No.	Initiatives and Priorities: Council Action Plan Year 4 Actions	Progress
115	Continue to deliver advocacy campaigns that support council priorities	Council advanced its advocacy agenda through regular engagement with local State and Federal MPs, promoting infrastructure upgrades, vegetation works along Merri Creek, and improvements to Gillon Oval. Submissions were made to multiple state and national inquiries, including public housing redevelopment, climate strategy, building electrification, and activity centres planning. Collaborative work continued with advocacy partners, including NCA, M9, CASBE, NAGA, and the Mayoral Taskforce for People Seeking Asylum, supporting priorities across transport, aged care, sustainability, and First Peoples' land recognition.
156	Continue to support the CALD Merri-bek connectors community engagement program to improve access to information and services	Council strengthened engagement with multicultural communities through the CALD Merri-bek Connectors program. The Merri-bek Community Panel invite was translated into the top five languages and sent to 66,000 households, supported by in-language social media ads, resulting in over 470 registrations from CALD community members. The Community Budget Ideas submission form was translated into eight languages and widely distributed through Connectors networks, clubs, and council channels. Work also progressed on the Conversations Merri-bek platform, adding a visible translation button to enhance accessibility.
223	Commence planning scheme amendment for a new open space contribution	Council resolved on 12 March 2025 to commence Planning Scheme Amendment C235mbek to implement a new open space contribution. The Amendment has been submitted to the Minister for Planning for authorisation and is awaiting a decision.
224	Enhance customer experience and capacity	Council enhanced customer experience and organisational capacity through targeted training and improved systems. Leadership training reached 160 people across 13 sessions, with 50–83% of staff completing supporting online modules such as 'Service with HEART'. A new tool was introduced to increase visibility and accountability for handling customer requests, complemented by education sessions for staff. Work also progressed on updating Customer Request Management Standards, improving information recording and ensuring consistent, high-quality service across the organisation.

Services		
The following statement provides information in relation to the services funded in the 2024-25 budget and the persons or sections of the community who are provided the service.		
Service	**Description**	**Net Cost** **Actual** **Budget** **Variance** **$000**
Customer Service	This service is the primary public contact point for the organisation and is delivered through three Customer service centres, the telephone contact centre and other multi-media channels. • Calls taken: 131,000 per annum • Customer requests received via phone: 41,000 per annum • Customer requests received online: 30,000 per annum	(3,364) (3,479) 115
Facilities	This service co-ordinates the provision of town hall bookings, and meeting rooms with the civic buildings, including facility management, catering and security. It also supports delivery Citizenship ceremonies. • Venue hire bookings: 5,210 per annum • Community venue hire spaces: 16	(2,948) (2,642) (306)
Finance	This service provides a range of financial services, including management of Council's finances, internal and external reporting, payments to suppliers of goods and services, staff payroll payments as well as procurement and contracting services. This services also manages the rating of properties within the municipality and the collection of debts owed to Council. • Invoices paid: 30,300 per annum • Rate notices issued: 345,000 per annum	(4,287) (3,787) (499)
Corporate Finance	This service undertakes the management of corporate level finances including loan interest repayments, bank fees, parental leave costs, and utilities	(2,675) 8,420 (11,095)

Fleet Services	This service provides a fleet management and maintenance service for over 670 items of plant and equipment. No. of mechanical services provided: 376 trucks and 302 light vehicles per annum	(4,335) (3,972) (363)
Integrity, Risk and Resilience	This service coordinates Council's Audit and Risk committee and oversees the internal audit function. It ensures that risk management is integrated into Council's activities, that Council maintains appropriate insurance coverage, and that claims made by or against Council are efficiently processed. Additionally, this service ensures the implementation and maintenance of a comprehensive Business Continuity Plan.	(4,284) (4,388) 105
Organisational Performance	This service supports and leads Council's culture and leadership development, change and continuous improvement capability building and supports the organisation in service unit planning and process mapping. This service also supports project management systems, processes and reporting	(1,557) (1,500) (57)
Governance and Civic Protocols	This service ensures good governance and transparent and responsible decision making, whilst providing support to the Mayor and Councillors through the development and implementation of systems which support democratic and corporate governance. 2024-25 expenditure includes $1.1 million for the 2024 Council elections.	(3,453) (3,751) 298
Information Technology and Records	This service supports and maintains corporate computing, communication, geospatial and record management systems for Councillors, staff and users of our public internet services.	(10,578) (11,113) 535
Communications	This service supports a number of corporate functions, including issues and reputation management; marketing and branding services; website and social media; community engagement; corporate and internal communications; and delivers community information about council work impacting the community and promotions of services, events, Council decisions, projects and community development initiatives.	(2,039) (2,339) 300
Community Engagement	This service ensures that Council is providing the community with good information about the work it is doing and consulting the community about how it develops and delivers projects and services, including consulting the community about any changes to the way Council works. It allows Council to make decisions that best reflect the views of the community	(1,341) (1,132) (209)
Civic Leadership / General Overheads	Includes corporate costs related to civic leadership.	(3,101) (2,726) (375)

Service performance indicators					
The following statement provides the results of the prescribed service performance indicators and measures including explanation of results in the comments.					
LGPRF under this section	**Results**				
Service/ Indicator/ measure	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**	**Comments**
Governance **Transparency** **Council decisions made at meetings closed to the public** *[Number of Council resolutions made at meetings of Council, or at meetings of a delegated committee consisting only of Councillors, closed to the public / Number of Council resolutions made at meetings of Council or at meetings of a delegated committee consisting only of Councillors] x100*	3.82%	3.67%	3.24%	5.00%	A total of 260 decisions were made at Council meetings held in the last financial year, with 13 decisions being made in meetings closed to the public (primarily due to being commercial in nature). This is an increase over previous years' results; however, the result is well below the expected range for this indicator and continues to demonstrate transparent decision-making in line with the definition of confidential information in the Local Government Act.
Consultation and engagement **Satisfaction with community consultation/ engagement** *[Community satisfaction rating out of 100 with how Council has performed on community consultation and engagement]*	54.00	51.00	69.00	68.00	The score for Merri-bek in 2025 is 68 which is consistent with our score in 2024 (69). This is the second year that Metropolis has completed the Customer Satisfaction Survey for Merri-bek. Metropolis' reporting typically shows a decline in outcomes across other Councils. As this was not found in Merri-bek, this is a very positive result.

|

Attendance **Councillor attendance at council meetings** *[The sum of the number of Councillors who attended each Council meeting / (Number of Council meetings) × (Number of Councillors elected at the last Council general election)] x100*	91.79%	89.97%	93.56%	94.18%	Councillor attendance at meetings remains consistently high. When unable to attend, Councillors have provided apologies, and their absences have been acknowledged accordingly.
Service cost **Cost of elected representation** *[Direct cost of the governance service / Number of Councillors elected at the last Council general election]*	$50,959.55	$54,385.73	$58,645.00	$60,031.61	The increase can mainly be attributed to the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal's determination to increase allowances.
Satisfaction **Satisfaction with council decisions** *[Community satisfaction rating out of 100 with how council has performed in making decisions in the interest of the community]*	53.00	48.00	68.00	69.00	The score for Merri-bek in 2025, at 69, is consistent with the result of 68 obtained in 2024. This finding suggests that satisfaction ratings are stable.

Performance statement

For the year ended 30 June 2025

Description of municipality

Merri-bek is a highly culturally and linguistically diverse municipality. In 2021, 33% of Merri-bek residents were born overseas. At home, residents are most likely to speak Italian, Arabic, Greek or Urdu if not speaking English. In total, 35% of households in our community speak a language other than English at home (ABS, 2021).

In 2023, there were an estimated 18,333 total GST-registered businesses in the City of Merri-bek. Health Care and Social Assistance is the largest employer, generating 8680 local jobs in 2021-22. The City of Merri-bek lies between 4 and 14 kilometres north of central Melbourne. The City of Merri-bek is bounded by the Western Ring Road and Hume City in the north, the City of Darebin and Merri Creek in the east, the City of Yarra, the City of Melbourne and Park Street in the south, and the City of Moonee Valley and Moonee Ponds Creek in the west.

The City of Merri-bek covers the suburbs of Brunswick, Brunswick East, Brunswick West, Coburg, Coburg North, Glenroy, Gowanbrae, Hadfield, Fawkner, Oak Park, Pascoe Vale, and Pascoe Vale South. Partial sections of the suburbs of Fitzroy North, Parkville and Tullamarine are also part of the City of Merri-bek. Estimated resident population for 2024-25 reporting year is 191,747 based on 2024 forecasting figures (Quantify, 2025).

Our forecasts now suggest that our population will increase to a total population of 222,733 by 2036 (Quantify, 2025). This is 22,000 fewer residents than we previously forecast we would have by 2036 (Charter Keck Consultancy 2021). Merri-bek is a highly culturally and linguistically diverse municipality. In 2021, 33% of Merri-bek residents were born overseas. At home, residents are most likely to speak Italian, Arabic, Greek or Urdu if not speaking English. In total, 35% of households in our community speak a language other than English at home (ABS, 2021). In 2023, there were an estimated 18,333 total GST registered businesses in the City of Merri-bek. In the City of Merri-bek, Health Care and Social Assistance is the largest employer, generating 8,680 local jobs in 2021/22.

Certification of the Performance Statement

In my opinion, the accompanying performance statement has been prepared in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* and the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020*.

Jemma Wightman CFO
Principal Accounting Officer
Dated: 17/09/2025

In our opinion, the accompanying performance statement of the *Merri-Bek City Council* for the year ended 30 June 2025 presents fairly the results of council's performance in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* and the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020*.

The performance statement contains the relevant performance indicators, measures and results in relation to service performance, financial performance and sustainable capacity.

At the date of signing, we are not aware of any circumstances that would render any particulars in the performance statement to be misleading or inaccurate.

We have been authorised by the council and by the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020* to certify this performance statement in its final form.

Mayor Cr Helen Davidson
Councillor
Dated: 17/09/2025

Deputy Mayor Cr Helen Politis
Councillor
Dated: 17/09/2025

Cathy Henderson
Chief Executive Officer
Dated: 17/09/2025

Independent Auditor's Report

Victorian Auditor-General's Office

To the Councillors of Merri-bek City Council

Opinion	I have audited the accompanying performance statement of Merri-bek City Council (the council) which comprises the: • description of municipality for the year ended 30 June 2025 • service performance indicators for the year ended 30 June 2025 • financial performance indicators for the year ended 30 June 2025 • sustainable capacity indicators for the year ended 30 June 2025 • notes to the accounts • certification of the performance statement. In my opinion, the performance statement of Merri-bek City Council in respect of the year ended 30 June 2025 presents fairly, in all material respects, in accordance with the performance reporting requirements of Part 4 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020.
Basis for Opinion	I have conducted my audit in accordance with the *Audit Act 1994* which incorporates the Australian Standards on Assurance Engagements. I further describe my responsibilities under that Act and those standards in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the performance statement* section of my report. My independence is established by the *Constitution Act 1975*. My staff and I are independent of the council in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to my audit of the performance statement in Victoria. My staff and I have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.
Councillors' responsibilities for the performance statement	The Councillors are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the performance statement in accordance with the performance reporting requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020* and Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020 and for such internal control as the Councillors determines is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a performance statement that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Level 31 / 35 Collins Street, Melbourne Vic 3000
T 03 8601 7000 enquiries@audit.vic.gov.au www.audit.vic.gov.au

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the performance statement

As required by the *Audit Act 1994*, my responsibility is to express an opinion on the performance statement based on the audit. My objectives for the audit are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the performance statement as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Standards on Assurance Engagements will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the decisions of users taken on the basis of this performance statement. As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Standards on Assurance Engagements, I exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the performance statement, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the council's internal control
- evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the performance statement, including the disclosures, and whether performance statement represents the underlying events and results in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with the Councillors regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.



MELBOURNE
23 September 2025

Travis Derricott
as delegate for the Auditor-General of Victoria

Section 2 - Service performance indicators

For the year ended 30 June 2025

Service	Results					Comments
Indicator / Measure	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25		Material Variations and Comments
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Target as per budget	Actual	
Aquatic Facilities						
Utilisation						
Utilisation of aquatic facilities *[Number of visits to aquatic facilities / Municipal population]*	3.55	5.64	5.28	N/A	5.75	There has been a modest increase in attendance across the centres, including two standalone seasonal outdoor pools, as well as an overall rise linked to the reopening of the Fawkner Leisure Centre.
Animal Management						
Health and safety						
Animal management prosecutions *[Number of successful animal management prosecutions / Number of animal management prosecutions] x 100*	100.00%	0%	100.00%	N/A	67%	Of the three matters presented for the magistrate's court, only one matter was not found in favour of the Council and struck out by the Courts.
Food Safety						
Health and safety						
Critical and major non-compliance outcome notifications *[Number of critical non-compliance outcome notifications and major non-compliance notifications about a food premises followed up / Number of critical non-compliance outcome notifications and major non-compliance notifications about a food premises] x100*	100.00%	100.00%	99.11%	N/A	100.00%	100.00% of major/critical notifications were followed up and remain above the statewide Council average, reflecting a commitment to ensure business associated with high risk is inspected and monitored.

Service	Results					Comments
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25		
Indicator / Measure	Actual	Actual	Actual	Target as per budget	Actual	Material Variations and Comments
Governance						
Satisfaction						
Satisfaction with community consultation and engagement *[Community satisfaction rating out of 100 with the consultation and engagement efforts of Council]*	54	51	69	55	68	The score for Merri-bek in 2025 is 68 which is consistent with our score in 2024 (69). This is the second year that Metropolis has completed the Customer Satisfaction Survey for Merri-bek. Metropolis' reporting typically shows a decline in outcomes across other Councils. As this was not found in Merri-bek, this is a very positive result.
Libraries						
Participation						
Library membership *[Percentage of the population that are registered library members] x100*	N/A	N/A	22.34%	N/A	24.07%	Merri-bek Libraries' Makerspaces provide a range of equipment for library members to use for a wide range of creative activities. New regular programs like drop-in social sewing sessions and introduction to 3D printing have been very popular and contributed to a small growth in membership this year.
Maternal and Child Health (MCH)						
Participation						
Participation in the MCH service *[Number of children who attend the MCH service at least once (in the year) / Number of children enrolled in the MCH service] x100*	71.95%	74.60%	75.51%	N/A	75.19%	Participation in Merri-bek's Maternal Child Health service remains consistent, reflecting the value the community places on early support for families, anticipatory guidance, assessment, and referrals.
Maternal and Child Health (MCH)						
Participation						
Participation in the MCH service by Aboriginal children *[Number of Aboriginal children who attend the MCH service at least once (in the year) / Number of Aboriginal children enrolled in the MCH service] x100*	71.52%	73.81%	80.00%	N/A	69.23%	Council has seen a decline in the overall participation rates of Aboriginal families choosing to participate in our service over the last financial year. The Maternal Child Health department is working collaboratively with local Aboriginal Community-controlled Organisation to increase participation through program trials such as 'Welcome Baby to Country'.

Service	Results					Comments
Indicator / Measure	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25		Material Variations and Comments
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Target as per budget	Actual	
Roads						
Condition						
Sealed local roads below the intervention level *[Percentage of sealed local roads that are below the renewal intervention level set by Council and not requiring renewal]*	95.36%	93.34%	92.37%	93.00%	89.12%	The percentage of sealed local roads below the intervention level has decreased slightly compared to previous years' results; however, the results remain within the expected range for ageing assets.
Statutory Planning						
Service standard						
Planning applications decided within the relevant required time *[Percentage of planning application decisions made within the relevant required time]*	58.10%	59.87%	74.91%	63.00%	76.73%	The urban planning service has now returned to a high level of performance following disruptions caused by the pandemic. The percentage of decisions made within the statutory timeframe has increased from 58.10% in 2021-22 to 76.73% being in excess of averages for inner and middle suburb metropolitan Councils.
Waste Management						
Waste diversion						
Kerbside collection waste diverted from landfill *[Weight of recyclables and green organics collected from kerbside bins / Weight of garbage, recyclables and green organics collected from kerbside bins]* x100	48.34%	48.42%	53.42%	55.00%	51.07%	While the Council introduced weekly Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) collection in the previous reporting period and has included glass diversion in this report period, ongoing community education and engagement efforts to achieve the desired results from kerbside waste reform are still a work in progress. This includes a trial of fortnightly rubbish that is occurring in 2025-26 aimed at landfill diversion. Council remains committed to refining our services and continuing community engagement to improve waste diversion outcomes.

Section 3 - Financial performance indicators

For the year ended 30 June 2025

Dimension/indicator/measure	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25		2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Material Variations and Comments
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Target As per budget	Actual	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	
Efficiency										
Expenditure level										
Expenses per property assessment *[Total expenses / Number of property assessments]*	$2,376.93	$2,542.84	$2,653.07	$2,732.11	$2,849.05	$2,705.06	$2,760.37	$2,709.03	$2,717.72	Expenditure between 2023-24 and 2024-25 has increased by 9.3% or $21.4 million while the number of property assessments has only increased by 1.8%. The increase in expenditure is primarily related to a $9.5 million increase in loss on disposal of assets (this occurs when an asset is sold for less than the assets recorded value or an asset is demolished as a part of capital works upgrade works and still has a recorded value) and workforce changes such as enterprise award increases in alignment with the rate cap, workcover premiums, and an 0.5% increase to the superannuation guarantee.

Service	Results									Comments
Dimension/indicator/measure	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25		2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Material Variations and Comments
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Target As per budget	Actual	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	
Revenue level										
Average rate per property assessment *[Sum of all general rates and municipal charges / Number of property assessments]*	$1,775.81	$1,832.70	$1,916.40	N/A	$1,914.20	$1,991.45	$1,996.91	$2,002.00	$1,996.88	This result has decreased slightly due to the nature of properties being processed through supplementary valuations in 2024/25. These properties were slightly below the average capital improvement value within the municipality, resulting in lower average rates charges against the municipality average.
Working capital										
Current assets compared to current liabilities *[Current assets / Current liabilities]* x100	361.94%	357.2%	297.88%	259.3%	264.05%	202.69%	223.85%	233.60%	230.22%	While current assets increased by 4.7%, current liabilities also rose by 14.1%. Council's current liability increased primarily as a result of a loan repayment of $12.1 million which is due in 2025-26.
Unrestricted cash										
Unrestricted cash compared to current liabilities [Unrestricted cash / Current liabilities] x100	39.22%	-60.93%	-63.95%	N/A	-21.25%	-50.91%	-42.71%	-48.67%	-40.58%	The indicator has increased in the current year from -64% to -21%, primarily due to a $13.7 million increase in cash and cash equivalents. This reflects a higher cash position held by Council at 30 June in line with projected cash flow requirements.

Service	Results									Comments
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25		2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	
Dimension/indicator/measure	Actual	Actual	Actual	Target As per budget	Actual	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Material Variations and Comments
Obligations										
Loans and borrowings										
Loans and borrowings compared to rates *[Interest bearing loans and borrowings / Rate revenue]* x100	14.23%	12.94%	16.15%	N/A	14.33%	6.73%	5.47%	4.27%	9.88%	This is a positive decrease as Council has reduced its debt relative to rate income. The improvement is due to the payment of principle repayments throughout the year and no new borrowings. Loan borrowings reducing by 6.51% while rate revenue increased by 5.32%. The improvement in the forecast period is primarily due to the repayment of the Local Government Funding Vehicle (LGFV) bond ($12.1 million) when it falls due in June 2026 and no new borrowings until 2028-29.
Loans and borrowings repayments compared to rates *[Interest and principal repayments on interest bearing loans and borrowings / Rate revenue]* x100	6.19%	1.13%	1.11%	N/A	1.44%	7.43%	1.18%	1.14%	1.10%	The ratio increased marginally from 1.11% to 1.44%, reflecting a $750k (36%) increase in loan repayments. This is as a result of movement in the Reserve Bank Australia (RBA) cash rates, resulting increases to our variable rate loan repayments. The ratio increases by almost 6% in 2025-26 due to the repayment of the Local Government Funding (LGVF) bond when it falls due in June 2026.
Obligations										

Indebtedness										
Non-current liabilities compared to own source revenue *[Non-current liabilities / Own source revenue] x100*	12.69%	11.46%	13.86%	N/A	7.08%	5.88%	4.81%	3.78%	8.06%	Non-current liabilities reduced by $12.1 million in 2024-25 as a result of the loan repayment moving to current liabilities. This resulted in a significant decrease in non-current liabilities relative to own source revenue.

Service	**Results**									**Comments**
Dimension/indicator/measure	**2021-22**	**2022-23**	**2023-24**	**2024-25**		**2025-26**	**2026-27**	**2027-28**	**2028-29**	Material Variations and Comments
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Target As per budget	Actual	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	
Obligations										
Asset renewal and upgrade										
Asset renewal and upgrade compared to depreciation *[Asset renewal and asset upgrade expense / Asset depreciation] x100*	94.99%	118.36%	185.83%	177.3%	182.88%	186.93%	107.30%	116.15%	159.96%	The ratio decreased marginally, indicating Council continues to invest in renewing and upgrading assets at a rate well above annual depreciation. The small reduction reflects a minor shift in capital expenditure timing but still demonstrates a strong commitment to asset sustainability, remaining as low-risk as per the Victorian Auditor-General Officer (VAGO).

Dimension/indicator/ measure	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25		2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Material Variations and Comments
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Target As per budget	Actual	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	
Operating position										
Adjusted underlying result										
Adjusted underlying surplus (or deficit) *[Adjusted underlying surplus (deficit)/ Adjusted underlying revenue]* x100	16.07%	12.4%	7.91%	N/A	8.82%	11.52%	9.14%	10.87%	11.20%	The adjusted underlying surplus increased from 7.91% to 8.82%, reflecting an improvement in Council's operating position. This is primarily due to the early payment of the 2025/26 financial assistance grant.
Stability										
Rates concentration										
Rates compared to adjusted underlying revenue [Rate revenue / Adjusted underlying revenue] x100	72.09%	73.10%	74.18%	73.20%	70.76%	75.17%	75.92%	76.11%	75.43	The ratio decreased slightly primarily due to the timing of receipt of the Commonwealth Financial Assistance grants for 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26. It is anticipated that the timing of these payments will return to the usual pattern in future years, resulting in the increase shown in the forecast period.
Rates effort										
Rates compared to property values										
[Rate revenue / Capital improved value of rateable properties in the municipality] x100	0.28%	0.25%	0.26%	N/A	0.27%	0.28%	0.28%	0.28%	0.28%	The result achieved remained consistent.

Section 4. Sustainable capacity indicators

For the year ended 30 June 2025

Service	Results				Comments
Indicator / measure [formula]	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Material Variations and Comments
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	
Population					
Expenses per head of municipal population *[Total expenses / Municipal population]*	$1,084.83	$1,228.54	$1,264.88	$1,343.62	Expenses per head of municipal population increased from $1,264.88 to $1,343.62, primarily due to a $21.4 million (9.34%) rise in overall expenses from 2023/24 to 2024/25. The key contributors were a $3.9 million increase in employee costs, an $8.6 million rise in materials and services, and a $9.5 million net loss increase on disposal of property, plant, infrastructure, and equipment.
Infrastructure per head of municipal population *[Value of infrastructure / Municipal population]*	$5,858.10	$6,992.26	$6,820.13	$5,780.53	Infrastructure per head of municipal population decreased by 15.24%, primarily due to population growth and a significant decrease in the value of property plant and equipment, as a result of a revaluation.
Population density per length of road *[Municipal population / Kilometres of local roads]*	293.19	276.55	287.66	296.09	The result of this indicator has remained consistent.
Own-source revenue					
Own-source revenue per head of municipal population *[Own-source revenue / Municipal population]*	$1,084.21	$1,210.90	$1,212.50	$1,259.72	The result of this indicator has remained consistent.

Service	Results				Comments
Indicator / measure [formula]	2021-22 Actual	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	2024-25 Actual	Material Variations and Comments
Recurrent grants					
Recurrent grants per head of municipal population *[Recurrent grants / Municipal population]*	$112.40	$115.91	$86.92	$131.14	Recurrent grants per head of municipal population increased by 50.89%, driven by an approximate $9 million increase in recurrent grant funding between 2023/24 and 2024/25. The increase is primarily due to the Commonwealth Financial Assistance grant, with 100% of the 2024-25 allocation and a 50% advance payment of the 2025-26 allocation received in 2024-25. By contrast, the 2023-24 grant was received in advance in 2022-23, resulting in a lower result in 2023-24.
Disadvantage					
Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage *[Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage by decile]*	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	The result of this indicator has remained consistent.
Workforce turnover					
Percentage of staff turnover *[Number of permanent staff resignations and terminations / Average number of permanent staff for the financial year]* x100	16.50%	15.90%	9.60%	13.40%	Staff turnover experiences yearly variations influenced by a broad range of factors. Council continues to focus on reducing turnover through various means, including strengthening staff engagement and enhancing recruitment and retention strategies such as flexibility, leave options and employment policies.

Section 5 - Notes to the accounts

5.1 Basis of preparation

Council is required to prepare and include a performance statement within its annual report. The performance statement includes the results of the prescribed, service performance, financial performance and sustainable capacity indicators and measures together with a description of the municipal district, an explanation of material variations in the results and notes to the accounts. This statement has been prepared to meet the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020* and *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020.*

Where applicable the results in the performance statement have been prepared on accounting bases consistent with those reported in the Financial Statements. The other results are based on information drawn from council information systems or from third parties (e.g., Australian Bureau of Statistics or the Council's satisfaction survey provider).

The performance statement presents the actual results for the current year and the previous three years, along with the current year's target, if mandated by the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020*. Additionally, for the prescribed financial performance indicators and measures, the performance statement includes the target budget for the current year and the results forecast for the period 2025-26 to 2028-29 by the council's financial plan.

The *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020* requires explanation of any material variations in the results contained in the performance statement. Council has adopted materiality thresholds relevant to each indicator and measure and explanations have not been provided for variations below the materiality thresholds unless the variance is considered to be material because of its nature.

5.2 Definitions

Key term	Definition
Aboriginal children	means a child who is an Aboriginal person
Aboriginal person	has the same meaning as in the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006
adjusted underlying revenue	means total income other than: • non-recurrent grants used to fund capital expenditure; and • non-monetary asset contributions; and • contributions to fund capital expenditure from sources other than those referred to above
adjusted underlying surplus (or deficit)	means adjusted underlying revenue less total expenditure
annual report	means an annual report prepared by a council under section 98 of the Act
asset renewal expenditure	means expenditure on an existing asset or on replacing an existing asset that returns the service capability of the asset to its original capability
asset upgrade expenditure	means expenditure that— (a) enhances an existing asset to provide a higher level of service; or (b) extends the life of the asset beyond its original life
critical non-compliance outcome notification	means a notification received by council under section 19N(3) or (4) of the *Food Act 1984*, or advice given to council by an authorized officer under that Act, of a deficiency that poses an immediate serious threat to public health
current assets	has the same meaning as in the Australian Accounting Standards
current liabilities	has the same meaning as in the Australian Accounting Standards
food premises	has the same meaning as in the *Food Act 1984*
intervention level	means the level set for the condition of a road beyond which a council will not allow the road to deteriorate and will need to intervene
local road	means a sealed or unsealed road for which the council is the responsible road authority under the *Road Management Act 2004*
major non-compliance outcome notification	means a notification received by a council under section 19N(3) or (4) of the *Food Act 1984*, or advice given to council by an authorized officer under that Act, of a deficiency that does not pose an immediate serious threat to public health but may do so if no remedial action is taken
MCH	means the Maternal and Child Health Service provided by a council to support the health and development of children within the municipality from birth until school age
non-current liabilities	means all liabilities other than current liabilities

Key term	Definition
own-source revenue	means adjusted underlying revenue other than revenue that is not under the control of council (including government grants)
population	means the resident population estimated by council
rate revenue	means revenue from general rates, municipal charges, service rates and service charges
relative socio-economic disadvantage	in relation to a municipal district, means the relative socio-economic disadvantage, expressed as a decile for the relevant financial year, of the area in which the municipal district is located according to the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage of SEIFA
restricted cash	means cash, cash equivalents and financial assets, within the meaning of the Australian Accounting Standards, not available for use other than for a purpose for which it is restricted, and includes cash to be used to fund capital works expenditure from the previous financial year
SEIFA	means the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas published from time to time by the Australian Bureau of Statistics on its Internet site
unrestricted cash	means all cash and cash equivalents other than restricted cash

5.3. Other Matters

Overview of 2025

During the financial year council experienced growth in residents and demand for services. Extensive capital works were undertaken to improve infrastructure.

Governance and management

Good governance, integrity and accountability are central to the *Local Government Act 2020*

The Act is based on 5 principles:
- community engagement
- strategic planning
- financial management
- public transparency
- service performance.

We embed these 5 principles in our decision-making, corporate governance and democratic governance. We have established governance rules to help us.

We seek to apply good governance to:
- engage our community in sound and responsible decision-making
- achieve the best outcomes for the Merri-bek community, and future generations
- ensure the transparency of Council decisions, actions and information
- ensure our ongoing financial viability
- increase our performance
- identify and drive out inefficiencies
- reassure residents we are spending public money responsibly, accountably and wisely.

Council meetings

Decisions on issues affecting the community are made at monthly council meetings. We hold council meetings to conduct the business of Council, and schedule Council meetings specifically for consideration of planning applications. These are called planning and related matters meetings.

Community members can observe the decision-making process at these meetings and ask questions. Where required, we may also hold special meetings.

We live-stream our council meetings to enable people to watch the proceedings in real time. Live-streaming council meetings offers greater access to information, decision-making and debate. It also underpins the principles of accessibility, openness, and transparency. Meetings are also recorded and available to watch later.

In accordance with Council's Governance Rules, we conducted council meetings from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025 in a hybrid format, allowing for both in person and online attendance.

In 2024-25, the number of people watching council meetings online (live and recorded) was 5355 and the number watching planning meetings was 1500.

Councillor attendance at meetings

In 2024-25, we held:

- 11 council meetings (includes meeting to elect the Mayor)
- 6 special council meetings
- 8 council meetings to consider planning and related matters.

Table A shows councillor attendance for 2024-25, for the period from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025.

Table A

Councillor	Council meetings (total 11)	Special council meetings (total 6)	Planning and related matters (total 8)
Cr Nat Abboud[1]	7	4	4
Cr Sue Bolton (approved leave of absence – 1 meeting)[2]	10	6	6
Cr Helen Davidson	10	6	7
Cr Jay Iwasaki[1]	7	4	5
Cr Liz Irvin[1]	7	4	5
Cr Chris Miles[1]	7	4	5
Cr Helen Politis[1,2] (approved leave of absence – 1 meeting)	7	3	5
Cr Adam Pulford	11	5	8
Cr Ella Svensson[1]	7	4	5
Cr Katerine Theodosis[1]	7	4	5
Cr Oscar Yildiz JP	10	6	8
Prior to October 2024 Council Elections			
Cr Annalivia Carli Hannan	4	2	2
Cr James Conlan	1	-	-
Cr Monica Harte	4	1	3
Cr Angelica Panopoulos	4	2	3
Cr Helen Pavlidis-Mihalakos	4	1	1
Cr Mark Riley	4	2	3
Cr Lambros Tapinos	4	1	2

[1] Elected from 26 October 2024

[2] The Victorian Local Government Reporting Framework requires that a councillor be counted as having attended a council meeting where the councillor has attended part of a meeting or is on an approved leave of absence.

Major committees

Audit and Risk Committee

The Audit and Risk Committee is established in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* ('the Act') and its committee charter was adopted by Council on 8 November 2023. As outlined in section 53(2) of the Act, this committee serves as an advisory body to Council, aiming to strengthen governance, risk management, financial management, and drive continuous improvement.

The committee's role involves assisting Council to fulfil our responsibilities as outlined in the Act, including:

- monitoring the compliance of Council's policies and procedures with:
  - the overarching governance principles
  - the Act, regulations and any ministerial directions
  - other relevant laws and regulations
- monitoring internal controls
- monitoring Council's financial and performance reporting
- monitoring and providing advice on risk management and fraud prevention systems and controls
- overseeing internal audit functions
- overseeing external audit functions
- monitoring related-party transactions.

The current committee consists of 7 members, including an independent chair, John Watson, three independent members (Lisa Tripodi, Marilyn Kearney and Jeff Rigby), and three councillors (Cr Helen Davidson – Mayor, Cr Helen Politis – Deputy Mayor and Cr Ella Svensson).

During 2024-25, the committee held four meetings with the following councillor attendance:

- Tuesday 3 September 2024: Cr Adam Pulford and Cr Monica Harte
- Tuesday 17 December 2024: Cr Helen Davidson, Cr Helen Politis and Cr Ella Svensson
- Tuesday 4 March 2025: Cr Helen Davidson, Cr Helen Politis and Cr Ella Svensson
- Tuesday 3 June 2025: Cr Helen Davidson and Cr Helen Politis.

Delegated committees

Council has not established any delegated Committees.

Councillor expenses and allowances

Expenses

We provide Councillors with resources and support to undertake their duties. This is so they can serve, engage and act in the community's best interests. We may make available funds to pay for resources or reimburse claims for out-of-pocket expenses.

Our Council Support Expenses and Resources Policy provides the level of expense and resources support provided.

We publish details of Councillor expenses (including those reimbursed) on our website quarterly.

Councillor expenses for the 2024-25 year are outlined below.

Councillor	Travel / Mileage	Child / Family Care	Conferences/ training	Accommodation	Mobile and data	Events	Copying / Stationery	Totals
Cr Nat Abboud			$100.00		$506.38			$606.38
Cr Sue Bolton	$23.63				$370.80			$394.43
Cr Helen Davidson	$831.75		$1,242.73	$1,019.93	$841.60			$3,936.01
Cr Liz Irvin	$66.03		$9,959.09		$219.62			$10,244.74
Cr Dr Jay Iwasaki	$23.63		$10,739.09		$129.32			$10,892.04
Cr Chris Miles					$535.19			$535.19
Cr Helen Politis			$120.00		$215.99			$335.99
Cr Adam Pulford	$2,175.29		$131.60	$673.87	$370.80			$3,351.56
Cr Ella Svensson	$673.80		$11,211.82	$1,019.93	$207.01			$13,112.56
Cr Katerine Theodosis	$786.90		$1,796.37	$1,019.93	$538.97			$4,142.17
Cr Oscar Yildiz JP	$3,156.85		$1,122.73	$1132.43	$1,648.82			$7,060.83

Former Councillor	Travel / Mileage	Child / Family Care	Conferences/ training	Accommodation	Mobile and data	Events	Copying / Stationery	Totals
Cr James Conlan					$75.80			$75.80
Cr Annalivia Carli Hannan					$123.60			$123.60
Cr Monica Harte					$123.60			$123.60
Cr Angelica Panopoulos	$91.78				$123.60			$215.38
Cr Helen Pavlidis-Mihalakos	$319.05		-$5,300.00*		$123.60			$442.95
Cr Mark Riley					$123.60			$123.60
Cr Lambros Tapinos	$122.52				$453.60			$576.12

**refund*

Allowances

Our Mayor and Councillors are entitled to receive an allowance while performing their duties as elected officials.

The *Local Government Act 2020* creates a framework for allowances to be specified by the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal, rather than the Minister and councils.

In accordance with Section 39 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, the Tribunal determined the following allowances for Category 3 councils (Merri-bek City Council being a Category 3) from 18 December 2024:

Mayoral allowance: $138,506

Deputy mayor's allowance: $69,252

Councillor allowance: $40,769

The Tribunal determined that the value of the allowance payable to a councillor is inclusive of any Superannuation Guarantee Contribution amount, or equivalent, that may be payable under Commonwealth law to the councillor with respect to their service in that office.

Councillor Code of Conduct

From 26 October 2024, all councillors are required to observe the Model Councillor Code of Conduct, as prescribed in Schedule 1 of the Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020, in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*.

The Model Code of Conduct sets out individual standards of conduct expected to be observed by councillors when performing their roles as councillors. The purpose of the Model Code of Conduct is to set clear standards that will improve on councillor conduct and behaviour. It is available on our website: merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Conflict of interest

Councillors, as elected representatives of residents and ratepayers, are required to act in the best interests of the community. This position of trust requires them to prioritise the public interest in all decision making. Similarly, Council officers must also prioritise the public interest in the performance of their duties and functions.

We have a procedure in place to manage the disclosure of a conflict of interest. The opportunity to declare a conflict of interest is a standard agenda item for all council meetings and also takes place throughout procurement and recruitment processes.

We maintain a register of all declarations that raise a conflict of interest from councillors and staff.

During 2024-25, 35 conflict of interest disclosures were made at council meetings and councillor briefings.

In declaring a conflict of interest, the relevant councillor leaves the meeting, removing them from the decision-making process in relation to that matter.

There were six conflict of interest disclosures added to the register for council officers.

The Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy for Councillors was revised in April 2025 and sets out practices to avoid the potential for conflicts of interest through the offer/acceptance of:

- gifts
- benefits
- hospitality.

Our procedures vary depending on the role and circumstances of the offer. Our policy has robust thresholds and defined practices.

A Lobbyists, Developers and Submitters Policy is also in place to ensure interactions between Council representatives and lobbyists, developers and submitters are conducted in an open, transparent and accountable manner.

Governance and management checklist

Results of Merri-bek Council's assessment against the prescribed governance and management checklist as of 30 June 2025

Checklist Item	Governance and Management Item	Assessment	
1	**Community engagement policy** (policy outlining Council's commitment to engaging with the community on matters of public interest)	**Current policy in operation and adopted in accordance with section 55 of the Act** **Reviewed and Adopted** 11/9/2024	☒
2	**Community engagement guidelines** (guidelines to assist staff to determine when and how to engage with the community)	**Current guidelines in operation** **Operational:** 9/12/2020	☒
3	**Financial Plan** (plan under section 91 of the Act outlining the financial and non-financial resources required for at least the next 10 financial years)	**Adopted in accordance with section 91 of the Act** **Adopted 20/10/2021:** The 10-year financial plan was adopted by Council in October 2021. The budget includes an update to the 10-year outlook and was approved on 26 June 2024 in accordance with section 91 of the Act 2020. Strategic Resource Plan 2020-2025 is in place, since 8/07/2020.	☒
4	**Asset Plan** (plan that sets out the asset maintenance and renewal needs for key infrastructure asset classes for at least the next 10 years)	**Adopted in accordance with section 92 of the Act Adopted** **Adopted 23/06/2022:** 10-year Asset Plan adopted by Council on 23 June 2022 in accordance with section 92 of the Act 2020.	☒
5	**Revenue and Rating Plan** (plan setting out the rating structure of Council to levy rates and charges)	**Adopted in accordance with section 93 of the Act** **Adopted: 23/06/2025** The Revenue and Rating Plan was adopted by Council on 23 June 2025 in accordance with section 93 of the Act.	☒

Checklist Item	Governance and Management Item	Assessment	
6	**Annual budget** (plan setting out the services to be provided and initiatives to be undertaken over the next 12 months and the funding and other resources required)	**Budget adopted in accordance with section 94 of the Act** **Adopted:** 23/06/2025 The annual budget was adopted by Council on 23 June 2025 in accordance with section 94 of the Act.	☒
7	**Risk policy** (policy outlining Council's commitment and approach to minimising the risks to Council's operations)	**Current policy in operation** **Operational:** 6/12/2023	☒
8	**Fraud policy** (policy outlining Council's commitment and approach to minimising the risk of fraud)	**Current policy in operation** **Operational:** 7/04/2025	☒
9	**Municipal emergency management planning** (Participation in meetings of the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee.)	**MEMPC meetings attended by one or more representatives of Council (other than the chairperson) during the financial year** **Date of MEMPC meetings attended:** 14/08/2024 12/11/2024 11/02/2025 13/05/2025	☒
10	**Procurement policy** (policy outlining the principles, processes and procedures that will apply to all purchases of goods and services by the Council)	**Current policy in operation and adopted in accordance with section 108 of the Act** **Reviewed and Adopted: 11/06/2025:** The procurement policy was reviewed and adopted by Council on 11 June 2025 in accordance with section 108 of the Act.	☒

Checklist Item	Governance and Management Item	Assessment	
11	**Business continuity plan** (plan setting out the actions that will be taken to ensure that key services continue to operate in the event of a disaster)	**Current plan in operation** **Operational:** 28/05/2024	☒
12	**Disaster recovery plan** (plan setting out the actions that will be undertaken to recover and restore business capability in the event of a disaster)	**Current plan in operation** **Operational:** 11/11/2024	☒
13	**Complaint policy** (Policy under section 107 of the Act outlining Council's commitment and approach to managing complaints.)	**Current policy in operation and adopted in accordance with section 107 of the Act** **Date of commencement of policy:** 14/01/2025	☒
14	**Workforce plan** (Plan outlining Council's commitment and approach to planning the current and future workforce requirements of the organisation.)	**Established in accordance with section 46 of the Act** **Date of commencement of current plan:** 27/03/2024	☒
15	**Payment of rates and charges hardship policy** (Policy outlining Council's commitment and approach to assisting ratepayers experiencing financial hardship or difficulty paying their rates.)	**Current policy in operation** **Date of commencement of current policy:** 1/10/2022	☒
16	**Risk management framework** (framework outlining Council's approach to managing risks to the Council's operations)	**Current framework in operation** **Operational:** 31/10/2024	☒
17	**Audit and Risk Committee** (advisory committee of Council under section 53 and 54 of the Act)	**Established in accordance with section 53 of the Act Established:** 13/05/2020	☒

Checklist Item	Governance and Management Item	Assessment	
18	**Internal audit** (independent accounting professionals engaged by the Council to provide analyses and recommendations aimed at improving Council's governance, risk and management controls)	**Internal auditor engaged** **Engaged:** 1/09/2021	☒
19	**Performance reporting framework** (a set of indicators measuring financial and non-financial performance, including the performance indicators referred to in section 98 of the Act)	**Current framework in operation** **Operational:** 23/06/2025	☒
20	**Council Plan report** (report reviewing the performance of the Council against the Council Plan, including the results in relation to the strategic indicators, for the first six months of the financial year)	**Current reports:** **Reported 14/8/2024:** Council Action Plan 2023 –24 Fourth Quarter Performance Report. **Reported 13/11/2024:** Council Action Plan 2024-25 – First Quarter Performance Report. **Reported 12/02/2025:** Council Action Plan 2024-25 - Second Quarter Performance Report. **Reported 14/05/2025:** Council Action Plan 2024-25 - Third Quarter Performance Report	☒
21	**Quarterly budget reports** (quarterly reports to Council under section 97 of the Act, comparing actual and budgeted results and an explanation of any material variations)	**Quarterly reports presented to Council in accordance with section 97(1) of the Act** **Reported 11/12/2024:** 2023/24 First Quarter Financial Report (Report 7.5). **Reported 13/03/2024:** 2023/24 Mid-Year Financial Report (Report 7.12). **Reported 10/04/2024:** 2023/24 Third Quarter Financial Report (Report 7.14).	☒

Checklist Item	Governance and Management Item	Assessment	
22	**Risk reporting** (six-monthly reports of strategic risks to Council's operations, their likelihood and consequences of occurring and risk minimisation strategies)	**Risk reports prepared and presented:** A Strategic Risk Review was presented to Executive on 14 January 2025, to the Audit and Risk Committee on 4 March 2025 and to Council at its meeting of 12 March 2025 (included within the Governance report).	☒
23	**Performance reporting** (six-monthly reports of indicators measuring the results against financial and non-financial performance, including performance indicators referred to in section 98 of the Act)	**Performance reports prepared:** **Reported:** **Reports Prepared:** **Reported 14/8/2024: Council Action Plan 2023 –24 Fourth Quarter Performance Report.** **Reported 13/11/2024: Council Action Plan 2024-25 – First Quarter Performance Report.** **Reported 11/12/2024: 2023/24 First Quarter Financial Report** **Reported 12/02/2025: Council Action Plan 2024-25 - Second Quarter Performance Report.** **Reported 13/03/2024: 2023/24 Mid-Year Financial Report**	☒
		Reported 10/04/2024: 2023/24 Third Quarter Financial Report	
		Reported 14/05/2025: Council Action Plan 2024-25 - Third Quarter Performance Report	

Checklist Item	Governance and Management Item	Assessment	
24	**Annual report** (annual report under sections 98 and 99 of the Act containing a report of operations and audited financial and performance statements)	**Annual report considered at a meeting of Council in accordance with section 98, 99 and 100 of the Act** **Considered:** 9/10/2024	☒
25	**Councillor Code of Conduct** (Code setting out the standards of conduct to be followed by Councillors and other matters.)	**Code of conduct reviewed and adopted in accordance with section 139 of the Act** **Reviewed and Adopted:** 26/10/2024	☒
26	**Delegations** (documents setting out the powers, duties and functions of Council and the Chief Executive Officer that have been delegated to members of staff)	**Delegations reviewed in accordance with section 11(7) of the Act and a register kept in accordance with sections 11(8) and 47(7) of the Act Registered Reviewed:** 10/06/2025	☒
27	**Meeting procedures** (Governance Rules governing the conduct of meetings of Council and delegated committees)	**Governance rules adopted in accordance with section 60 of the Act Reviewed and Adopted:** 14/05/2025	☒

I certify that this information presents fairly the status of Council's governance and management arrangements.

Cathy Henderson	**Cr Helen Davidson**
Chief Executive Officer	**Mayor**
Signature	**Signature**
Date: 17 September 2025	**Date: 17 September 2025**

Taskforce on Climate-related financial disclosures

Council is continuing its voluntary climate disclosure and reporting. Disclosures support the management of systemic risks to the financial system due to climate change. In Council, assets and services we deliver to the community may be impacted by extreme weather and climate. Disclosures support our accountability in climate-related decision-making and our financial sustainability.

In July 2023, the Taskforce on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) transitioned to the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) *S1 General Requirements for Disclosure of Sustainability-related Financial Information* and *S2 Climate-related Disclosure*. The Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB) developed the AASB S2 based on IFRS S2 to localise its implementation to the Australian context.

Australia introduced mandatory climate-related financial disclosures in accordance with AASB S2 standard for large businesses, financial institutions, and not for profits for financial years starting on or after January 2025. Public sector organisations, including local governments, are currently not required to report under this standard.

Council has begun reporting following the recommendations of the TCFD in its annual report in Financial Year 2022-23. Council is actively monitoring developments in AASB S2 disclosures, including emerging examples and best practices. We will continue learning and exploring how we might adopt these standards in the future. In the meantime, we will continue to report in accordance with the TCFD recommendations focusing on governance, strategy, risk management and metrics and targets. We acknowledge that these themes also form the core elements of AASB S2 reporting. The following report is unaudited.

Introduction

Council is recognised for our leadership in environmental sustainability and climate action. In 2018, we declared a climate emergency and committed to urgent action.

Council was the second Victorian local government and the third in Australia to be certified carbon neutral for our corporate operations, achieving this in December 2012. Since 2019, we have purchased all our electricity from 100% renewable energy through the Crowlands Wind Farm in northwest Victoria. We now have more than 25 pure electric vehicles (EVs) in our light vehicle fleet. This is the largest council EV fleet in Victoria. This has resulted in Council achieving a 63% reduction in carbon emissions by 2023-24 compared to baseline (2011-12). Further information on climate action in Council and the community can be found in the Zero Carbon Merri-bek website.

The 2021-25 Council Plan recognises climate change as a significant challenge for our community and integrates Council's climate response throughout the plan.

Our main climate-related strategies and actions plans are the Zero Carbon Merri-bek Framework and Climate Emergency Action Plan, the Climate Risk Strategy and Foundational Action Plan and the Circular Economy Strategy (under development). We are developing a forward Climate Emergency Action Plan for 2025-30 that will integrate action across the three strategies.

These strategies and action plans are complemented by related strategies, policies, and action plans that enable and drive climate action, including:

- Council Plan and the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Urban Forest Strategy
- Integrated Water Management Strategy and Action Plan

- Merri-bek Nature Plan
- Open Space Strategy and Action Plan
- Moving around Merri-bek – Transport Strategy and Streets for People Plan
- Food Systems Strategy
- Environmentally Sustainable Design through the Merri-bek Planning Scheme
- Sustainable Buildings Policy (for Council-managed assets)

In addition to the strategic alignment and considerations described above, our work on climate change is guided by the following Victorian legislative obligations:

The ***Climate Change Act 2017*** requires that decision-makers have regard to climate change:

- Councils in Victoria must by law consider climate risks in decision-making.
- Under the Act, councils must incorporate climate risk assessments into strategic planning and report on climate-related impacts, particularly regarding greenhouse gas emissions reduction, climate adaptation, and resilience planning.
- This Act also establishes a pathway to net-zero emissions by 2050 in Victoria.

The ***Local Government Act 2020*** requires local governments to plan for climate change risks:

- Section 9(c) of the Act emphasises that councils give effect to the overarching governance principles including 'the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted'
- Section 9(b) instructs councils to focus on achieving the best outcomes for both current and future generations, reinforcing a forward-looking approach to governance.

The ***Planning and Environment Act 1987***

- This Act includes provisions (Section 12A – amended in March 2024) to consider climate change in urban planning and land use. Council planning schemes must support the State's climate change policy, with an emphasis on resilience, environmental protection, and sustainable urban development.

Climate change governance

Council meetings and decisions

Councillors play a key role in shaping the Council Plan and approving the annual budget, including climate-related priorities. The 2024-25 budget outlines key funding allocations related to responding to the climate emergency and environmental sustainability. In addition to budgetary decisions, Councillors endorse strategies and action plans that guide resource allocation and inform the work of Council officers. To stay informed on the progress of these initiatives, Councillors may receive briefings from Council staff.

Council reports across different topics typically include a section on the climate emergency, highlighting how each report addresses climate-related considerations. This allows for robust decision-making. Through regular meetings, Councillors also deliberate and make decisions on planning and related matters.

Audit and Risk Committee

The Audit and Risk Committee provides oversight of climate risks. One of the 9 strategic risks is that the impacts of climate change, including physical and transition risks, are not appropriately planned for or responded to. In 2023-24, biannual reports were submitted to the committee describing climate risk management processes and progress against the delivery of the Climate Risk Strategy. The committee is comprised of the Chief Executive Officer, Merri-bek Executives, Councillors, and independent and external members.

Climate Resilience Integration Board

The Climate Resilience Integration Board (CRIB) is composed of the CEO, Directors, Chief Financial Officer, Manager Governance and Strategy, and Manager Sustainability and Climate, and is supported by key officers. It manages the development and implementation of the Climate Risk Strategy and Action Plans and the integration and embedding of climate risk management across Council assets, services, and regulatory functions. The board meets quarterly and is informed about climate-related issues as well as progress against actions that mitigate climate risks. Progress on actions and emergent issues are reported to the board.

Risk Management Committee

The Risk Management Committee meet every 6 weeks to monitor risk reviews and to discuss existing and emerging risks. Meeting minutes are shared with the Executive, the Audit and Risk Committee and posted to Council's staff intranet.

Other Project Control Boards

There are other governance mechanisms that support our work for reducing emissions, kerbside waste service, capital works planning and asset management that guide the work in these respective areas and that also support the management of climate risks.

Climate change strategy

The **Council Plan 2025-29** is under development and at the time of writing available for public consultation. It is expected to be adopted in Council in October. It includes focus areas and strategic objectives against which Council and its administration measure its performance. The Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan is integrated into the Council Plan.

Council endorsed its **Climate Risk Strategy** in November 2022. The vision is that by 2030:

> 'Council competently, accountably, and responsibly manages climate risks
> Merri-bek is climate resilient, leafy, and liveable; and
> Merri-bek has a climate-ready and resilient community with no one left behind'.

Five goals were identified, around managing climate risk, improving the resilience of built and natural environments, improving the resilience of community services, supporting community and businesses with information to take action, and partnerships.

To achieve the goals, objectives, and desired outcomes in the strategy, the **Climate Risk Foundational Action Plan 2023-25** was developed and endorsed by Council in June 2023. This action plan was developed to help Council understand:

- What climate change means for Merri-bek across the municipality
- The impacts of climate risk on Council infrastructure, open spaces, natural environments, and community services
- How climate risk impacts the people of Merri-bek, particularly vulnerable groups, and businesses
- Our organisational ability to manage climate risk physically, financially and legally
- How we build climate resilience to best deliver infrastructure, open spaces, natural environments, and community services in cost-effective ways.

In the context of the completion of the Climate Risk Foundational Action Plan in June 2025, Council embarked on an Interim Review of the Climate Risk Strategy and a Climate Change Audit. The recommendations under these two pieces of work will inform the development of further actions for 2025-26.

The **Zero Carbon Merri-bek Framework 2040** (Framework) and **Climate Emergency Action Plan 2020-25** are the endorsed Council strategy and plan that describe our approach and actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Framework defines the key priorities for driving emissions reductions across the three target areas: energy transition, sustainable transport and waste and consumption over the first five years (2020-25) and beyond.

It is Council's adopted goal for Merri-bek to achieve a 75% emissions reduction by 2030 (against the 2011-12 baseline), net zero by 2035, and drawdown ('negative emissions') by 2040. We have actions on corporate and community emissions to meet this target. Many of these ambitious goals have been achieved, and some will be carried through to our next plan. Read our summary of achievements since 2020. Taking stock of the outcomes and achievements in the past years, a new climate emergency action plan is being developed. In June 2025, the **draft Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025-30** was endorsed by Council for public exhibition and feedback. The updated Action Plan is expected to be finalised within the first half of 2025-26.

Climate risk management

Scenario analysis

In the previous annual report, we mainly used Representative Concentration Pathway (RCP) 4.5 (medium emission scenario) and RCP 8.5 (high emission scenario) as the datasets provided through the Victorian Climate Projections 2019. Since then, the Victorian Government has expanded information to consider other scenarios, the SSP 1-2.6 low emission scenario and SSP 3 – 7.0 high emission scenario. RCP 8.5 now becomes a very high emission scenario.

We have not taken a view on which of the scenarios represent a plausible future. Instead, we recognise that different scenarios may be used for analysis of different risks. For example, in service assessments we used qualitative scenarios, and in RCP 4.5 and 8.5 on assessments of how climate change is already affecting and will affect community buildings. We reported on the findings of our building assessments in our last annual report. As a result of this work, we have created a rolling program of upgrades to improve resilience in buildings to start in the financial year 2025-26. For some of our larger buildings, the outcome of assessments will be considered in renewal plans according to the asset renewal schedules.

Risk identification and assessment

Climate-related risks are identified through our strategic and operational risk processes. We assess how climate impacts our operational risks. We have also developed risk tolerance statements for several key areas. We have conducted a materiality assessment, or have the potential to impact our financial sustainability, as well as impacts to the health and wellbeing of the community and the environment. The materiality assessment helps us prioritise key actions for progress monitoring by the CRIB.

Emerging risks are monitored through a combination of external publications, internal escalation via our Risk Management Committee, and active knowledge exchange with other local governments. This collaborative approach ensures we remain informed of evolving climate-related challenges and opportunities.

Currently, our focus is on physical climate risks, including extreme weather events and long-term changes in climate patterns that may affect infrastructure, service delivery, and community resilience. We acknowledge the importance of transition risks – such as policy, legal, and market shifts associated with the transition to a low-carbon economy – and are exploring ways to incorporate these into future assessments.

Risk management approach

Climate risks are managed through existing governance structures and risk mitigation strategies. Our enterprise risk framework supports the integration of climate considerations into decision-making processes, ensuring that climate-related risks are addressed alongside other strategic risks, including through our risk register. Where appropriate, risk tolerance statements guide our response to climate impacts, helping to align our actions with organisational priorities and community expectations.

Continuous Improvement

We are committed to enhancing our climate risk management capabilities. This includes refining our risk identification methods, expanding our focus to include transition risks, and applying scenario analysis in assessing the impact and likelihood of our operational risks to better understand long-term climate impacts.

The scenario analysis can be complemented by our assessment of hazards, exposure, and vulnerability in Merri-bek that has been completed in June 2025. This work can help us to have an integrated approach to addressing risks. Ongoing collaboration with peer councils and sector experts supports our efforts to build resilience and adapt to a changing climate.

Metrics and targets

Climate risk strategy monitoring and evaluation

Council has developed the following qualitative progress scorecards against the 5 goals of the strategy. We assessed progress in June 2025 at the end of the implementation period of the Foundational Action Plan. We met all targets for 2025 and continue to work towards reaching 2030 targets.

Goal	Progress scorecard scale and Impact Indicators	2021 baseline	2023 rating	2025 target and rating	2030 target
Goal 1: By 2025, Council has iterative risk management, reporting and decision-making processes in place to manage climate-related risk to assets, service delivery, finances, and liabilities.	**Progress scorecard** Beginning to build capacity: No information available to officers on climate risks in the municipality. Emerging capacity: Information provided, training delivered. Establishing capacity: Information is used in risk management processes and service planning. Consolidating capacity: Climate risk and resilience is well integrated into strategies, policies, and planning. Succeeding and obtaining resilience benefits: Beyond integration into policies, robust climate risk and resilience integration into operational processes, resulting in more robust decision-making (assessed by CRIB).	Emerging capacity	Establishing capacity	Consolidating Capacity	Succeeding and obtaining resilience benefits
Goal 2: By 2030, Council has improved the ability of its infrastructure, open spaces and natural environments to avoid, withstand and recover from climate impacts,	**Progress scorecard** Beginning to build capacity: No initiatives and investment in understanding climate impacts to infrastructure, open spaces, and natural environments. Emerging capacity: Infrastructure vulnerability assessments are conducted to understand climate impacts. Establishing capacity: Some trial works (upgrades and refurbishment) delivered to improve building and infrastructure performance to satisfactory service levels for high-risk buildings and infrastructure.	Beginning to build capacity	Emerging capacity	Establishing capacity	Succeeding and obtaining resilience benefits

while continuing to provide for community wellbeing, amenity and ecosystem services.	Consolidating capacity: Council has developed a work program to improve resilience in built environment and open space and environment. Succeeding and obtaining resilience benefits: Processes and systems are in place to address climate risk in capital works delivery of investments into infrastructure, open spaces, and natural environments.				
Goal 3: By 2030, Council services are resilient to climate impacts such that we can support our community through the shocks and stressors associated with climate change.	**Progress scorecard** Beginning to build capacity: No Council initiatives and investment in understanding climate impacts to services. Emerging capacity: Service assessments for a sample of core services are conducted. Establishing capacity: Service assessments and planning for an expanded number of core services are conducted. Consolidating capacity: Recommendations from assessments are delivered through operational plans. Succeeding and obtaining resilience benefits: Services are reporting high adaptive capacity (using checklist developed by Victorian Climate Resilient Councils).	Beginning to build capacity	Emerging capacity	Establishing capacity	Succeeding and obtaining resilience benefits
Goal 4: By 2030, Merri-bek residents and businesses have access to support and information from Council to take meaningful action to adapt and build resilience to climate change.	**Progress scorecard** Beginning to build capacity: No initiatives or partnerships related to climate. Emerging capacity: Baseline community adaptive capacity is assessed. Establishing capacity: Opportunities for information sharing and support are mapped out. Consolidating capacity: Community and businesses informed on climate risks and adaptation actions. Succeeding and obtaining resilience benefits: Community and business have uptake of adaptation actions.	Beginning to build capacity	Emerging capacity	Establishing capacity	Succeeding and obtaining resilience benefits.

Goal 5: By 2030, Council collaborates with and influences a range of private, community and public sector partners to drive adaptation and build climate resilience in Merri-bek.	**Progress scorecard** Beginning to build capacity: Council does not work with partners to drive adaptation and resilience. Emerging capacity: Council participates in networks to coordinate, share information, and showcase work of Merri-bek. Establishing capacity: Council collaborates with partners in projects that result in shared outputs. Consolidating capacity: Partnerships are delivering tangible outcomes in two out of the four areas: advocacy, grants and partnerships, procurement, and private developments. Succeeding and obtaining resilience benefits: Partnerships are delivering tangible outcomes in four out of the four areas: advocacy, grants and partnerships, procurement, and private developments. Partnerships are delivering tangible benefits or advocacy positions are adopted by relevant authorities. All gold projects consider climate risk in their design and procurement. Service provider networks report high adaptive capacity. Measures to ensure improved planning permit compliance are effective resulting in % increase in compliance.	Emerging capacity	Establishing capacity	Consolidating capacity	Succeeding and obtaining resilience benefits

A suite of 22 indicators was also developed or linked to the Climate Risk Strategy relating to risk management, adaptive capacity, service performance, integrated water management, and others. Some of the same applicable indicators from the Council Action Plan were used to avoid duplication (for example: percentage of tree canopy cover, capacity of water harvesting systems for re-use and irrigation, and area of catchment treated by large-scale water sensitive urban design approaches). The status update of the 2024-25 indicators will be provided in the next annual report.

Council emissions 2023-24 pending certification

For Council (corporate/operational) emissions, we have adopted a highly ambitious target range of between 80% and 100% reduction by 2030 (precluding offsets, against 2011-12 baseline).

Council achieved a 63% reduction in carbon emissions by 2023-24 compared to baseline. This reduction was achieved through a range of initiatives including purchasing electricity backed by renewable energy certificates (Melbourne Renewable Energy Project), purchase of electric vehicles, electrification of heating and street lighting upgrades.

Council emissions reporting (Scope 1, Scope 2, and selected Scope 3 categories) has been certified by Climate Active most recently in 2022-23. Data is available for 2023-24 but this is currently going through certification and is therefore subject to change. Emissions in 2023-24 were 7,795 tCO2e, an increase of 5.5% (+407 tCO2e) compared to 2022-23. This increase was due to a higher number of road-construction projects and slightly higher diesel consumption by Council's waste contractor. Council currently achieves carbon neutrality through the purchase of offsets, while continuing to pursue ambitious carbon targets.

Key carbon reduction initiatives in 2024-25 were the electrification of Fawkner Leisure Centre as well as six small Council sites. Fawkner Leisure Centre is the first aquatic centre in Victoria to become all-electric through refurbishment. In addition, a feasibility study and successful grant application were prepared for the electrification of Oak Park Sports and Aquatic Centre (OPSAC). Works are scheduled to take place over winter 2026. Electrification of OPSAC is modelled to reduce annual corporate emissions by 380 tCO2e, or 5% of 2023-24 emission.

Council will continue to investigate reporting and offsetting solutions, work with neighbouring councils to develop possible alternatives, and monitor market developments for improved options over time.

Community emissions – 2022-23

In 2021 Council increased our carbon targets ambitions. The updated target for the Merri-bek community is to achieve 75% emissions reduction by 2030 (against 2011-12 baseline), net zero by 2035 and drawdown ('negative emissions') by 2040. As figure 1 below highlights, the latest community emissions profile (2022-23) reflects 30% emissions reduction since the baseline year.

The latest data on community emissions are captured in figure 2 below for financial year 2022–23. There is usually a two-year time lag in the reporting to account for the time when the data sets become available and when they can be collected, analysed, reviewed and then shared. Our major emissions source is electricity consumption, due to the community's scale of population and commercial activity. The second largest source of emissions is gas consumption.

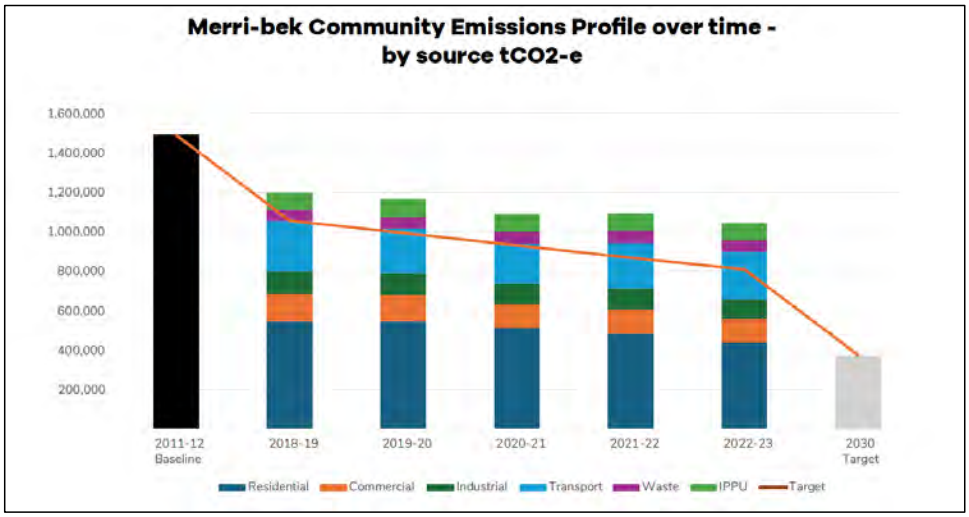


Figure 1. Snapshot Tool estimate of 2022-23 Merri-bek Community Emissions over time compared to baseline.

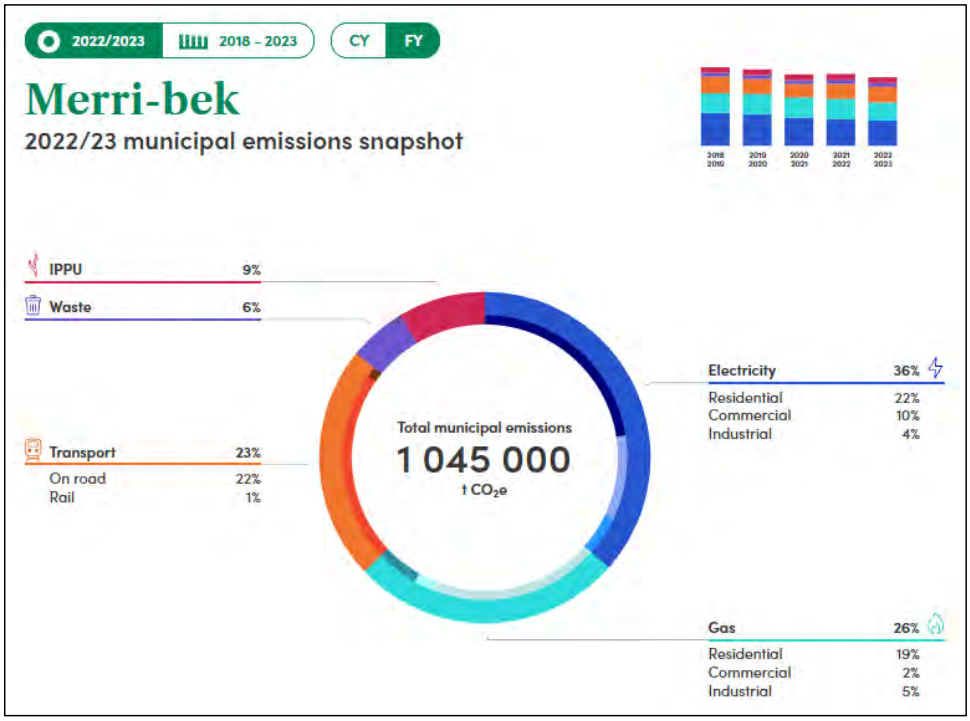


Figure 2. Estimate of 2022-23 Merri-bek Community Emissions.

Statutory information

Community engagement

Council is committed to engaging with our communities on decisions that affect them.

We continued to improve the process for engagement through the Community Engagement Policy and Implementation Plan, with the ongoing development of a digital engagement framework, and a training program to help council staff better engage with children and young people.

In 2024-25 Council carried out more than 261 planned engagement processes.

Council also engaged with the community on the following key projects:

- *Dog Walking in Merri-bek*
- *A new Coburg Library and Piazza*
- *Coburg North Sports Hub Masterplan*
- *Streets for People Plan*
- *Community Budget ideas*
- *Rainbow crossings*

Legislative environment

We operate and deliver services under, and in accordance with, more than 80 different pieces of Victorian primary legislation and the regulations made under those Acts.

Many sections of this report address specific legislation, including the:

- *Domestic Animals Act 1994*
- *Road Management Act 2014*
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008.*

We have highlighted key Acts below.

Local Government Act

Community vision, council plan, asset plan

In October 2021, we adopted our Community Vision 2021-31 and Council Plan 2021-25, which were guided by our deliberative engagement practices.

The community vision and council plan were major outputs of the Imagine Merri-bek program. Imagine Merri-bek was a 4-stage engagement program to develop the Community Vision 2021-31, and to inform the development of the following Council documents:

- 4-year Council Plan, including the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan
- 10-year Financial Plan
- 10-year Asset Plan, including the Community Infrastructure Plan.

The Council Plan 2021-25 was informed by current services delivered to the community, examining opportunities and challenges, evaluating existing Council strategies and projects and ensuring that identified legislative requirements (such as the *Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, *Climate Change Act 2017* and *Gender Equality Act 2020*) were considered for incorporation.

A Council Action Plan 2024-25 was also adopted to support the implementation of the Council Plan 2021-25 for the third financial year of the 4-year period. It identified the priority actions for delivering the strategies and major initiatives contained in the Council Plan 2021-25.

On 23 June 2022, Council adopted its Asset Plan 2022-32. The 10-year plan outlines maintenance, renewal, expansion, acquisition, disposal and decommissioning of assets for which Council is responsible and covers transport infrastructure (roads, footpaths, bike paths and bridges), community and civic facilities (community centres, Council offices, sporting pavilions), stormwater infrastructure (drainage pits and pipes) and open space (playgrounds, reserves and sporting fields).

Chief Executive Officer employment and remuneration policy

To meet our legislative obligations, Council reviewed its Chief Executive Officer Employment and Remuneration Matters Policy on 12 March 2025.

This policy reinforces Council's commitment to good governance practices and provides a consistent, fair, and transparent framework for employment matters relating to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) including recruitment, contract terms, performance monitoring and annual review.

This policy is a requirement of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) and outlines the Council's approach to managing the employment cycle of its CEO.

Governance rules

Council reviewed the Governance Rules as adopted on 10 April 2024, making amendments to sections relating to urgent business and keeping of minutes.

Community members were invited to submit written feedback on the revised Governance Rules between 14 and 28 April 2025. The updated Governance Rules were adopted at the 14 May 2025 Council meeting.

Planning and Environment Act 1987

The *Planning and Environment Act 1987* provides the legal framework and governs the processes involved in determining what land can be used for (for example: open space, industry, homes). It also governs the processes for permits to develop certain land. During 2024-25, there were no significant changes to this legislation.

Freedom of Information Act 1982

The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* provides the public with a right of access to government documents. This includes documents held by Council. During 2023-24, there were no significant changes to this legislation.

Domestic Animals Act 1994

Domestic Animal Management Plan

The *Domestic Animals Act 1994* requires all councils in Victoria to develop a domestic animal management plan. This plan must outline Council services, programs and policies established to address the administration of the Act and Council's management of cat and dog issues in the community. This plan is the overarching strategic document relating to domestic animals and is prepared at 4-year intervals. It sets out:

- the method we use for evaluating whether the animal control services provided are effective and achieve the requirements under the Act and Regulations
- training programs for authorised officers
- programs to promote and encourage responsible pet ownership and compliance with relevant legislation and associated codes of practice
- programs, services and strategies to address 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; minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals; ensure that dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs are compliant with the Act and Regulations
- to ensure that domestic animal businesses are complying with the Act, the Regulations and the related Code of Practice.

The Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-25 was formally adopted on 10 November 2021.

Road Management Plan

The *Road Management Act 2004* requires each council to review its road management plan by 31 October in the year following a general election.

The purpose of the plan is to demonstrate that Council, as the road authority, is responsibly managing all the road assets under its control and specifies the standards and inspection regimes required to manage civil liability, which are reasonable and achievable.

The Road Management Plan 2021 was adopted by Council on 13 October 2021.

Contracts

Council adopted a revised Procurement Policy on 11 June 2025 that amended the public tender threshold to $350,000 (including GST), however any tender processes commenced prior to this had a public tender threshold of $300,000 (including GST).

At the Council meeting on 13 October 2021, Council considered a review of the Instrument of Delegation to the Chief Executive Officer, and resolved on a new Instrument of Delegation.

The delegation allowed for the approval of contract variations to an amount equal to 5% above $700,000 if the original contract was awarded under delegation by the CEO, or 5% of the total contract value if the original contract had been awarded via Council resolution.

In November 2021, the Instrument of Delegation was prepared by staff, reviewed, and presented to the CEO and Mayor for execution (signing and sealing). The prepared instrument unfortunately included an administrative error, of specifying 20% instead of 5% as the delegated limit for contract variations. Council became aware of this error in mid-September 2024. In the meantime, staff had

unknowingly referred to the executed Instrument of Delegation ever since its execution, unaware that it contained an error in relation to contract variations. As a result, five contract variations were incorrectly approved in the period since November 2021.

The remedial actions put in place to rectify this situation include:

- Reporting of the matter to the Local Government Inspectorate, initially on 11 September 2024 and with more detail following
- Thorough investigation of all contract variations since October 2021 to identify erroneously executed contract variations (this review identified issues with five contract variations, three of which are completed contracts and two of which are still in progress)
- Internal review of what occurred in October-November 2021, which confirmed this was a one-time human error (process improvements have been implemented since 2021 intended to prevent such errors occurring into the future)
- Execution of a corrected Instrument of Delegation on 16 September 2024, which properly reflects the 13 October 2021 resolution
- Public reporting of these matters through a Council report 9 October 2024 and inclusion in this annual report.

The below table includes a list of all contracts entered into with a value above the public tender threshold amount from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025. In summary:

- 34 contracts above the public tender threshold were awarded (contracts signed) in 2024-25
- A further 33 contracts have been advertised under the public tender process or expression of interest in 2024-25, however have not yet been awarded.

Public tenders awarded within the 2024-25 financial year

Contact name	Date published	Contract finalised
Road Reconstruction and Drainage Improvement Work at South Street, Hadfield	13/07/2024	22/09/2024
Supply and Install of Gym Equipment for Council's Aquatic & Leisure Centres	6/04/2024	30/10/2024
Road Reconstruction – Bain Avenue, Coburg North (Plaisted Street to Boundary Road)	29/06/2024	30/10/2024
Wilson Avenue Streetscape Improvement	18/05/2024	31/10/2024
Road Reconstruction - Patterson Street Brunswick (Tinning Street to Albion Street)	13/07/2024	11/11/2024
Road Rehabilitation at Peterson Ave Coburg North (between Jackson Parade and Mehegan Avenue)	20/07/2024	10/11/2024
Hadfield Depot Internal Rectification Works	27/07/2024	04/11/2024
Clifton Park Synthetic Soccer Pitch Replacement Project	10/08/2024	11/11/2024
Revitalising Coburg: Strategic Property Advisory Services	5/06/2024	12/12/2024
Audit and Maintenance of Essential Safety Measures for Council Facilities	2/12/2023	18/12/2024
End of Trip Facility - Construction at Coburg Civic Centre	8/06/2024	19/12/2024
Richards Reserve Soccer Field Upgrade Works	10/08/2024	31/12/2024
Gutter Cleaning Services	14/09/2024	11/06/2025
Road Reconstruction - Winn Grove, Fawkner (Major Road and Ledger Avenue	21/09/2024	19/11/2024
Shore Reserve Pavilion Upgrade (Modular)	28/09/2024	14/02/2025
Road Reconstruction – Tyson Street, Fawkner (Jukes Road to Denys Street)	19/10/2024	18/12/2024
Road Reconstruction - Peveril Street, Brunswick	19/10/2024	24/01/2025
Drainage Improvement - Sim Crescent and Victoria Street, Oak Park	26/10/2024	17/03/2025
Provision of General and Specialist Tree Services	16/11/2024	19/05/2025
Drainage Improvement Works at Gowanbrae Drive and Birk Court, Gowanbrae	23/11/2024	20/01/2025
Road Reconstruction - De Carle Street, Brunswick	23/11/2024	27/02/2025
Road Reconstruction - Montifore Street, Coburg	23/11/2024	17/03/2025
Revitalising Coburg Precinct Framework	27/11/2024	04/03/2025
Road Rehabilitation - Alva Grove	1/02/2025	01/04/2025
Elms Court Reserve Gowanbrae - Flood Mitigation works	8/02/2025	12/05/2025
Raeburn Reserve Cricket Nets	19/02/2025	02/05/2025
Glass Collections, Glass Processing and Mixed Recycling Processing (Collab M9)	2/11/2023 - Merri-bek opted-in 2025	15/05/2025
Road Reconstruction - Fowler Street, Coburg (Walsh to Laneway)	15/03/2025	24/06/2025
Permanent Shared Zone Installation - Albert Street and Victoria Street Brunswick East at Fleming Park	15/03/2025	11/06/2025
Kent Road Raised Pedestrian Crossing	15/03/2025	25/05/2025
Brunswick Baths - Renewal Works	22/02/2025	27/06/2025
Electrification of Oak Park Sports and Aquatic Precinct (OPSAP)	10/05/2025	Cancelled

In compliance with the Procurement Policy's provision for exemption from the general publicly advertised tender and quotations, Council entered three other contracts valued at $300,000 or more for goods or services without engaging in a competitive process.

Disability access and inclusion plan

During 2024-25, Council continued to deliver actions to remove barriers and discrimination experienced by people with disabilities. These actions sit under the five key areas of the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2022-26.

Equal access to all areas of community life

- Installed Council's first wheelchair-accessible electric vehicle charging station, at Russell Street carpark in Coburg.
- Conducted multiple disability access audits at activity centres, including a major access audit of Brunswick Activity Centre.
- Developed guidelines for businesses to safely use temporary step ramps.
- Created an 'Access Map' website. This features a map of Merri-bek with locations and accessibility descriptions of all major Council buildings and facilities.
- Implemented third year of the Arts Merri-bek Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2022-26.
- Increased budget for footpath and kerb ramp upgrades.
- Committed a new allocation of budget for Neighbourhood House accessibility upgrades. Projects to start in 2025-26.
- Reviewed Council's hearing loop systems and made recommendations to upgrade to new system.
- Expanded sensory friendly hours at Coburg Library.

Employment, education and economic security

- Delivered a 9-month work experience program for two students with mild intellectual disabilities in partnership with Kangan Bendigo TAFE.
- Developed a Workplace Adjustment Policy
- Obtained data relating to staff with disability – number of staff with disability, and type of disability.
- Made job application process at Council more accessible.
- Delivered training to hiring managers about recruiting people with disabilities and supporting staff with disabilities.
- Promoted Council job advertisements to local Disability Employment Services.
- Maintained close working relationship with several local Disability Employment Services.

Inclusion and participation in the community

- Hosted a large social dance event, 'Pyjama Party', at Coburg Town Hall, in collaboration with Holstep Health, for over 150 residents of Supported Residential Services.
- Hosted multiple events for International Day of People with Disability, including major event at Glenroy Hub with over 100 people with disabilities in attendance.
- Delivered a year-long free music-making and art-making program for people with disabilities in collaboration with 'Out Hear Art Collective'.
- Hosted multiple inclusive Storytime sessions at Merri-bek's libraries with a disability focus.
- Continued partnership with Sport4All, a program established by Dylan Alcott to increase sport participation for people with disabilities. A Sport4All staff member is based at Council.
- In partnership with Sport4All, hosted a Come 'n' Try day at Coburg Basketball Stadium for young people aged 6-18.

- Delivered a third consecutive year of 'The Art Connection' program, which is a free art program at Coburg and Glenroy libraries for people with disabilities.
- Supported 4 community organisations to apply for Council's community grants to fund major infrastructure projects to improve the accessibility of their facilities.
- Convened the Merri-bek Disability Reference Group.
- Convened the Merri-bek Disability Service Provider Network.
- Chaired the Northern Metro Local Government Disability Planners' Network.
- Leadership committee member of the Victorian Local Government Disability Planners Network.

Changing attitudes and practices that lead to discrimination

- Delivered disability related training for staff including: deaf awareness training; disability awareness training; Mental Health Awareness in the Workplace training; Mental Health First Aid.
- Provided advice and responded to more than 500 internal and external enquiries and complaints relating to disability.
- Reviewed the accessibility of Council's Customer Service systems.
- Customer Service team achieved 'Communication Access' accreditation.
- Recruited an Auslan-proficient staff member to Council's Language Aid program.
- Advocated for several human rights issues for people with disabilities including: increasing wages for people with disabilities in sheltered workshops; increasing disability awareness among building surveyors and building designers; better treatment of neurodivergent people in assessment, health and education settings; equal access to public transport.
- Supported the advocacy for accessible tram stops along Sydney Road through public rallies, petitions, public notices, promotional resources and media representation.
- Convened internal bi-monthly meetings made up of staff across Council to identify, review and remove physical access barriers in Merri-bek.
- All major policies and strategies reviewed in 2024-25 have incorporated access and inclusion as main priorities.
- Celebrated the winner and nominees of Council's Community Award for the category of 'Access and Inclusion'.
- Established an internal working group, The LAB, to identify, review and remove physical access barriers in Merri-bek.

Supporting health, wellbeing and safety

- Supported the YMCA to expand the Attendant Support Initiative (ASI) program to assist more people with disabilities access Merri-bek's Aquatic and Leisure Centres.
- Provided regular in-home and community support services for over 170 residents with disabilities under the age of 65. The services included personal care, general home care, assisted shopping, respite, delivered meals, community transport and social support groups.
- More than 70 unpaid carers accessed Council's Support for Carers program, which offers a range of support services for people who provide unpaid care for a loved one.

Domestic animal management

We prepare a domestic animal management plan every four years. This is a requirement of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the 'Act').

We endorsed our Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021–25 on 10 November 2021. It was submitted to the Victorian Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions on 15 November 2021. The plan was developed through a sector-leading partnership with two neighbouring councils, Darebin and Whittlesea.

Key objectives in the plan include:

- developing programs to promote and encourage responsible pet ownership and compliance with legislation
- educating the community on topics related to animal management
- increasing registration and identification of domestic cats and dogs
- ensuring animal management officers have appropriate training
- identifying dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs in the municipality to ensure they are kept in accordance with the Act and relevant regulations
- minimising the risk of dog attacks
- addressing overpopulation rates
- ensuring domestic animal businesses comply with legislation reducing any nuisance caused by cats and dogs.

Implementation of the plan is spread across 4 years with specific actions planned for each year. As required under the Act, a progress report on the actions is provided to Council in December each year.

Highlights of the actions delivered during the 2024-25 financial period included:

- desexing 147 cats to address overpopulation
- partnering with The Vet Project, a mobile vet clinic that performs cat desexing and other animal care for residents who may not otherwise have access to these services
- caring for 1830 Merri-bek animals at the wat djerring Animal Facility (not inclusive of May and June data)
- continuing our cat desexing program, including the extension to non-concession cardholders for a co-payment of $50 to receive desexing, microchipping, first year registration free (for cats not already registered) and assistance with transport to and from the clinic if required
- receiving a high number of animal registrations (8607 cats and 13,722 dogs in the April 2024 to April 2025 registration year), following a greater focus on education, follow up of registrations, the desexing program and work of Council staff in administering the Act and delivering actions in the DAMP 2021-25.

Food Act ministerial directions

In accordance with section 7E of the *Food Act 1984*, there were no ministerial directions received by Merri-bek City Council during the 2024-25 financial year.

Road Management Act ministerial directions

In accordance with section 22 of the *Road Management Act 2004*, we must publish a copy or summary of any ministerial direction in our annual report. We did not receive any ministerial directions in 2024-25.

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities commitment

The *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (the Act) sets out the basic rights, freedoms and responsibilities of all people in Victoria.

The charter requires governments, local councils and other public authorities to consider human rights when they:

- make laws
- develop policies
- provide services.

Beyond compliance, Council takes a proactive approach to its commitment to the charter, promoting a culture of human rights across the organisation.

Managing Human Rights risk at Council

Council actively manages the medium-rated risk of breaching the Human Rights of workers or community members, particularly under the Act. Key causes include lack of staff awareness, poor consultation, inaccessible infrastructure, and insufficient leadership or complaint processes. Consequences range from legal sanctions and reputational damage to negative impacts on staff and community wellbeing.

To mitigate this risk, Council has implemented a range of effective controls, including policies, plans, training, and inclusive governance structures that embed human rights principles into everyday practice.

Key policies, plans and commitments

- Moreland Human Rights Policy 2016-26
- Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2022-26 (DAIP)
- First People's Employment Plan 2022-25
- Gender Equality Action Plan 2022-25
- Social Cohesion Plan
- Child Safe Policy
- Child Safe Statement of Commitment
- Statement of Commitment to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in Moreland
- Gender Equality Statement of Commitment

Training and implementation

- Human Rights Charter Assessment Training (via Corporate Training Calendar)
- Mandatory Human Rights online learning module for staff
- Human Rights Implementation Plan
- Gender Impact Assessments

Advisory and reference groups

Council supports a range of Advisory Committees and Reference Groups that guide the Human Rights Policy and related strategies, with over 97 community members contributing their diverse lived experiences:

- First Nations Advisory Committee – 8 members
- Human Rights and Inclusion Advisory Committee – 12 members
- LGBTQIA+ Reference Group – 10 members
- Gender Equality Reference Group – 7 members
- Environmental Sustainability Advisory Group – 14 members
- Disability Reference Group – 9 members
- Heritage and Local History Reference Group – 8 members
- Arts Advisory Group – up to 15 members
- Affordable Housing Advisory Committee – 8 members
- Older Persons (Age-Friendly) Reference Group – 10 members

Human Rights training at Council

Council delivers a wide range of training programs aligned with its Human Rights Policy, ensuring staff are well-equipped to uphold and promote human rights in all areas of service and engagement. These sessions support a culture of inclusion, respect, and equity across the organisation and community.

Training topics have included:

- Charter of Human Rights
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Inclusion and Cultural Safety
- Active Bystander Training
- Disability Awareness Training
- Disability Awareness in the Workplace
- Disability Confidence for HR Professionals
- Disability Engagement Training
- Deaf Awareness Training
- Introduction to Gender and Sexuality 101

In total, staff have participated almost 2000 times in these sessions, demonstrating Council's strong commitment to building a rights-based and inclusive workplace.

We continue to convene a range of local service provider and community networks to support the capacity, reach and good governance of community organisations that target priority groups, including:

- Multicultural Settlement Services Network
- Fawkner and Glenroy Services Provider Networks
- Merri-bek Disability Service Provider Network
- Family Violence Network
- Hume Merri-bek Volunteer Network
- Merri-bek LGBTIQA+ Service Provider Network.

These measures ensure Council's compliance with human rights legislation and foster a culture of inclusion, accessibility, and respect across the organisation and community.

New or revised policies, strategies, plans and programs considered human rights in line with charter responsibilities and gender equality in line with the *Gender Equality Act 2020*.

A key goal of our human rights policy is to advance inclusion, social cohesion and respect in the community. We held celebratory and awareness-raising events for significant dates including International Women's Day, Refugee Week, Cultural Diversity Week, International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT), Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC, 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence and International Day for People with a Disability.

Social cohesion

Through its Social Cohesion Plan 2020-25, Council continued to fund the Merri-bek Democracy Lab, a partnership between Council and The Public Value Studio. The Lab was developed with the specific aim of strengthening civic participation and community-led action in Merri-bek. In 2025, 19 participants representative of Merri-bek's diversity and residing in different suburbs, participated in The Lab. To further civic participation in Merri-bek, the Seeds of Change project was implemented with 6 participants showcasing their ideas for finding inclusive solutions to Merri-bek's local issues.

Under the economic participation theme, the Refugee and Migrant Business Development Series – a 5-part business growth program – was successfully delivered from Glenroy Community Hub. The series offered expert-led sessions focused on developing a business mindset, networking, and impactful business practices, aimed at supporting local entrepreneurs, small business owners, and aspiring founders in Merri-bek. More than 80 people participated in these workshops.

The Peoples' Report project was delivered, which explored community-led solutions for addressing discrimination. This innovative initiative recruited, trained and supported 5 local individuals to develop and implement a community engagement process within Merri-bek's diverse communities. The findings from this project will contribute to Council's work in the anti-racism space.

The Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre (ASWC) in Brunswick received funding to work with a consumer-led Advisory Group and hosted Refugee Week Party 2025.

Council supported Merri-bek Interfaith Network to host the World Interfaith Harmony Week event at the Glenroy Hub on Sunday 9 February. This event brought together 120 people from diverse faith groups showcasing local talents in a celebration of peace and community diversity.

Merri-bek City Council, along with Hume, Darebin, and Whittlesea Councils, launched an 'Anti-racism Support Booklet' in March to mark the UN International Day for the Elimination of Racism. The booklet will help residents in Melbourne's northern suburbs to recognise, report, and address racism. It offers guidance on making complaints and accessing support, is available in multiple languages, and aims to raise awareness, assist victims, and build a more inclusive community by simplifying reporting processes. The support booklet, along with posters and postcards, is now available for distribution.

First Nations engagement and cultural consultation

The First Nations Advisory Committee met seven times in 2024-25. Co-chaired by the First Nations community Co-Chair, the committee recommended the development of the Merri-bek Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy, which was endorsed by Council in May 2025. It also advocated for a dedicated First Nations consultation process for the new Council Plan.

In August 2024, Council endorsed a recommendation from the First Nations Advisory Committee to strengthen First Nations participation in Council decision-making. As part of this, Council agreed to amend Governance Rule 3.9.14 by introducing a new clause requiring that any Notice of Motion relating to First Nations affairs be referred to the First Nations Advisory Committee before being considered at a Council meeting. This change will aim to provide input into matters impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities prior to formal debate and decision-making.

The committee continued to advocate for the transfer of the Ballerrt Mooroop site to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and recommended that Council allocate $500,000 in matching funds in the 2025-26 budget.

In 2024–25, Council officers continued monthly consultations with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders. Over the past 12 months, our monthly consultations with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders have focused on a wide range of culturally significant and community-oriented themes. These included major urban development projects such as the Coburg Bluestone Restoration and Coburg North Sports Hub Masterplan, alongside initiatives to embed First Nations perspectives in public art, lighting, and sustainability programs. Elders were consulted on culturally sensitive land use, the Council Plan development process, and the First Peoples Employment Plan.

Engagement also covered storytelling and literacy initiatives, including the Indigenous Literacy Fund and the Coburg Stories Projection Series, as well as environmental and cultural heritage matters like the Moonee Ponds Creek walk and the care of the 'Indigenous Garden' artwork.

The consultations consistently supported meaningful First Nations representation in planning, arts, and community wellbeing, while strengthening relationships and ensuring respectful collaboration across Council departments.

Some notable achievements because of this engagement include:

- Adoption of the name Balam Balam Arts Centre in Brunswick. Balam Balam, meaning butterfly in Woi-wurrung language, was suggested by a community member and approved by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.
- Inclusion of a statement from the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation in Merri-bek's first Circular Economy Strategy – Towards a Zero Waste Merri-bek, recognising circular practices as part of First Nations cultures.
- Significant Traditional Owner input into the Coburg Conversation First Nations Engagement Insights Report, which will inform the future development of central Coburg.
- Continued engagement with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Policy and Partnerships Sub-Committee, including beginning formal discussions on a partnership agreement with Council.

Ballerrt Mooroop Annual Plan update – June 2025

Significant progress has been made on the development of the Ballerrt Mooroop site in Glenroy, a culturally important location on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country. Council and the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation continue to collaborate closely, with work underway to support the business case and long-term planning. This includes a site masterplan, design review, and culturally appropriate signage and presentation materials.

A major milestone was the completion of the Ballerrt Mooroop History Study, which documents the site's cultural, educational, and social significance through research and interviews with community members.

On Sunday 25 May 2025, more than 350 people gathered at the Ballerrt Mooroop site to celebrate culture, community and connection to Country ahead of National Reconciliation Week. The event featured a Welcome to Country, Djirri Djirri dance performance, smoking ceremony, children's activities and a free BBQ. One attendee said, "There was a good feeling from the community spirit – it felt like we were part of something bigger."

Gender equality and family violence prevention

Implementation of Gender Impact Assessments this year focused on commissioning an external review of Council's process and templates and strengthening our approach to be more collaborative.

Council's first Gender Equality Action Plan has now finished, with 24 action items marked as complete, 2 as ongoing, 11 in progress and 3 voided. Progress includes:

- Introducing paid superannuation for people on parental leave.
- A user-focused update of the Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedure, the introduction of a new, identified reporting channel within Elumina, a plain language page on the intranet, and a comprehensive communications campaign including leader-led conversations.
- Updates to staff demographic questions to make them safer and more inclusive, following staff consultations.
- The creation of an organisational diversity and inclusion calendar with an ongoing commitment to hosting internal events that raise awareness and capability and create opportunities for connection.
- The creation of a Women and Gender Diverse Network for women and gender diverse people who work in male-dominated, field-based roles.
- The creation of a mechanism allowing ongoing pay gap reporting and analysis.

Examples of collaborations with community partners included Council's Merri-bek Walk against Family Violence around Coburg Lake on 29 October 2024 as part of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. This walk was attended by around 100 staff from Council and community organisations, as well as community members. It provided an opportunity for Council-funded community partners Dads Group and Northern Community Legal Centre to promote their community prevention projects in key settings – early years and diverse communities.

Our International Women's Day event on 5 March had the theme 'Equal Opportunities for Women in Sport', with keynote speaker Chyloe Kurdas and panellists from Council's Advancing Women's Sports Participation Network. It was a successful event with around 110 people in attendance and increased interest in Council's work with the Advancing Women in Sport Participation Network. We also continued to support Council teams as well as community groups and organisations regarding their gender equality and family violence prevention initiatives in key settings, including sport and recreation, early years, youth/education and diverse communities.

LGBTIQA+ communities

We continue to build capacity and remove barriers for LGBTIQA+ people with the aim of reducing discrimination within Merri-bek communities. Over the last 12 months, we have seen a significant increase in Council programs and services for LGBTIQA+ people across all life stages. We have also seen relationships and partnerships with local LGBTIQA+ organisations flourish.

Informed by Council's LGBTIQA+ Action plan, several events and programs have taken place over the past year, with a focus on celebrating, capacity building and showcasing local LGBTIQA+ communities. Importantly, many of these programs have taken an intersectional lens to the community to better support groups that may face additional systemic challenges.

Highlights have included:

- *Lee's Café* – intergenerational social support series for LGBTIQA+ people of all ages at Glenroy Library
- *MY Rainbow* – an ongoing young queers social and peer-lead program
- Public poster campaign for Trans Awareness Week 2024 showcasing local trans and gender diverse artists
- *Queer Histories/Queer Futures* – audio history tour of significant LGBTIQA+ locations in Merri-bek
- A parenting workshop for families with gender-diverse children
- IDAHOBIT Allyship training to increase the skills and knowledge of allies in the community.

Our LGBTIQA+ reference group provided constructive advice and guidance to Council throughout the group's term to ensure LGBTIQA+ voices are heard on Council programs, strategies and funding decisions. A significant piece of work was the advice provided on Council's new Public Toilet principles, which resulted in safe and accessible toilets for trans, gender diverse and LGBTIQA+ people in new public toilet builds, including the new semi-automatic toilet at Shore Reserve, Pascoe Vale South and refurbished toilets at Brearley Reserve, Pascoe Vale South and Temple Park, Brunswick.

Developing safe Council services for LGBTIQA+ people has also been vital. Merri-bek's Home Support team undertook LGBTIQA+ inclusion training to develop safe practices for older members of the community. This was a significant milestone towards our all-life stages commitment in the LGBTIQA+ action plan.

Over the last year we have strengthened our relationships with local LGBTIQA+ service providers. This has been a significant positive step forward and we hope that these partnerships will continue to grow.

Initiatives included:

- A research project in collaboration with *Many Coloured Skies* and Darebin City Council was commissioned to explore service gaps in supporting LGBTIQA+ people from asylum seeker, refugee and migrant backgrounds
- Council partnered with *Transgender Victoria* to host the 2025 Trans and Gender Diverse job fair at Brunswick Town Hall. Merri-bek also had a stall at the event.
- Provided grant assistance, letters of support and brokering to numerous other grassroots LGBTIQA+ groups and individuals.

Global and national political dialogue on the rights and autonomy of LGBTIQA+ people has been felt at a local level in Merri-bek. This remains an ongoing challenge in the portfolio. We continue to explore the best way to respond and advocate for LGBTIQA+ communities during and beyond these events. Activities this year have included submissions, public campaigns and internal advocacy.

Merri-bek has a diverse, growing and proud LGBTIQA+ community. However, work continues to reduce discrimination faced by LGBTIQA+ people in a range of social, family and community settings. We remain committed to working towards ending discrimination through the LGBTIQA+ action plan and Human Rights Policy.

Older people and communities

Council continued to deliver initiatives under the Living and Ageing Well Framework to create inclusive, age-friendly communities.

We continued to strengthen the Age Well Navigation Program, Outdoor Help, and off-site exercise activities with older adults at seniors clubs.

We continued to deliver ageism and elder abuse awareness through activities such as commencing a portrait/storytelling campaign and intergenerational activities including partnering with Lively to deliver in-home social support. We continue to create more opportunities for civic participation, centring the voice of older adults, such as our active and engaged Older Persons Reference Group, which provided feedback and input into Open and Public Space initiatives, transport planning, and wellbeing initiatives. This has led to increased inclusion of the needs and aspirations of ageing residents across all areas of Council's work.

The Merri-bek Seniors Festival program included an array of engaging events celebrating older adults including outdoor walking events and 'We are One' multicultural performances, culminating in a joining of hands of residents, performers and staff singing and moving together in a show of community.

Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum

In 2024-25, the Mayoral and Councillor Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum advanced its national advocacy through the Back Your Neighbour (BYN) campaign, supported by over 40 councils and 90 community organisations. The campaign calls for fair work rights, access to essential services, and just review processes for asylum seekers.

A key highlight was the Taskforce's presence at the ALGA National General Assembly 2025, including a special morning tea and meetings with federal representatives such as Hon Julian Hill MP and Alicia Payne MP, with Merri-bek Mayor Helen Davidson part of the delegation. The Taskforce also endorsed events like Palm Sunday Walks and Big Walk 4 Refugees, and supported refugee resettlement through Community Refugee Sponsorship Australia.

People with disability

Our commitment to advancing disability access and inclusion in 2024-25 was demonstrated through multiple activities across 5 key areas in Merri-bek's Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2022-26. Please refer to page 66 for more information.

National Competition Policy annual statement of compliance

Council has an ongoing commitment to comply with the National Competition Policy and we are obligated to adhere to competitive neutrality principles.

During the 2024-25 financial year, Council complied with the requirements of the National Competition Policy and did not receive any complaints in relation to competitive neutrality.

Infrastructure and development contributions

We introduced a development contributions plan in 2015. In accordance with section 46GM and 46QD of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*— 'a council that is a collecting agency must prepare and give a report to the Minister for Planning on development contributions, with levies and works in kind'.

For 2024–25, the following information about development contributions is disclosed.

Table 1 – Total DCP levies received in 2024-25 financial year

DCP name and year approved	Levies received in 2024-25 financial year ($)
Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$447,440.84
Total	**$447,440.84**

Table 2 – DCP land, works, services or facilities accepted as works-in-kind in 2024-25 financial year

DCP name and year approved	Project ID	Project description	Item purpose	Project value ($)
Merri-bek DCP (2015)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total				**$0.00**

Table 3 – Total DCP contributions received and expended to date *(for DCPs approved after 1 June 2016)*

DCP name and year approved	Total levies received ($)	Total levies expended ($)	Total works-in-kind accepted ($)	Total DCP contributions received (levies and works-in-kind) ($)
Merri-bek DCP (Gazetted 10 September 2015)	$14,328,373.58	$12,783,037.23	$0.00	$14,328,373.58
Total	**$14,328,373.58**	**$12,783,037.23**	**$0.00**	**$14,328,373.58**

Table 4 – Land, works, services or facilities delivered in 2024-25 financial year from DCP levies collected

Project description	Project ID	DCP name and year approved	DCP fund expended ($)	Works-in-kind accepted ($)	Council's contribution ($)	Other contributions ($)	Total project expenditure ($)	Percentage of item delivered
Planning /Interest	PL01	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$99,495.27	-	-	-	$99,495.27	-
De Carle Street from Donald to Davies, Brunswick, Drainage Works	DR128N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$45,696.36	$0.00	$351,492.49	$0.00	$397,188.85	100%
Phoenix Street Dead End-Sydney Brunswick	RD0453	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$7,654.01	$0.00	$19,719.99	$0.00	$27,374.00	100%
Temple Park Public toilets 24 Gray Street, Brunswick	CF019	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$70,428.64	$0.00	$84,959.79	$0.00	$155,388.43	63%
Carnarvon Street from Blyth to Dorothy, Brunswick, Road Reconstruction	RD1281N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$41,586.71	$0.00	$387,265.11	$0.00	$428,851.82	100%
Carnarvon Street from Dorothy to Stewart, Brunswick, Road Reconstruction	RD1282N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$27,409.42	$0.00	$234,114.40	$0.00	$261,523.82	100%
Patterson Street from Tinning to Albion, Brunswick, Road Reconstruction	RD1285N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$43,477.02	$0.00	$225,286.34	$0.00	$268,763.36	88%
Peveril Street from Sydney to Cameron, Brunswick, Road Reconstruction	RD1286N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$45,367.32	$0.00	$556,820.20	$0.00	$602,187.52	100%
Brunswick Activity Centre Upgrade Works - Wilson Ave, Brunswick, Streetscape Reconstruction	RD1287N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$236,288.13	$0.00	$1,173,131.34	$0.00	$1,409,419.47	85%
Alice Street from Victoria to Bell, Coburg, Road Resurfacing	RD1315N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$6,032.24	$0.00	$30,181.76	$0.00	$36,214.00	80%

Barrow Street from Walsh Centre Line to Sheffield, Coburg, Road Resurfacing	RD1304N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$4,364.03	$0.00	$22,653.97	$0.00	$27,018.00	83%
Chambers Street from Walsh to Edward Bend, Coburg, Road Resurfacing	RD1303N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$2,202.03	$0.00	$11,815.97	$0.00	$14,018.00	85%
Darlington Grove from The Grove to Rennie, Coburg, Road Resurfacing	RD1309N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$3,549.94	$0.00	$18,973.06	$0.00	$22,523.00	85%
Fraser Street from O'Hea to Murray, Coburg, Road Resurfacing	RD1317N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$5,485.06	$0.00	$28,939.94	$0.00	$34,425.00	84%
Glengyle Street Nicholson-Kirkby Coburg	RD0915	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$2,300.27	$0.00	$21,315.73	$0.00	$23,616.00	100%
Hatton Grove from Sydney to Dead End, Coburg, Road Resurfacing	RD0752NR	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$8,820.10	$0.00	$34,586.90	$0.00	$43,407.00	85%
Huntington Grove from Rennie to Carlisle, Coburg, Road Resurfacing	RD1313N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$9,662.25	$0.00	$50,853.75	$0.00	$60,516.00	84%
Mayfield Street from Victoria to Bell, Coburg, Road Resurfacing	RD1323N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$6,139.00	$0.00	$32,149.00	$0.00	$38,288.00	83%
Mayfield Street from Munro to Victoria, Coburg, Road Resurfacing	RD1322N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$6,539.37	$0.00	$33,456.63	$0.00	$39,996.00	82%
McKay Street from Wilson to Bell, Coburg, Road Resurfacing	RD1311N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$6,219.07	$0.00	$32,343.93	$0.00	$38,563.00	83%
Portland Street from Reynard to Munro, Coburg, Road Resurfacing	RD1308N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$9,595.52	$0.00	$48,436.48	$0.00	$58,032.00	81%
Mcpherson Street from Dead End to Reynard, Coburg, Road Reconstruction	RD1290N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$31,695.93	$0.00	$543,147.16	$0.00	$574,843.09	100%
Kendall/Harding Footbridge over Merri Creek BR070, Coburg, Footbridge	RD1291N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$54,009.86	$0.00	$166,680.60	$0.00	$220,690.46	55%

Batman Avenue Shared Path - Upfield Shared Path Upgrade, Coburg, Path Upgrade	RD1292N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$22,821.07	$0.00	$166,103.46	$0.00	$188,924.53	100%
Mantell Street from Williams Kerb Line to Mcdonald Kerb Line, Coburg North, Road Resurfacing	RD2043N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$444.87	$0.00	$21,740.13	$0.00	$22,185.00	90%
Sussex Street from Boundary Kerb Line to South Centre Line, Pascoe Vale, Road Resurfacing	RD2015N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$9,576.18	$0.00	$66,158.82	$0.00	$75,735.00	90%
Kent Road from Bawden to Derby, Pascoe Vale, Drainage Works	DR123N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$2,254.99	$0.00	$576,020.80	$0.00	$578,275.79	100%
Miller Street from Major Kerb Line to Dead End, Fawkner, Road Resurfacing	RD1369N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$2,716.76	$0.00	$27,276.24	$0.00	$29,993.00	92%
Kerr Avenue from Devereaux to Vincent, Oak Park, Road Resurfacing	RD4001N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$7,507.08	$0.00	$17,881.92	$0.00	$25,389.00	75%
Chris Court from Devereaux to Dead End, Oak Park, Road Reconstruction	RD1258N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$7,612.99	$0.00	$204,303.39	$0.00	$211,916.38	97%
Snell Gve Public Toilet, Oak Park, Public Toilets Renewal	CF137N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$37,872.12	$0.00	$193,996.18	$0.00	$231,868.30	100%
Narre Narre Stadium, 9 Hillcrest Road, Oak Park, Sports Stadium Renewal	CF133N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$56,025.91	$0.00	$84,189.89	$0.00	$140,215.80	11%
Tucker Street from Lock Centre Line to Major Kerb Line, Fawkner, Road Resurfacing	RD1374N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$2,951.71	$0.00	$30,686.29	$0.00	$33,638.00	95%
Tyrrell Crescent from Undera Centre Line to Mcbryde Centre Line, Fawkner, Road Resurfacing	RD1375N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$3,166.53	$0.00	$31,278.47	$0.00	$34,445.00	90%
Yungera Street Wyuna-Mutton Fawkner	RD0426	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$279.90	$0.00	$637,625.60	$0.00	$637,905.50	100%

Mcbryde St Reserve (Moomba Park Pavillion), 276 Mcbryde St, Fawkner, Pavilion Upgrade	CF103NR	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$5,903.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$5,903.00	3%
South Street from Everitt Street to West Street (Engeny Hot Spot No 12), Hadfield, Drainage Works	DR126N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$3,358.52	$0.00	$761,520.01	$0.00	$764,878.53	74%
South Street from Dickinson to Everitt, Hadfield, Road Reconstruction	RD0031NR	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$2,186.25	$0.00	$1,109,392.36	$0.00	$1,111,578.61	100%
Daley Street Cardinal-Glen Glenroy	RD0592	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$5,524.00	$0.00	$26,944.00	$0.00	$32,468.00	100%
Anselm Gve - Glenroy; A'beckett - Pascoe Vale: both Carriageways Glenroy	RD1208	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	$1,714.97	$0.00	$35,392.03	$0.00	$37,107.00	100%
Total			**$945,934.41**	**$0.00**	**$8,098,834.12**	**$0.00**	**$9,044,768.53**	

A plain English guide to the Financial Report

We are committed to accountability and developed this guide to help you read and understand the Financial Report.

Our report complies with:

- Australian Accounting Standards
- other authoritative pronouncements of the Australian Accounting Standards Board
- the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act)
- the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020* (the regulations).

Some readers may not be familiar with terms required by the standards as we are a part of the public sector. Some of the terms used in private-sector company reports are not suitable for the public sector.

What is in the Annual Financial Report?

The report has two main sections – the financial statements and the notes.

There are 5 statements and 10 notes, which are:
- prepared by our staff
- audited by the Victorian Auditor-General
- examined by our Audit Committee.

Council approves in principle the Annual Financial Report and authorises its certification. The 5 statements are in the first few pages of the report including:
- comprehensive income statement
- balance sheet
- statement of changes in equity
- statement of cash flows
- statement of capital works.

The notes detail our accounting policies, and the make-up of values contained in the statements.

Comprehensive income statement

The comprehensive income statement shows:
- the sources of our revenue by income category
- the expenses incurred in running Council during the year.

The expenses relate only to Council operations. They do not include the cost associated with the purchase or building of assets. While asset-purchase costs are not included in the expenses, there is a line item for depreciation. Depreciation is a non-cash transaction. It represents the value of an asset decreasing over time due to wear and tear and becoming out-of-date.

The key figure to look at is the surplus or deficit for the year. The accounting surplus or deficit is the total revenue less the total expenses. While Council may be generating a healthy accounting surplus, this is used to fund other items in our operations. This includes loan principal repayments, transfers to reserves to fund future projects and rates-funded projects in the capital works program.

Balance sheet

The balance sheet is a snapshot of the financial position as at 30 June. It shows what we own as assets and what we owe as liabilities. Towards the bottom of the balance sheet is a line showing net assets. This is the net worth of Council, which has been built up over many years.

The assets and liabilities are separated into current and non-current. Current means those assets or liabilities that will fall due in the next 12 months.

Current and non-current assets

- Cash and other financial assets include cash and investments. That is, cash held in the bank and in petty cash, and our investments.
- Receivables are monies owed to us by ratepayers and others.
- Investment property represents the value of property owned by Council as investment.
- Property, infrastructure, plant, and equipment is the largest component of our worth. It represents the value of all the assets held by Council. This includes land, buildings, roads, footpaths, shared paths, drains, vehicles, equipment, and parks, built up over many years.
- Right of use assets shows Council's right to use assets over the course of a lease.

Current and non-current liabilities

- Payables are those who we owed money to as at 30 June.
- Provisions include accrued long service and annual leave owed to employees.
- Trust funds represent money held in trust by Council.
- Interest-bearing liabilities represent our outstanding borrowings.
- Unearned income represents money received for goods and services not yet provided.

Net assets

This term is used to describe the difference between the value of total assets and the value of total liabilities. It represents the net worth of Council as at 30 June.

Total equity

This always equals net assets. It is made up of the following components:

- asset revaluation reserve is the total of all post-acquisition fair market value changes for non-current assets
- other reserves are allocations of funds that have been set aside and act as a future funding source for specific purposes:
  - these reserve funds do not have bank accounts of their own but are a theoretical split up of cash that Council has on hand for a future identified need or obligation
  - our reserves are broken up into two categories – restricted and non-restricted
- accumulated surplus is the value of all surpluses and deficits accumulated over time.

Statement of changes in equity

The statement of changes in equity summarises the transactions relating to the equity over the financial year. This statement shows the values of such changes and how these changes arose.

The main reasons for a change in equity stem from:

- a surplus or deficit from operations for the year
- the transfer of money to reserves and the use of money from our reserves
- revaluation of the assets, which are undertaken cyclically based on condition assessment and fair market value.

Statement of cash flows

The cash flow statement summarises our cash payments and cash received for the year. The values may differ from those shown in the income statement as it is prepared on a cash accounting basis. The cash flow statement includes the total value (including GST). The income statement is prepared on an accrual basis and is excluding GST.

Our cash arises from, and is used in three main areas:

- cash flows from operating activities:
  - receipts – all cash received into our bank account from ratepayers and others who owed money to us. Receipts can include grant payments, fees and fines or interest earnings from our cash investments
  - payments – all cash paid by us from our bank account to staff, creditors, and other persons
- cash flows from investing activities:
  - this section shows the cash invested in the creation or purchase of property, infrastructure, plant, and equipment assets. It also includes the cash received from the sale of these assets
- cash flows from financing activities:
  - this is where the receipt and repayment of borrowed funds are recorded.

The bottom line of the cash flow statement states the cash held at the end of the financial year. This shows our capacity to meet cash debts and other liabilities.

Statement of capital works

The statement of capital works details all amounts expended by Council on capital works. The statement classifies the expenditure in line with our asset classes.

It categorises capital works expenditure into:

- renewal of assets
- upgrading of assets
- expansion of assets
- creating new assets.

Each of these categories has a different impact on our future costs.

Notes to the accounts

The notes are a very important and informative section of the report. We have given details of our accounting policies to help you understand how the values shown in the statements are established. We have described these throughout the notes as relevant.

The notes also give details behind many of the summary figures in the statements. The note numbers are shown beside the relevant items in the comprehensive income statement, balance sheet, statement of cash flows and statement of capital works.

Where we wish to disclose other information, which cannot be incorporated into the statements, we have shown it in the notes.

Notes include:

- the breakdown of expenses, revenues, reserves, and other assets
- contingent liabilities
- transactions with persons related to Council.

The notes should be read at the same time as, and together with, the other parts of the Financial Statements to get a clear picture of the accounts.

Statements by Principal Accounting Officer and Councillors

The certification of the Principal Accounting Officer is made by the person responsible for the financial management of Council that, in her opinion, the financial statements have met all the statutory and professional reporting requirements.

The certification of Councillors is made by two councillors, the Chief Financial Officer and the Chief Executive Officer, on behalf of Council that, in their opinion, the financial statements present fairly the financial transactions of Council.

Auditor General's report

The independent audit report provides you with an external and independent opinion on the financial statements. It confirms the financial report is prepared in accordance with relevant legislation and professional standards, and it represents a fair picture of our financial affairs.

Our main office
90 Bell Street, Coburg

External auditor
Auditor-General of Victoria

Internal auditor
Crowe Australasia

Solicitors
Various

Bankers
Westpac Banking Corporation

Website address
merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Merri-bek City Council

ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Merri-bek City Council

Annual Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2025

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Annual Financial Report

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Content Overview

These financial statements are General Purpose Financial Statements and cover the consolidated operations for Merri-bek City Council.

All figures presented in these financial statements are presented in Australian currency.

These financial statements were approved in principle by the Council on 10 September 2025.

Council has the power to amend and reissue these financial statements.

Merri-bek City Council

Annual Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2025

Certification of the Financial Statements

In my opinion, the accompanying financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*, the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020*, the Australian Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements.

Jemma Wightman
Chief Financial Officer
Dated: 17/09/2025
Coburg, VIC

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly the financial transactions of Merri-bek City Council for the year ended 30 June 2025 and the financial position of the Council as at that date.

At the date of signing, we are not aware of any circumstances which would render any particulars in the financial statements to be misleading or inaccurate.

We have been authorised by the Council and by the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020* to certify the financial statements in their final form.

Helen Davidson
Mayor
Dated: 17/09/2025
Coburg, VIC

Helen Politis
Deputy Mayor
Dated: 17/09/2025
Coburg, VIC

Cathy Henderson
Chief Executive Officer
Dated: 17/09/2025
Coburg, VIC

Independent Auditor's Report

Victorian Auditor-General's Office

To the Councillors of Merri-bek City Council

Opinion	I have audited the financial report of Merri-bek City Council (the council) which comprises the: • balance sheet as at 30 June 2025 • comprehensive income statement for the year then ended • statement of changes in equity for the year then ended • statement of cash flows for the year then ended • statement of capital works for the year then ended • notes to the financial statements, including material accounting policy information • certification of the financial statements. In my opinion the financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the council as at 30 June 2025 and their financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the financial reporting requirements of Part 4 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, the Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020 and applicable Australian Accounting Standards.
Basis for Opinion	I have conducted my audit in accordance with the *Audit Act 1994* which incorporates the Australian Auditing Standards. I further describe my responsibilities under that Act and those standards in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of my report. My independence is established by the *Constitution Act 1975*. My staff and I are independent of the council in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to my audit of the financial report in Victoria. My staff and I have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.
Councillors' responsibilities for the financial report	The Councillors of the council are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards, the *Local Government Act 2020* and the Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020, and for such internal control as the Councillors determine is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. In preparing the financial report, the Councillors are responsible for assessing the council's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless it is inappropriate to do so.

Level 31 / 35 Collins Street, Melbourne Vic 3000
T 03 8601 7000 enquiries@audit.vic.gov.au www.audit.vic.gov.au

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial report

As required by the *Audit Act 1994*, my responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on the audit. My objectives for the audit are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, I exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the council's internal control
- evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Councillors
- conclude on the appropriateness of the Councillors' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the council's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the council to cease to continue as a going concern.
- evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with the Councillors regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.



MELBOURNE
23 September 2025

Travis Derricott
as delegate for the Auditor-General of Victoria

Merri-bek City Council

Comprehensive Income Statement

for the year ended 30 June 2025

	Note	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Income / Revenue			
Rates and charges	3.1	195,088	185,236
Statutory fees and fines	3.2	18,025	16,035
User fees	3.3	9,132	8,210
Grants - operating	3.4	25,531	17,172
Grants - capital	3.4	6,466	4,788
Contributions - monetary	3.5	13,570	11,405
Contributions - non monetary	3.5	503	1,887
Fair value increment on investment properties	6.3	818	375
Other income	3.7	11,918	9,878
Total income / revenue		281,051	254,986
Expenses			
Employee costs	4.1	115,692	111,724
Materials and services	4.2	78,352	69,723
Depreciation	4.3	39,312	38,736
Depreciation - Right of use assets		385	347
Net loss on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment and non-current assets held for sale	3.6	12,827	3,309
Allowance for impairment losses	4.4	2,423	3,967
Borrowing costs		853	712
Finance Costs - Leases		71	3
Other expenses	4.5	716	704
Total expenses		250,631	229,225
Surplus for the year		30,420	25,761
Other comprehensive income:			
Items that will not be reclassified to surplus or deficit in future periods			
Net asset revaluation loss	9.1	(194,747)	(22,858)
Total items which will not be reclassified subsequently to the operating result		(194,747)	(22,858)
Total other comprehensive income		(194,747)	(22,858)
Total comprehensive result		(164,327)	2,903

The above comprehensive income statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Merri-bek City Council

Balance Sheet

as at 30 June 2025

	Note	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Assets			
Current assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	5.1	36,116	22,387
Trade and other receivables	5.1	41,677	44,237
Other financial assets	5.1	60,000	84,000
Inventories		690	659
Prepayments		3,160	2,429
Non-current assets classified as held for sale	6.1	22,975	11,019
Other assets		4,156	2,208
Total current assets		168,774	166,939
Non-current assets			
Investments in associates, joint arrangements and subsidiaries		2	2
Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	6.2	2,635,162	2,811,430
Investment property	6.3	37,232	36,024
Right-of-use assets		813	600
Total non-current assets		2,673,209	2,848,056
Total assets		2,841,983	3,014,995
Liabilities			
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	5.2	19,603	18,678
Trust funds and deposits	5.2	6,761	6,165
Contract liabilities	5.2	2,302	6,898
Provisions	5.4	20,922	22,195
Interest-bearing liabilities	5.3	14,209	1,997
Lease liabilities		121	109
Total current liabilities		63,918	56,042
Non-current liabilities			
Interest-bearing liabilities	5.3	13,667	27,821
Provisions	5.4	2,510	2,603
Lease liabilities		457	20
Total non-current liabilities		16,634	30,444
Total liabilities		80,552	86,486
Net assets		2,761,431	2,928,509
Equity			
Accumulated surplus		823,271	785,732
Reserves	9.1	1,938,160	2,142,777
Total Equity		2,761,431	2,928,509

The above balance sheet should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Merri-bek City Council

Statement of Changes in Equity

for the year ended 30 June 2025

	Note	Total $ '000	Accumulated Surplus $ '000	Revaluation Reserves $ '000	Other Reserves $ '000
2025					
Balance at beginning of the financial year		2,928,509	785,732	2,066,208	76,569
Parking fine refund scheme	9.3	(2,751)	(2,751)	–	–
Adjusted opening balance		2,925,758	782,981	2,066,208	76,569
Surplus for the year		30,420	30,420	–	–
Other comprehensive income					
Net asset revaluation loss	9.1	(194,747)	–	(194,747)	–
Other comprehensive income		(194,747)	–	(194,747)	–
Total comprehensive income		(164,327)	30,420	(194,747)	–
Transfers to other reserves	9.1	–	(46,616)	–	46,616
Transfers from other reserves	9.1	–	56,486	–	(56,486)
Balance at end of the financial year		2,761,431	823,271	1,871,461	66,699
2024					
Balance at beginning of the financial year		2,925,606	750,053	2,089,066	86,487
Parking fine refund scheme	9.3	–	–	–	–
Surplus for the year		25,761	25,761	–	–
Other comprehensive income					
Net asset revaluation loss	9.1	(22,858)	–	(22,858)	–
Other comprehensive income		(22,858)	–	(22,858)	–
Total comprehensive income		2,903	25,761	(22,858)	–
Transfers to other reserves	9.1	–	(47,443)	–	47,443
Transfers from other reserves	9.1	–	57,361	–	(57,361)
Balance at end of the financial year		2,928,509	785,732	2,066,208	76,569

The above statement of changes in equity should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Merri-bek City Council

Statement of Cash Flows

for the year ended 30 June 2025

	Note	2025 Inflows/ (Outflows) $ '000	2024 Inflows/ (Outflows) $ '000
Cash flows from operating activities			
Rates and charges		194,509	183,131
Statutory fees and fines		14,046	12,316
User fees		9,142	8,454
Grants - operating		25,604	17,172
Grants - capital		1,787	9,619
Contributions - monetary		13,570	11,405
Interest received		4,652	5,529
Trust funds and deposits taken		48,957	40,706
Other receipts		9,044	1,518
Net GST payment		166	(911)
Employee costs		(117,058)	(110,334)
Materials and services		(80,129)	(67,528)
Trust funds and deposits repaid		(48,361)	(40,598)
Other payments		(724)	(1,051)
Net cash provided by operating activities	9.2	75,205	69,428
Cash flows from investing activities			
Payments for property, infrastructure, plant and equipment		(80,707)	(86,770)
Proceeds from sale of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment		(2,572)	235
Payments for investments		(69,182)	(40,625)
Proceeds from sale of investments		94,000	50,000
Net cash used in investing activities		(58,461)	(77,160)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Finance costs		(853)	(712)
Proceeds from borrowings		–	8,000
Repayment of borrowings		(1,942)	(1,338)
Interest paid - lease liability		(71)	(3)
Repayment of lease liabilities		(149)	(110)
Net cash flow provided by/(used in) financing activities		(3,015)	5,837
Net Increase/Decrease in cash and cash equivalents		13,729	(1,895)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year		22,387	24,282
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year		36,116	22,387
Financing arrangements	5.5	28,165	30,107

The above statement of cash flows should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Merri-bek City Council

Statement of Capital Works

for the year ended 30 June 2025

	Note	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Property			
Land		5,040	59
Total land		5,040	59
Buildings		29,181	41,923
Building improvements		4,102	4,194
Total buildings		33,283	46,117
Total property		38,323	46,176
Plant and equipment			
Plant, machinery and equipment		4,334	872
Fixtures, fittings and furniture		216	147
Computers and telecommunications		886	653
Artworks		35	28
Library books		1,082	1,062
Total plant and equipment		6,553	2,762
Infrastructure			
Roads		18,801	12,535
Bridges		324	229
Footpaths and cycleways		2,457	3,972
Drainage		1,849	2,241
Waste management		200	58
Parks, open space and streetscapes		21,476	16,391
Other infrastructure		1,285	3,278
Total infrastructure		46,392	38,704
Total capital works expenditure	6.2	91,268	87,642
Represented by:			
New asset expenditure		19,374	15,659
Asset renewal expenditure		53,932	47,225
Asset upgrade expenditure		17,962	24,758
Total capital works expenditure		91,268	87,642

The above statement of capital works should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 1. Overview

Introduction

The Merri-bek City Council was established by an Order of the Governor in Council on 21 June 1994 and is a body corporate.

The Council's main office is located at 90 Bell Street, Coburg.

Statement of compliance

These financial statements are a general purpose financial report that consists of a Comprehensive Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Statement of Changes in Equity, Statement of Cash Flows, Statement of Capital Works and Notes accompanying these financial statements. The general purpose financial report complies with Australian Accounting Standards (AAS), other authoritative pronouncements of the Australian Accounting Standards Board, the *Local Government Act 2020*, and the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020.*

The Council is a not-for-profit entity and therefore applies the additional AUS paragraphs applicable to a not-for-profit entity under the Australian Accounting Standards.

Accounting policy information

1.1 Basis of accounting

Accounting policies are selected and applied in a manner which ensures that the resulting financial information satisfies the concepts of relevance and reliability, thereby ensuring that the substance of the underlying transactions or other events is reported. Specific accounting policies applied are disclosed in sections where the related balance sheet or financial statement matter is disclosed.

The accrual basis of accounting has been used in the preparation of these financial statements, except for the cash flow information, whereby assets, liabilities, equity, income and expenses are recognised in the reporting period to which they relate, regardless of when cash is received or paid.

The financial statements are based on the historical cost convention unless a different measurement basis is specifically disclosed in the notes to the financial statements.

The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis. The financial statements are in Australian dollars. The amounts presented in the financial statements have been rounded to the nearest thousand dollars unless otherwise specified. Minor discrepancies in tables between totals and the sum of components are due to rounding.

Judgements, estimates and assumptions are required to be made about the carrying values of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated judgements are based on professional judgement derived from historical experience and various other factors that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised and also in future periods that are affected by the revision. Judgements and assumptions made by management in the application of AAS that have significant effects on the financial statements and estimates relate to:

- the fair value of land, buildings, infrastructure, plant and equipment (refer to Note 6.2.)
- the determination of depreciation for buildings, infrastructure, plant and equipment (refer to Note 6.2.)
- the determination of employee provisions (refer to Note 5.4.)
- the determination of whether performance obligations are sufficiently specific so as to determine whether an arrangement is within the scope of *AASB 15 Revenue from Contracts with Customers or AASB 1058 Income of Not-for-Profit Entities* (refer to Note 3)
- the determination, in accordance with *AASB 16 Leases*, of the lease term, the estimation of the discount rate when not implicit in the lease and whether an arrangement is in substance short-term or low value.
- whether or not AASB 1059 *Service Concession Arrangements: Grantors* is applicable
- other areas requiring judgements.

Unless otherwise stated, all accounting policies are consistent with those applied in the prior year. Where appropriate, comparative figures have been amended to accord with current presentation, and disclosure has been made of any material changes to comparatives.

continued on next page ...

Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 1. Overview (continued)

Goods and Services Tax (GST)
Income and expenses are recognised net of the amount of associated GST. Receivables and payables are stated inclusive of the amount of GST receivable or payable. The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the taxation authority is included with other receivables or payables in the balance sheet.

Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 2. Analysis of our results

Note 2.1 Performance against budget

The performance against budget notes compare Council's financial plan, expressed through its annual budget, with actual performance. The *Local Government* (*Planning and Reporting*) *Regulations 2021* requires explanation of any material variances. Council has adopted a materiality threshold of the lower of 10 percent or $3 million where further explanation is warranted. Explanations have not been provided for variations below the materiality threshold unless the variance is considered to be material because of its nature.

The budget figures detailed below are those adopted by Council on 26 June 2024. The budget was based on assumptions that were relevant at the time of adoption of the budget. Council sets guidelines and parameters for revenue and expense targets in this budget in order to meet Council's planning and financial performance targets for both the short and long term. The budget did not reflect any changes to equity resulting from asset revaluations, as their impacts were not considered predictable.

These notes are prepared to meet the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020* and the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020.*

2.1.1 Income / Revenue and expenditure

	Budget 2025 $ '000	Actual 2025 $ '000	Variance $ '000	Variance %	Ref
Income / Revenue					
Rates and charges	194,037	195,088	1,051	1%	
Statutory fees and fines	18,436	18,025	(411)	(2)%	
User fees	8,594	9,132	538	6%	
Grants - operating	22,879	25,531	2,652	12%	1
Grants - capital	11,928	6,466	(5,462)	(46)%	2
Contributions - monetary	9,056	13,570	4,514	50%	3
Contributions - non monetary	–	503	503	100%	4
Net gain on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	90	–	(90)	(100)%	5
Fair value increment on investment properties	–	818	818	100%	6
Other income	10,547	11,918	1,371	13%	7
Total income / revenue	275,567	281,051	5,484	2%	
Expenses					
Employee costs	111,824	115,692	(3,868)	(3)%	8
Materials and services	78,247	78,352	(105)	0%	
Depreciation	40,890	39,312	1,578	4%	
Depreciation - right of use assets	236	385	(149)	(63)%	9
Allowance for impairment losses	3,064	2,423	641	21%	10
Borrowing costs	869	853	16	2%	
Finance costs - leases	–	71	(71)	(100)%	
Net loss on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	–	12,827	(12,827)	(100)%	11
Other expenses	758	716	42	6%	
Total expenses	235,888	250,631	(14,743)	(6)%	
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	39,679	30,420	(9,259)	(23)%	

continued on next page ...

Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 2.1 Performance against budget (continued)

(i) Explanation of material variations

Variance Ref	Explanation
1.	The variance is primarily attributed to the payment of 50% of the Commonwealth Financial Assistance Grant for 2025/26 being paid in June 2025.
2.	The variance primarily stems from the timing of grants being recognised and/or received including grants for capital projects including the receipt of $3 million for the Brunswick Early Years Hub and $1 million for Dunstan Reserve Childcare under the State Government Building Blocks (3 y/o kindergarten expansion) program, Cole Reserve Masterplan and the electrification of Oak Park Aquatic Centre.
3.	Council received an unbudgeted $4.8 million contribution from the State Government as reimbursement for expenditure on activities related to Level Crossing Removals within the municipality.
4.	The variance is primarily attributed to Council receiving $0.5 million in gifted drainage assets from completed developments within the municipality.
5.	Council regularly sells rights of way (ROWs) to private landholders, budgeting for an average of one sale per financial year. As the value and timing of these sales are highly variable, no sales were recognised in 2024/25.
6.	The variance is primarily attributed to the outcomes of market valuations on investment properties conducted by qualified valuers.
7.	The variance is primarily attributable to favourable interest income, which has been influenced by higher interest rates on Council's investments, as well as unbudgeted rental income from Council land used for Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) locations.
8.	The variance is primarily attributed to higher than anticipated workcover premiums, leave provision growth and fringe benefit tax costs.
9.	The variance is primarily attributable to the amortisation of Council’s printing and copier devices.
10.	The decrease in bad and doubtful debts is primarily due to a reduced parking infringement provision.
11.	The variance is primarily attributed to the disposal of infrastructure and other assets during the year is not budgeted annually due to its ad hoc nature. The variance includes the disposal costs associated with demolition of key building assets which were undertaken throughout the year, including Balam Balam place, Brunswick and Fawkner Leisure Centre as well as the loss on disposal of 2-12 Wilkinson Street, Brunswick. The loss on sale costs were partially offset against proceeds on sale from other assets, including 737 Pascoe Vale, Glenroy.

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 2.1 Performance against budget (continued)

2.1.2 Capital works

	Budget 2025 $ '000	Actual 2025 $ '000	Variance $ '000	Variance %	Ref
Property					
Land	–	5,040	5,040	100%	1
Total land	–	5,040	5,040	100%	
Buildings	28,133	29,181	1,048	4%	
Building improvements	6,985	4,102	(2,883)	(41)%	2
Total buildings	35,118	33,283	(1,835)	(5)%	
Total property	35,118	38,323	3,205	9%	
Plant and equipment					
Plant, machinery and equipment	3,962	4,334	372	9%	
Fixtures, fittings and furniture	339	216	(123)	(36)%	3
Computers and telecommunications	745	886	141	19%	4
Artworks	44	35	(9)	(20)%	
Library books	1,082	1,082	–	0%	
Total plant and equipment	6,172	6,553	381	6%	
Infrastructure					
Roads	18,877	18,801	(76)	0%	
Bridges	1,411	324	(1,087)	(77)%	5
Footpaths and cycleways	4,600	2,457	(2,143)	(47)%	6
Drainage	1,439	1,849	410	28%	7
Waste management	212	200	(12)	(6)%	
Parks, open space and streetscapes	23,610	21,476	(2,134)	(9)%	
Other infrastructure	1,261	1,285	24	2%	
Total infrastructure	51,410	46,392	(5,018)	(10)%	
Total capital works expenditure	92,700	91,268	(1,432)	(2)%	
Represented by:					
New asset expenditure	20,204	19,374	(830)	(4)%	
Asset renewal expenditure	53,511	53,932	421	1%	
Asset upgrade expenditure	18,985	17,962	(1,023)	(5)%	
Total capital works expenditure	92,700	91,268	(1,432)	(2)%	

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 2.1 Performance against budget (continued)

(i) Explanation of material variations

Variance Ref	Explanation
1.	Expenditure related to land purchases takes place when opportunities arise to acquire properties in strategically identified areas. These acquisitions align with Council's adopted framework, known as "A Park Close to Home," which aims to address open space gaps. Funding for these purchases is derived from the Public Resort & Recreation Land fund.
2.	The variance is primarily due to the rescheduling of improvement works at various sites, including projects funded through Merri-bek's Partnership Grants Program. In addition, some expenditure was reclassified as building works but was originally budgeted under building improvements.
3.	The variance is primarily due to project expenditure originally budgeted under fittings being reclassified as buildings.
4.	The variance is primarily due to the purchase of additional devices to support aged and community support workforce.
5.	The variance is primarily due to the rescheduling of works along the Merri Trail and at the Kendall Street/Harding Street footbridge.
6.	The variance is primarily due to delayed footpath and cycleway works across various locations.
7.	The variance is primarily due to additional expenditure on drainage improvement projects, predominantly at South Street, Glenroy, and the reclassification of various capital works as drainage upon completion.

Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 2.2 Analysis of Council results by program

2.2.1 Analysis of Council results by program

Council delivers its functions and activities through the following programs.

Chief Executive Officer Management
Chief Executive Officer Management oversees the management executive group, manages overall operations and sets the tone, vision and culture of Council.

City Infrastructure
City Infrastructure delivers a large number of Council services, including waste, parking, local laws, animal management and maintenance of our parks, sports fields, building and civil infrastructure. The directorate also plans and delivers most of Council's capital program and develops strategy for open space, transport and management of assets.

Business Transformation
Business Transformation is responsible for corporate functions relating to people, culture and business enhancement. This includes finance and procurement, human resources, corporate governance, organisational performance, information technology, and digital and customer transformation program.

Community
Community provides high quality community focused programs, service delivery and communication to residents. It is responsible for services relating to infants, children, youth, family and aged. Leading the achievement of our wellbeing outcomes including recreation, health, education, cultural vibrancy, safety and social cohesion.

Place and Environment
Place and Environment supports Council's urban development, environmental sustainability and economy. It also advances city-shaping partnership projects and manages Council's property portfolio.

2.2.2 Summary of income / revenue, expenses, assets and capital expenses by program

Functions/activities	Income / Revenue $ '000	Expenses $ '000	Surplus / (Deficit) $ '000	Grants included in income / revenue $ '000	Total assets $ '000
2025					
Chief Executive Officer Management	–	689	(689)	–	7
City Infrastructure	49,686	81,513	(31,827)	5,733	2,317,952
Business Transformation	188,401	93,194	95,207	9,166	198,909
Place and Environment	22,592	22,193	399	1,605	3,211
Community	20,372	53,042	(32,670)	15,493	321,904
Total functions and activities	281,051	250,631	30,420	31,997	2,841,983
2024					
Chief Executive Officer Management	–	723	(723)	–	8
City Infrastructure	45,837	81,530	(35,693)	6,510	2,472,944
Business Transformation	174,191	76,283	97,908	344	237,051
Place and Environment	16,651	20,644	(3,993)	604	39,243
Community	18,307	50,045	(31,738)	14,503	265,749
Total functions and activities	254,986	229,225	25,761	21,961	3,014,995

Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 3. Funding for the delivery of our services

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000

3.1 Rates and charges

Council uses Capital Improved Value (CIV) as the basis of valuation of all properties within the municipal district. The CIV of a property is its total market value of the land plus buildings and other improvements.

The valuation base used to calculate general rates for 2024/25 was $71.3 billion (2023/24: $70.7 billion).

General rates	165,723	159,532
Waste management charge	24,713	22,364
Special rates and charges	597	595
Supplementary rates and rate adjustments	2,684	2,214
Interest on rates and charges	1,371	531
Total rates and charges	195,088	185,236

The date of the general revaluation of land for rating purposes within the municipal district was 1 January 2024 and the valuation was first applied in the rating year commencing 1 July 2024.

Annual rates and charges are recognised as income when Council issues annual rates notices. Supplementary rates are recognised when a valuation and reassessment is completed and a supplementary rates notice issued.

3.2 Statutory fees and fines

Infringements and costs	10,032	9,519
Court recoveries	693	860
Town planning fees	1,878	1,710
Land information certificates	514	467
Other fines	1,209	824
Permits	2,953	2,340
Parking	746	315
Total statutory fees and fines	18,025	16,035

Statutory fees and fines (including parking fees and fines) are recognised as income when the service has been provided, the payment is received, or when the penalty has been applied, whichever first occurs.

3.3 User fees

Aged and health services	3,175	1,956
Leisure centre and recreation	425	998
Registration and other permits	2,606	2,262
Building services	361	376
Valuation fees	–	67
Waste management services	220	233
Other fees and charges	2,345	2,301
Town planning fees	–	17
Total user fees	9,132	8,210
User fees by timing of revenue recognition		
User fees recognised at a point in time	9,132	8,210
Total user fees	9,132	8,210

User fees are recognised as revenue at a point in time, or over time, when (or as) the performance obligation is satisfied.

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 3. Funding for the delivery of our services (continued)

Recognition is based on the underlying contractual terms.

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
3.4 Funding from other levels of government		
Grants were received in respect of the following:		
Summary of grants		
Commonwealth funded grants	20,913	10,685
State funded grants	11,084	11,275
Total grants received	31,997	21,960
(a) Operating Grants		
Recurrent - Commonwealth Government		
Financial Assistance Grants	8,992	252
Family day care	615	593
Aged care	8,481	8,210
Recurrent - State Government		
Home help	426	1,088
Families and Children	3,955	3,794
Food Services	20	22
Libraries	1,183	1,183
Total recurrent operating grants	23,672	15,142
Non-recurrent - State Government		
Libraries	71	123
Employment Assistance	190	–
Recreation	400	–
Arts and Culture	103	–
Community welfare	14	13
Other	1,081	1,894
Total non-recurrent operating grants	1,859	2,030
Total operating grants	25,531	17,172
(b) Capital Grants		
Recurrent - Commonwealth Government		
Roads to recovery	791	609
Total recurrent capital grants	791	609
Non-recurrent - Commonwealth Government		
Local Roads Community Infrastructure	355	939
Buildings	1,679	82
Non-recurrent - State Government		
Buildings	1,468	2,484
Community Safety	–	13
Recreation	577	8
Other	1,596	653
Total non-recurrent capital grants	5,675	4,179

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 3. Funding for the delivery of our services (continued)

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Total capital grants	6,466	4,788

(c) Recognition of grant income

Before recognising funding from government grants as revenue the Council assesses whether there is a contract that is enforceable and has sufficiently specific performance obligations in accordance with *AASB 15 Revenue from Contracts with Customers*. When both these conditions are satisfied, the Council:

- identifies each performance obligation relating to revenue under the contract/agreement
- determines the transaction price
- recognises a contract liability for its obligations under the agreement
- recognises revenue as it satisfies its performance obligations, at the point in time or over time when services are rendered.

Where the contract is not enforceable and/or does not have sufficiently specific performance obligations, the Council applies *AASB 1058 Income for Not-for-Profit Entities.*

Grant revenue with sufficiently specific performance obligations is recognised over time as the performance obligations specified in the underlying agreement are met. Where performance obligations are not sufficiently specific, grants are recognised on the earlier of receipt or when an unconditional right to receipt has been established. Grants relating to capital projects are generally recognised progressively as the capital project is completed. The following table provides a summary of the accounting framework under which grants are recognised.

Income recognised under AASB 1058 Income of Not-for-Profit Entities		
General purpose	24,025	15,170
Specific purpose grants to acquire non-financial assets	179	82
Other specific purpose grants	7,308	5,334
Revenue recognised under AASB 15 Revenue from Contracts with Customers		
Specific purpose grants	485	1,375
	31,997	21,961

(d) Unspent grants received on condition that they be spent in a specific manner:

Operating		
Balance at start of year	1,303	1,527
Received during the financial year and remained unspent at balance date	432	355
Received in prior years and spent during the financial year	(1,123)	(579)
Balance at year end	612	1,303
Capital		
Balance at start of year	231	793
Received during the financial year and remained unspent at balance date	1,342	–
Received in prior years and spent during the financial year	(231)	(562)
Balance at year end	1,342	231

Unspent grants are determined and disclosed on a cash basis.

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 3. Funding for the delivery of our services (continued)

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
3.5 Contributions		
Monetary contributions		
Monetary	13,570	11,405
Total monetary contributions	13,570	11,405
Non-monetary contributions		
Non-monetary	503	1,887
Total non-monetary contributions	503	1,887
Total contributions	14,073	13,292

Contributions of non monetary assets were received in relation to the following asset classes.

Infrastructure	503	1,887
Total non-monetary contributions	503	1,887

Monetary and non monetary contributions are recognised as income at their fair value when Council obtains control over the contributed asset.

3.6 Net loss on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment and non-current assets held for sale

Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment		
Proceeds of sale	6,443	235
Written down value of assets disposed (plant & equipment)	(41)	(29)
Written down value of assets disposed (infrastructure)	(2,727)	(3,515)
Written down value of assets disposed (property)	(9,015)	–
Written down value of assets held for sale disposed (property)	(7,487)	–
Total net loss on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	(12,827)	(3,309)

The profit or loss on sale of an asset is determined when control of the asset has passed to the buyer.

3.7 Other income

Interest	4,652	5,529
Investment property rental	1,209	1,336
Other rent	1,091	1,207
Recoveries	3,761	944
Sales	377	580
Other	806	277
Road occupancy/ Right of way closures	22	5
Total other income	11,918	9,878

Interest is recognised as it is earned.

Other income is measured at the fair value of the consideration received or receivable and is recognised when Council gains control over the right to receive the income.

Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 4. The cost of delivering services

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000

4.1 Employee costs

(a) Employee costs

Wages and salaries	94,834	92,364
Casual staff	6,446	5,060
WorkCover	2,425	3,989
Superannuation	10,928	9,957
Fringe benefits tax	402	111
Other	657	243
Total employee costs	115,692	111,724

(b) Superannuation

Council made contributions to the following funds:

Defined benefit fund		
Employer contributions to Local Authorities Superannuation Fund (Vision Super)	317	241
	317	241
Accumulation funds		
Employer contributions to Local Authorities Superannuation Fund (Vision Super)	3,973	3,907
Employer contributions - other funds	6,638	5,809
	10,611	9,716
Employer contributions payable at reporting date	785	756

Most employees in the Council are members of various accumulation funds including Vision Super, and other industry and retail funds. As of 30 June 2025, there were 25 employees in the defined benefit fund, local authorities superannuation fund (Vision Super).

For 30 June 2025 the Vested Benefits Index (VBI) for the defined benefits funds is 110.5% and in a good financial position, and therefore it is expected that there will be no change to the Defined Benefit category's funding arrangements from prior years.

In the event that the Fund Actuary determines there is a shortfall, the Fund's participating employers (Merri-bek City Council) would be required to make an employer contribution to cover the shortfall.

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Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 4. The cost of delivering services (continued)

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
4.2 Materials and services		
General maintenance	15,805	15,292
Utilities	5,487	4,306
Cleaning and waste removal	18,821	19,177
Legal costs	792	685
Minor equipment and supplies	1,640	1,228
Office administration	5,141	2,593
Information technology and telecommunications	4,993	5,258
Insurance	3,436	2,858
Consultants and Contractors	12,360	9,464
Other materials and supplies	8,011	7,044
Council grants and contributions	1,866	1,818
Total materials and services	78,352	69,723

Expenses are recognised as they are incurred and reported in the financial year to which they relate.

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
4.3 Depreciation		
Property		
Buildings - specialised	7,057	6,931
Total depreciation - property	7,057	6,931
Plant and equipment		
Plant machinery and equipment	387	383
Fixtures fittings and furniture	242	208
Computers and telecomms	919	944
Library books	1,018	1,007
Motor vehicles	2,125	1,938
Total depreciation - plant and equipment	4,691	4,480
Infrastructure		
Bridges	463	454
Footways and cycleways	4,245	4,246
Drainage	3,627	3,545
Road surface	3,712	3,685
Road pavement	4,467	4,372
Kerb and channel	1,798	1,741
Other infrastructure	9,252	9,282
Total depreciation - infrastructure	27,564	27,325
Total depreciation	39,312	38,736

Refer to note 6.2 for a more detailed breakdown of depreciation charges and accounting policy.

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 4. The cost of delivering services (continued)

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
4.4 Allowance for impairment losses		
Parking fine debtors	2,081	4,076
Other debtors	342	(109)
Total allowance for impairment losses	2,423	3,967
Movement in allowance for impairment losses in respect of debtors		
Balance at the beginning of the year	16,975	20,110
New allowances recognised during the year	2,423	2,510
Amounts already allowed for and written off as uncollectible	(107)	(5,645)
Balance at end of year	19,291	16,975

An allowance for impairment losses in respect of debtors is recognised based on an expected credit loss model. This model considers both historic and forward looking information in determining the level of impairment.

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
4.5 Other expenses		
Auditors' remuneration - VAGO - audit of the financial statements, performance statement and grant acquittals	73	75
Auditors' remuneration - Internal Audit	155	142
Councillors' allowances	488	487
Total other expenses	716	704

Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 5. Investing in and financing our operations

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
5.1 Financial assets		
(a) Cash and cash equivalents		
Current		
Cash on hand	3	5
Cash at bank	36,113	22,382
Total current cash and cash equivalents	36,116	22,387
Total cash and cash equivalents	36,116	22,387
(b) Other financial assets		
Current		
Term deposits	60,000	84,000
Total current other financial assets	60,000	84,000
Total other financial assets	60,000	84,000
Total current financial assets	96,116	106,387
Total cash and cash equivalents and other financial assets	96,116	106,387

Cash and cash equivalents include cash on hand, deposits at call, and other highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, net of outstanding bank overdrafts.

Other financial assets are valued at fair value, at balance date. Term deposits are measured at original cost. Any unrealised gains and losses on holdings at balance date are recognised as either a revenue or expense.

Other financial assets include term deposits and those with original maturity dates of three to 12 months are classified as current, whilst term deposits with maturity dates greater than 12 months are classified as non-current.

(c) Trade & Other Receivables		
Current		
Statutory receivables		
Rates debtors	27,733	27,154
Parking Infringement debtors	19,816	18,588
Net GST receivable	3,181	3,278
Fire Services Property Levy Debtors	2,973	2,668
Allowance for expected credit loss - Parking infringements	(15,301)	(13,220)
Non-statutory receivables		
Other debtors	7,267	9,524
Allowance for expected credit loss - Other debtors	(3,992)	(3,755)
Total current trade and other receivables	41,677	44,237
Total trade and other receivables	41,677	44,237

Short term receivables are carried at invoice amount. An allowance for expected credit losses is recognised based on past experience and other objective evidence of expected losses. Long term receivables are carried at amortised cost using the effective interest rate method.

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 5. Investing in and financing our operations (continued)

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000

(d) Ageing of receivables

The ageing of the Council's trade & other receivables (excluding statutory receivables) that are not impaired was:

Current (not yet due)	1,939	3,416
Past due by up to 30 days	555	977
Past due between 31 and 180 days	143	252
Past due between 181 and 365 days	13	22
Past due by more than 1 year	625	1,102
Total trade and other receivables	3,275	5,769

(e) Ageing of individually impaired receivables

At balance date, other debtors representing financial assets with a nominal value of $3,991,944 (2024: $3,755,272) were impaired. The amount of the allowance raised against these debtors was $3,991,944 (2024: $3,755,272). They individually have been impaired as a result of their doubtful collection. Many of the long outstanding past due amounts have been lodged with Council's debt collectors or are on payment arrangements.

The ageing of receivables that have been individually determined as impaired at reporting date was:

Current (not yet due)	28	26
Past due by up to 30 days	98	92
Past due between 31 and 180 days	737	693
Past due between 181 and 365 days	861	810
Past due by more than 1 year	2,268	2,134
Total trade and other receivables	3,992	3,755

Contract assets are recognised when Council has transferred goods or services to the customer but where Council is yet to establish an unconditional right to consideration.

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 5. Investing in and financing our operations (continued)

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
5.2 Payables, trust funds and deposits and contract and other liabilities		
(a) Trade and other payables		
Current		
Non-statutory payables		
Trade payables	6,292	5,223
Accrued expenses	13,311	13,455
Total current trade and other payables	19,603	18,678
(b) Trust funds and deposits		
Current		
Refundable deposits	491	878
Trust funds	691	679
Fire services levy	5,004	4,137
Retention amounts	588	399
Other refundable deposits	(13)	72
Total current trust funds and deposits	6,761	6,165

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 5. Investing in and financing our operations (continued)

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
(c) Contract liabilities		
Contract liabilities		
Current		
Grants received in advance:		
Grants received in advance - operating	123	50
Grants received in advance - capital	1,371	6,050
Total grants received in advance	1,494	6,100
User fees received in advance:		
Other	808	798
Total user fees received in advance	808	798
Total current contract liabilities	2,302	6,898

Trust funds and deposits
Amounts received as deposits and retention amounts controlled by Council are recognised as trust funds until they are returned, transferred in accordance with the purpose of the receipt, or forfeited. Trust funds that are forfeited, resulting in Council gaining control of the funds, are to be recognised as revenue at the time of forfeit.

Contract liabilities
Contract liabilities reflect consideration received in advance from customers in respect of various contracts and operating funding agreements. Contract liabilities are derecognised and recorded as revenue when promised goods and services are transferred to the customer. Refer to Note 3.

Purpose and nature of items
Refundable deposits – deposits are taken by Council as a form of surety in a number of circumstances, including in relation to building works, contract deposits and the use of civic facilities.

Council currently maintains separate and distinct Trust Funds for the Gavin Environment Trust, the Blackburn Bequest Trust and the Inner Circle Linear Trust. These funds are held and administered in accordance with the Trust Deed arrangements.

Fire Service Levy - Council is the collection agent for fire services levy on behalf of the State Government. Council remits amounts received on a quarterly basis. Amounts disclosed here will be remitted to the State Government in line with that process.

Retention Amounts - Council has a contractual right to retain certain amounts until a contractor has met certain requirements or a related warrant or defect period has elapsed. Subject to the satisfactory completion of the contractual obligations, or the elapsing of time, these amounts will be paid to the relevant contractor in line with Council's contractual obligations.

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 5. Investing in and financing our operations (continued)

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
5.3 Interest-bearing liabilities		
Current		
Treasury Corporation of Victoria borrowings - secured	1,619	1,577
Other borrowings - secured	12,590	420
Total current interest-bearing liabilities	14,209	1,997
Non-current		
Treasury Corporation of Victoria borrowings - secured	11,567	13,131
Other borrowings - secured	2,100	14,690
Total non-current interest-bearing liabilities	13,667	27,821
Total	27,876	29,818
Borrowings are secured by the rates of the Council		
a) The maturity profile for Council's borrowings is:		
Not later than one year	14,209	1,997
Later than one year and not later than five years	9,054	20,873
Later than five years	4,613	6,948
	27,876	29,818

Borrowings are initially measured at fair value, being the cost of the interest bearing liabilities, net of transaction costs. The measurement basis subsequent to initial recognition depends on whether the Council has categorised its interest-bearing liabilities as either financial liabilities designated at fair value through the profit and loss, or financial liabilities at amortised cost. Any difference between the initial recognised amount and the redemption value is recognised in net result over the period of the borrowing using the effective interest method.

The classification depends on the nature and purpose of the interest bearing liabilities. The Council determines the classification of its interest bearing liabilities based on contractual repayment terms at every balance date.

In classifying borrowings as current or non-current Council considers whether at balance date it has the right to defer settlement of the liability for at least twelve months after the reporting period. Council's loan arrangements include covenants based on Council's financial performance and position at the end of the reporting period. These covenants are assessed for compliance after the reporting period based on specified financial ratios.

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 5. Investing in and financing our operations (continued)

	Employee provisions $ '000	Total $ '000
5.4 Provisions		
2025		
Balance at the beginning of the financial year	24,798	24,798
Additional provisions	7,458	7,458
Amounts used	(10,727)	(10,727)
Change in the discounted amount arising because of time and the effect of any change in the discount rate	1,903	1,903
Balance at the end of the financial year	23,432	23,432
Provisions		
Provisions - current	20,922	20,922
Provisions - non-current	2,510	2,510
Total Provisions	23,432	23,432
2024		
Balance at the beginning of the financial year	23,408	23,408
Additional provisions	7,023	7,023
Amounts used	(9,143)	(9,143)
Change in the discounted amount arising because of time and the effect of any change in the discount rate	3,510	3,510
Balance at the end of the financial year	24,798	24,798
Provisions		
Provisions - current	22,195	22,195
Provisions - non-current	2,603	2,603
Total Provisions	24,798	24,798

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Employee provisions		
Current provisions expected to be wholly settled within 12 months		
Annual leave	6,075	7,257
Long service leave	2,601	2,445
	8,676	9,702
Current provisions expected to be wholly settled after 12 months		
Annual leave	2,052	2,531
Long service leave	10,191	9,928
Other	3	34
	12,246	12,493
Total current employee provisions	20,922	22,195
Non-Current		
Long service leave	2,510	2,603
Total Non-Current Employee Provisions	2,510	2,603

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 5. Investing in and financing our operations (continued)

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Aggregate Carrying Amount of Employee Provisions:		
Current	20,922	22,195
Non-current	2,510	2,603
Total Aggregate Carrying Amount of Employee Provisions	23,432	24,798

The calculation of employee costs and benefits includes all relevant on-costs and are calculated as follows at reporting date.

Annual leave
A liability for annual leave is recognised in the provision for employee benefits as a current liability because the Council does not have an unconditional right to defer settlement of the liability. Liabilities for annual leave are measured at:
- nominal value if the Council expects to wholly settle the liability within 12 months
- present value if the Council does not expect to wholly settle within 12 months.

Liabilities that are not expected to be wholly settled within 12 months of the reporting date are recognised in the provision for employee benefits as current liabilities, measured at the present value of the amounts expected to be paid when the liabilities are settled using the remuneration rate expected to apply at the time of settlement.

Long service leave
Liability for long service leave (LSL) is recognised in the provision for employee benefits. Unconditional LSL is disclosed as a current liability as the Council does not have an unconditional right to defer settlement. Unconditional LSL is measured at nominal value if expected to be settled within 12 months or at present value if not expected to be settled within 12 months. Conditional LSL that has been accrued, where an employee is yet to reach a qualifying term of employment, is disclosed as a non-current liability and measured at present value.

Key assumptions:		
- discount rate	4.30%	4.35%
- index rate	4.25%	4.45%

5.5 Financing arrangements

The Council has the following funding arrangements in place as at 30 June 2025.

Credit card facilities	289	289
Treasury Corporation of Victoria facilities	13,186	14,708
Other facilities	14,690	15,110
Total Facilities	28,165	30,107
Used facilities	28,084	30,048
Used facilities	28,084	30,048
Unused facilities	81	59

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 5. Investing in and financing our operations (continued)

5.6 Commitments

The Council has entered into the following commitments. Commitments are not recognised in the Balance Sheet. Commitments are disclosed at their nominal value and presented exclusive of the GST payable.

(a) Commitments for expenditure

	Not later than 1 year $ '000	Later than 1 year and not later than 2 years $ '000	Later than 2 years and not later than 5 years $ '000	Later than 5 years $ '000	Total $ '000
2025					
Operating					
Garbage collection	247	–	–	–	247
Consultancies	1,041	295	55	50	1,441
IT Systems Supports	2,216	1,544	147	–	3,907
Building Management	198	120	120	–	438
Parking	863	863	–	–	1,726
Total	4,565	2,822	322	50	7,759
Capital					
Consultancies	770	9	–	–	779
Works	10,429	13	–	–	10,442
Total	11,199	22	–	–	11,221
2024					
Operating					
Garbage collection	112	–	–	–	112
Consultancies	135	–	–	–	135
IT Systems Supports	2,970	982	108	–	4,060
Animal Welfare	473	473	473	–	1,419
Building Management	348	–	–	–	348
Parking	708	692	718	–	2,118
Total	4,746	2,147	1,299	–	8,192
Capital					
Consultancies	240	–	–	–	240
Works	10,017	–	–	–	10,017
Total	10,257	–	–	–	10,257

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 5. Investing in and financing our operations (continued)

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000

(b) Operating lease receivables

The Council has entered into commercial property leases on its investment property. These properties held under operating leases have remaining non-cancellable lease terms of between 1 and 15 years. All leases include a CPI based revision of the rental charge annually.

Future undiscounted minimum rentals receivable under non-cancellable operating leases are as follows:		
Not later than one year	1,408	1,393
Later than one year and not later than five years	4,178	4,678
Later than five years	6,291	7,200
	11,877	13,271

Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 6. Assets we manage

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
6.1 Current assets classified as held for sale		
Current		
Fair value of assets	22,975	11,019
Total current assets classifed as held for sale	22,975	11,019

Assets held for sale relate to 72-80 Bell St, Coburg, 29-31 Urquhart St, Coburg and 498-514 Bell St, Pascoe Vale South, that have been recently added this financial year.

Non-current assets classified as held for sale (including disposal groups) are measured at the lower of their carrying amount and fair value less costs to sell, and are not subject to depreciation. Non-current assets, disposal groups, and related liabilities are treated as current and classified as held for sale if their carrying amount will be recovered through a sale transaction rather than through continuing use. This condition is considered met only when the sale is highly probable and the asset's sale (or disposal group sale) is expected to be completed within 12 months from the date of classification.

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

6.2 Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment

Summary of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	Carrying amount 30 June 2024 $ '000	Additions $ '000	Contributions $ '000	Revaluation $ '000	Disposal $ '000	Depreciation $ '000	Write-off $ '000	Transfers $ '000	Carrying amount 30 June 2025 $ '000
Property	1,840,807	34,246	–	(1,399)	(9,015)	(7,057)	–	35,583	1,893,165
Plant and equipment	17,839	5,722	75	–	(42)	(4,691)	–	930	19,833
Infrastructure	874,100	10,820	428	(193,348)	(2,727)	(27,564)	–	11,045	672,754
Work in progress	78,684	40,480	–	–	–	–	(2,365)	(67,389)	49,410
Total	2,811,430	91,268	503	(194,747)	(11,784)	(39,312)	(2,365)	(19,831)	2,635,162

Summary of Work in Progress	Opening WIP $ '000	Additions $ '000	Write-off $ '000	Transfers $ '000	Closing WIP $ '000
Property	55,965	4,131	(305)	(55,414)	4,377
Plant and equipment	952	830	(43)	(930)	809
Infrastructure	21,767	35,519	(2,017)	(11,045)	44,224
Total	78,684	40,480	(2,365)	(67,389)	49,410

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Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

	Land specialised $ '000	Land non specialised $ '000	Land under Roads $ '000	Total land and land improve-ments $ '000	Buildings specialised $ '000	Total buildings $ '000	Work in progress $ '000	Total property $ '000
Property								
At fair value 1 July 2024	1,207,031	351,324	4,943	1,563,298	413,764	413,764	55,965	2,033,027
Accumulated depreciation at 1 July 2024	–	–	–	–	(136,255)	(136,255)	–	(136,255)
	1,207,031	351,324	4,943	**1,563,298**	277,509	**277,509**	55,965	**1,896,772**
Movements in fair value								
Additions	4,376	1,246	–	5,622	28,624	28,624	4,131	38,377
Revaluation	–	(1,334)	(65)	(1,399)	–	–	–	(1,399)
Disposal	(216)	–	–	(216)	(15,595)	(15,595)	–	(15,811)
Write-off	–	–	–	–	–	–	(305)	(305)
Transfers	(3,162)	(7,245)	–	(10,407)	45,990	45,990	(55,414)	(19,831)
	998	(7,333)	(65)	**(6,400)**	59,019	**59,019**	(51,588)	**1,031**
Movements in accumulated depreciation								
Depreciation and amortisation	–	–	–	–	(7,057)	(7,057)	–	(7,057)
Accumulated depreciation of disposals	–	–	–	–	6,795	6,795	–	6,795
	–	–	–	**–**	(262)	**(262)**	–	**(262)**
At fair value 30 June 2025	1,208,028	343,990	4,879	1,556,897	472,784	472,784	4,377	2,034,058
Accumulated depreciation at 30 June 2025	–	–	–	–	(136,516)	(136,516)	–	(136,516)
Carrying amount	1,208,028	343,990	4,879	**1,556,897**	336,268	**336,268**	4,377	**1,897,542**

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Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

	Motor vehicles $ '000	Plant and equipment $ '000	Furniture and fittings $ '000	Computer equipment $ '000	Library books $ '000	Artwork $ '000	Total $ '000	Work in progress $ '000	Total plant and equipment $ '000
Plant and Equipment									
At fair value 1 July 2024	22,506	4,850	2,551	3,346	12,744	1,935	47,932	952	48,884
Accumulated depreciation at 1 July 2024	(15,880)	(3,125)	(1,339)	(2,106)	(7,643)	–	(30,093)	–	(30,093)
	6,626	1,725	1,212	1,240	5,101	1,935	**17,839**	952	**18,791**
Movements in fair value									
Additions	2,741	296	1,009	734	912	30	5,722	830	6,552
Contributions	–	–	–	75	–	–	75	–	75
Disposal	(231)	(16)	–	(426)	(2,667)	–	(3,340)	–	(3,340)
Write-off	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	(43)	(43)
Transfers	445	48	164	120	148	5	930	(930)	–
	2,955	328	1,173	503	(1,607)	35	**3,387**	(143)	**3,244**
Movements in accumulated depreciation									
Depreciation and amortisation	(2,125)	(387)	(242)	(919)	(1,018)	–	(4,691)	–	(4,691)
Accumulated depreciation of disposals	209	16	–	406	2,667	–	3,298	–	3,298
	(1,916)	(371)	(242)	(513)	1,649	–	**(1,393)**	–	**(1,393)**
At fair value 30 June 2025	25,460	5,178	3,727	3,850	11,135	1,969	51,319	809	52,128
Accumulated depreciation at 30 June 2025	(17,796)	(3,496)	(1,581)	(2,619)	(5,994)	–	(31,486)	–	(31,486)
Carrying amount	7,664	1,682	2,146	1,231	5,141	1,969	**19,833**	809	**20,642**

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Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

	Road surface $ '000	Road pavement $ '000	Drainage $ '000	Footpaths $ '000	Kerb and channel $ '000	Bridges/ retaining walls $ '000	Other infra-structure $ '000	Total $ '000	Work in progress $ '000	Total infra-structure $ '000
Infrastructure										
At fair value 1 July 2024	116,354	438,819	328,753	195,200	123,345	36,185	225,021	1,463,677	21,767	1,485,444
Accumulated depreciation at 1 July 2024	(42,184)	(176,294)	(133,881)	(61,174)	(27,282)	(16,316)	(132,446)	(589,577)	–	(589,577)
	74,170	262,525	194,872	134,026	96,063	19,869	92,575	**874,100**	21,767	**895,867**
Movements in fair value										
Additions	1,630	473	520	757	183	425	6,832	10,820	35,519	46,339
Contributions	–	–	428	–	–	–	–	428	–	428
Revaluation	(1,776)	41,019	33,662	347	23,855	–	–	97,107	–	97,107
Disposal	(1,704)	(731)	(134)	(1,069)	(265)	(98)	(7,248)	(11,249)	–	(11,249)
Write-off	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	(2,017)	(2,017)
Transfers	1,664	483	531	772	187	434	6,974	11,045	(11,045)	–
	(186)	41,244	35,007	807	23,960	761	6,558	**108,151**	22,457	**130,608**
Movements in accumulated depreciation										
Depreciation and amortisation	(3,712)	(4,467)	(3,627)	(4,245)	(1,798)	(463)	(9,252)	(27,564)	–	(27,564)
Accumulated depreciation of disposals	1,331	526	61	361	82	33	6,128	8,522	–	8,522
Accumulated depreciation on revaluation	(29,688)	(124,472)	(14,252)	(57,460)	(64,583)	–	–	(290,455)	–	(290,455)
	(32,069)	(128,413)	(17,818)	(61,344)	(66,299)	(430)	(3,124)	**(309,497)**	–	**(309,497)**
At fair value 30 June 2025	116,169	480,059	363,761	196,008	147,305	36,947	231,580	1,571,829	44,224	1,616,053
Accumulated depreciation at 30 June 2025	(74,252)	(304,707)	(151,699)	(122,519)	(93,582)	(16,746)	(135,570)	(899,075)	–	(899,075)
Carrying amount	41,917	175,352	212,062	73,489	53,723	20,201	96,010	**672,754**	44,224	**716,978**

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

Acquisition

The purchase method of accounting is used for all acquisitions of assets, being the fair value of assets provided as consideration at the date of acquisition plus any incidental costs attributable to the acquisition. Fair value is the price that would be received to sell an asset (or paid to transfer a liability) in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. Refer also to Note 8.4 for further disclosure regarding fair value measurement.

Where assets are constructed by Council, cost includes all materials used in construction, direct labour, borrowing costs incurred during construction, and an appropriate share of directly attributable variable and fixed overheads.

In accordance with Council's policy, the threshold limits have applied when recognising assets within an applicable asset class and unless otherwise stated are consistent with the prior year.

	Depreciation Period years	Threshold Limit $ ´000
Asset recognition thresholds and depreciation periods		
Land and land improvements		
land	n/a	–
land improvements	n/a	–
Buildings		
buildings	5-260 years	1
building and leasehold improvements	N/A	1
Plant and Equipment		
plant, machinery and equipment	3-10 years	1
furniture and fittings	7-10 years	1
computer equipment	1-5 years	1
library books	10 years	1
motor vehicles	up to 10 years	3
artwork	not applicable	1
Infrastructure		
roads surface	Up to 40 years	1
roads pavement	Up to 100 years	1
drainage	Up to 100 years	1
footpaths and cycleways	10-80 years	1
kerb and channel	10-80 years	1
bridges	Up to 200 years	1
Other infrastructure		
street furniture	10 to 20 years	1
recreational, leisure and community facilities	10 to 50 years	1
parks, open space and streetscapes	10 to 100 years	1
playground equipment and other structures	10 to 100 years	1
Right of use assets		
right of use assets	Lease Term	10

Land under roads

Land under roads acquired after 30 June 2008 is brought to account using the fair value basis. Council does not recognise land under roads that it controlled prior to that period in its financial report.

Depreciation and amortisation

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

Buildings, land improvements, plant and equipment, infrastructure, and other assets having limited useful lives are systematically depreciated over their useful lives to the Council in a manner which reflects consumption of the service potential embodied in those assets. Estimates of remaining useful lives and residual values are made on a regular basis with major asset classes reassessed annually. Depreciation rates and methods are reviewed annually.

Where assets have separate identifiable components that are subject to regular replacement, these components are assigned distinct useful lives and residual values and a separate depreciation rate is determined for each component.

Road earthworks are not depreciated on the basis that they are assessed as not having a limited useful life.

Straight line depreciation is charged based on the residual useful life as determined each year.

Depreciation periods used are listed above and are consistent with the prior year unless otherwise stated.

Repairs and maintenance
Where the repair relates to the replacement of a component of an asset and the cost exceeds the capitalisation threshold the cost is capitalised and depreciated. The carrying value of the replaced asset is expensed.

Leasehold improvements
Leasehold improvements are recognised at cost and are amortised over the unexpired period of the lease or the estimated useful life of the improvement, whichever is the shorter.

Valuation of land and buildings
A revaluation is necessary when the fair value of each revalued class of asset differs materially from its carrying amount at balance date. Tom Kennedy (Qualified CPV valuer) from Opteon Property Group, has completed a review of the carrying amount of land and building assets as at February 2025.

The valuation of buildings is at fair value based on current replacement cost less accumulated depreciation at the date of valuation. The valuation of land is at fair value, being market value based on highest and best use permitted by relevant land planning provisions. All freehold land reserved for public open space is valued at a discount of 20 percent to market value based on legal precedents.

Where land use is restricted through existing planning provisions, the valuation is reduced to reflect this limitation. The review methodology included analysis of recent land and building sales to determine the movement in values as displayed by the market. To ascertain a level of market value movement, Opteon Property Group reviewed the sales data throughout Merri-bek City Council from the 1st March 2024 to the 28th February 2025, to determine the material change in the underlying land value of each property sector.

The property sector includes residential, commercial and industrial property classifications. The change in the underlying land value of each sector over the analysed period has been residential -0.22%, commercial -1.97% and industrial 2.51%. These movements can be summarised across all combined sectors to reflect an average change of 0.35%. In addition, to determine the change in council owned buildings, reference was made to the building cost index "Rawlinsons Construction Guide 2025". The building cost index derived from this reference source has indicated an immaterial change in value over the analysed period of 5.35%.

The movement in the value of the land and building assets since the last valuation undertaken as at February 2024 was not material and therefore the change was not applied to Merri-bek City Council's land and building asset register.

Specialised land is valued at fair value using site values adjusted for englobo (undeveloped and/or unserviced) characteristics, access rights and private interests of other parties and entitlements of infrastructure assets and services. This adjustment is an unobservable input in the valuation. The adjustment has no impact on the comprehensive income statement.

Any significant movements in the unobservable inputs for land and land under roads will have a significant impact on the fair value of these assets.

The date and type of the current valuation is detailed in the following table.

Details of the Council's land and buildings and information about the fair value hierarchy as at 30 June 2025 are as follows:

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Date of valuation	Type of Valuation
Non-specialised Land	–	343,990	–	Mar-24	Revaluation
Specialised land	–	–	1,208,028	Mar-24	Revaluation
Buildings	–	–	336,268	Mar-24	Revaluation
Total	–	343,990	1,544,296		

Valuation of Infrastructure

Fair value assessments were performed on 31st May 2025 where it was determined that there was a material movement in fair value for the asset classes of Roads, Footpath, Kerb & Channel and Drainage Infrastructure. The valuation of these classes were undertaken by Geoff Bolling (Bachelor of Engineering - Civil) from Council's Asset Management Unit, at fair value based on replacement cost less accumulated depreciation.

The replacement cost revaluation was conducted in the current year, based on Merri-bek City Council's construction costs of assets within that category, Rawlinsons Australian Construction Handbook and construction cost indices from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The methodology included reassessment of each asset's replacement cost, condition and written down value. The valuation is at fair value based on current replacement cost less accumulated depreciation as at the date of valuation.

Council advises that certain cost components have not been included in the current replacement cost estimate for the asset classes within Infrastructure, as Council does not have data to reliably estimate these costs. This includes disruption costs and third-party assets related costs.

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Date of valuation	Type of Valuation
Road surface	–	–	41,917	May-25	Revaluation
Road pavement	–	–	175,352	May-25	Revaluation
Kerbs	–	–	53,723	May-25	Revaluation
Bridges	–	–	20,201	Jun-23	Revaluation
Footpaths and cycleways	–	–	73,489	May-25	Revaluation
Drainage	–	–	212,062	May-25	Revaluation
Recreational, leisure & community facilities	–	–	22,500	June-23	Index
Parks, open space & streetscapes	–	–	44,731	June-23	Index
Other Infrastructure	–	–	28,779	June-23	Index
Total	–	–	672,754		

Description of significant unobservable inputs into level 3 valuations

Specialised land and land under roads is valued using a market based direct comparison technique. Significant unobservable inputs include the extent and impact of restriction of use and the market cost of land per square metre. The extent and impact of restrictions on use varies and results in a reduction to surrounding land values between 10% and 95%. The market value of land varies significantly depending on the location of the land and the current market conditions. Currently land values range between $4 and $6,500 per square metre.

Specialised buildings are valued using a current replacement cost technique. Significant unobservable inputs include the current replacement cost and remaining useful lives of buildings. Current replacement costs are calculated on a square metre basis and ranges from $350 to $15,000 per square metre. The remaining useful lives of buildings are determined on the basis of the current condition of buildings and vary from 5 years to 260 years. Replacement cost is sensitive to changes in market conditions, with any increase or decrease in cost flowing through to the valuation. Useful lives of buildings are sensitive to changes in expectations or requirements that could either shorten or extend the useful lives of buildings.

Infrastructure assets are valued based on the current replacement cost. Unobservable inputs are included in the current replacement cost and remaining useful lives. The remaining useful lives of infrastructure assets are determined on the basis of the current condition of the asset and vary from 10 year to 200 years. Replacement cost is sensitive to changes in market conditions, with any increase or decrease in cost flowing through to the valuation. Useful lives of infrastructure are sensitive to changes in use, expectations or requirements that could either shorten or extend the useful lives of infrastructure assets.

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Reconciliation of specialised land		
Land under roads	4,879	4,943
Parks and reserves	1,208,028	1,207,029
Total specialised land	1,212,907	1,211,972

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

6.3 Investment property

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Balance at beginning of financial year	36,024	28,690
Additions	390	6,959
Fair value increment	818	375
Balance at end of financial year	37,232	36,024

Investment property is held to generate long-term rental yields. Investment property is measured initially at cost, including transaction costs. Costs incurred subsequent to initial acquisition are capitalised when it is probable that future economic benefit in excess of the originally assessed performance of the asset will flow to the Council. Subsequent to initial recognition at cost, investment property is carried at fair value, determined annually by independent valuers. Changes to fair value are recorded in the comprehensive income statement in the period that they arise.

Valuation of investment property

Valuation of investment properties has been determined in accordance with an independent valuation by Opteon Property Group who has recent experience in the location and category of the property being valued. The valuation is at fair value, based on the current market value for the property.

Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 7. People and relationships

7.1 Council and key management remuneration

(a) Related Parties

Parent entity
Merri-bek City Council is the parent entity.

Subsidiaries and Associates
Procurement Australasia Ltd

(b) Key Management Personnel

Key management personnel (KMP) are those people with the authority and responsibility for planning, directing and controlling the activities of Merri-bek City Council. The Councillors, Chief Executive Officer and Directors are deemed KMP.

Details of KMP at any time during the year are:

Councillors	Mayor Helen Davidson Deputy Mayor Helen Politis Councillor Adam Pulford (Mayor from 1/7/24 to 17/11/24) Councillor Lambros Tapinos (Deputy Mayor from 1/7/24 to 17/11/24) Councillor Mark Riley (from 1/7/24 to 17/11/24) Councillor Annalivia Carli Hannan (from 1/7/24 to 17/11/24) Councillor James Conlan (from 1/7/24 to 14/8/24) Councillor Nat Abboud (from 20/11/24 to current) Councillor Chris Miles (from 20/11/24 to current) Councillor Ella Svensson (from 20/11/24 to current) Councillor Jay Iwasaki (from 20/11/24 to current) Councillor Katerine Theodosis (from 20/11/24 to current) Councillor Liz Irvin (from 20/11/24 to current) Councillor Oscar Yildiz Councillor Sue Bolton Councillor Helen Pavlidis (from 1/7/24 to 17/11/24) Councillor Monica Harte (from 1/7/24 to 17/11/24) Councillor Angelica Panopoulos (from 1/7/24 to 17/11/24)
Key Management Personnel	Chief Executive Officer Cathy Henderson Director City Infrastructure Anita Curnow Director Business Transformation Sue Vujcevic Director Place and Environment Pene Winslade (from 05/08/24) Acting Director Place and Environment Phillip Priest (from 01/07/24 to 01/08/24) Director Community Eamonn Fennessy

	2025 No.	2024 No.
Total Number of Councillors	18	11
Total of Chief Executive Officer and other Key Management Personnel	6	5
Total Number of Key Management Personnel	24	16

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 7. People and relationships (continued)

(c) Remuneration of Key Management Personnel

Remuneration comprises employee benefits including all forms of consideration paid, payable or provided by Council, or on behalf of the Council, in exchange for services rendered. Remuneration of Key Management Personnel and Other senior staff is disclosed in the following categories.

Short-term employee benefits include amounts such as wages, salaries, annual leave or sick leave that are usually paid or payable on a regular basis, as well as non-monetary benefits such as allowances and free or subsidised goods or services.

Other long-term employee benefits include long service leave, other long service benefits or deferred compensation.

Post-employment benefits include pensions, and other retirement benefits paid or payable on a discrete basis when employment has ceased.

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Total remuneration of key management personnel was as follows:		
Short-term employee benefits	2,173	1,974
Other long-term employee benefits	40	13
Post-employment benefits	232	188
Total	2,445	2,175

	2025 No.	2024 No.
The numbers of key management personnel whose total remuneration from Council and any related entities, fall within the following bands:		
$1 - $9,999	1	–
$10,000 - $19,999	3	–
$20,000 - $29,999	9	–
$30,000 - $39,999	3	7
$40,000 - $49,999	–	1
$50,000 - $59,999	–	1
$70,000 - $79,999	1	1
$90,000 - $99,999	1	1
$270,000 - $279,999	–	1
$280,000 - $289,999	2	–
$290,000 - $299,999	1	2
$310,000 - $319,999	1	1
$330,000 - $339,999	1	–
$360,000 - $369,999	1	1
	24	16

continued on next page ...

Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 7. People and relationships (continued)

(d) Remuneration of other senior staff

Other senior staff are officers of Council, other than Key Management Personnel, whose total remuneration exceeds $170,000 and who report directly to a member of the KMP.

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Total remuneration of other senior staff was as follows:		
Short-term employee benefits	3,466	3,070
Other long-term employee benefits	32	49
Post-employment benefits	378	331
Termination benefits	232	–
Total	4,108	3,450

	2025 No.	2024 No.
The number of other senior staff are shown below in their relevant income bands:		
Income Range:		
$170,000 - $179,999	2	–
$180,000 - $189,999	–	6
$190,000 - $199,999	1	5
$200,000 - $209,999	4	2
$210,000 - $219,999	4	2
$220,000 - $229,999	3	1
$230,000 - $239,999	2	–
$250,000 - $259,999	–	1
$280,000 - $289,999	1	–
$420,000 - $429,999	1	–
	18	17

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Total remuneration for the reporting year for other senior staff included above, amounted to:	4,108	3,450

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 7. People and relationships (continued)

7.2 Related party disclosure

(a) Transactions with related parties

During the year Council entered into related party transactions totalling $28,349. The nature of the transactions are related to subscriptions, seminars and memberships with Local Government Professionals Inc.

(b) Outstanding balances with related parties

There are no outstanding balances at the end of the reporting period in relation to transactions with related parties.

(c) Loans to/from related parties

The aggregate amount of loans in existence at balance date that have been made, guaranteed or secured by the council to a related party are nil as at 30 June 2025.

(d) Commitments to/from related parties

The aggregate amount of commitments in existence at balance date that have been made, guaranteed or secured by the council to a related party are are nil as at 30 June 2025.

Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 8. Managing uncertainties

8.1 Contingent assets and liabilities

(a) Contingent assets
Contingent assets and contingent liabilities are not recognised in the Balance Sheet, but are disclosed and if quantifiable, are measured at nominal value. Contingent assets and liabilities are presented inclusive of GST receivable or payable, respectively. As at 30 June 2025 there were no contingent assets identified by Council.

(b) Contingent liabilities

Contingent liabilities are:
- possible obligations that arise from past events, whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence or non-occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the Council; or
- present obligations that arise from past events but are not recognised because:
  - it is not probable that an outflow of resources embodying economic benefits will be required to settle the obligation; or
  - the amount of the obligation cannot be measured with sufficient reliability.

As at 30 June 2025, the following Contingent Liabilities have been identified by Council.

Superannuation
Council has obligations under a defined benefit superannuation scheme that may result in the need to make additional contributions to the scheme, matters relating to this potential obligation are outlined below. As a result of the volatility in financial markets the likelihood of making such contributions in future periods exists.

Insurance claims
Council is presently involved in several confidential insurance matters, which are being conducted through Council's insurer. As these matters are yet to be finalised, and the financial outcomes are unable to be reliably estimated, no allowance for these contingencies has been made in the financial report.

Legal matters
Council is presently involved in several confidential legal matters, which are being conducted through Council's solicitors. As these matters are yet to be finalised, and the financial outcomes are unable to be reliably estimated, no allowance for these contingencies has been made in the financial report.

8.2 Change in accounting standards

Certain new Australian Accounting Standards and interpretations have been published that are not mandatory for the 30 June 2025 reporting period. Council assesses the impact of these new standards. As at 30 June 2025 there were no new accounting standards or interpretations issued by the AASB which are applicable for the year ending 30 June 2025 that are expected to impact Council.

In September 2024 the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB) issued two Australian Sustainability Reporting Standards (ASRS). This followed Commonwealth legislation establishing Australia's sustainability reporting framework. Relevant entities will be required to undertake mandatory reporting of climate-related disclosures in future financial years. Public sector application issues remain under consideration and Council will continue to monitor developments and potential implications for future financial years.

8.3 Financial instruments

(a) Objectives and policies

The Council's principal financial instruments comprise cash assets, term deposits, receivables (excluding statutory receivables), payables (excluding statutory payables) and bank and TCV borrowings. Details of the material accounting policy information and methods adopted, including the criteria for recognition, the basis of measurement and the basis on which income and expenses are recognised, in respect of each class of financial asset, financial liability and equity instrument is disclosed in the notes of the financial statements. Risk management is carried out by senior management under policies approved by the Council. These policies include identification and analysis of the risk exposure to Council and appropriate procedures, controls and risk minimisation.

continued on next page ...

Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 8. Managing uncertainties (continued)

(b) Market risk

Market risk is the risk that the fair value or future cash flows of Council financial instruments will fluctuate because of changes in market prices. The Council's exposure to market risk is primarily through interest rate risk with only insignificant exposure to other price risks and no exposure to foreign currency risk.

Interest rate risk

Interest rate risk refers to the risk that the value of a financial instrument or cash flows associated with the instrument will fluctuate due to changes in market interest rates. Council's interest rate liability risk arises primarily from long term loans and borrowings at fixed rates which exposes Council to fair value interest rate risk. Council does not hold any interest bearing financial instruments that are measured at fair value, and therefore has no exposure to fair value interest rate risk. Cash flow interest rate risk is the risk that the future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market interest rates. Council has minimal exposure to cash flow interest rate risk through its cash and deposits that are at floating rates.

Investment of surplus funds is made with approved financial institutions under the *Local Government Act 2020*.
Council manages interest rate risk by adopting an investment policy that ensures:

- diversification of investment product;
- monitoring of return on investment; and
- benchmarking of returns and comparison with budget.

There has been no significant change in the Council's exposure, or its objectives, policies and processes for managing interest rate risk or the methods used to measure this risk from the previous reporting period.

Interest rate movements have not been sufficiently significant during the year to have an impact on the Council's year end result.

(c) Credit risk

Credit risk is the risk that a contracting entity will not complete its obligations under a financial instrument and cause Council to make a financial loss. Council has exposure to credit risk on some financial assets included in the balance sheet. Particularly significant areas of credit risk exist in relation to outstanding fees and fines as well as loans and receivables from sporting clubs and associations. To help manage this risk:

- Council has a policy for establishing credit limits for the entities Council deals with;
- Council may require collateral where appropriate; and
- Council only invests surplus funds with financial institutions which have a recognised credit rating specified in Council's investment policy.

Receivables consist of a large number of customers, spread across the ratepayer, business and government sectors. Credit risk associated with the Council's financial assets is minimal because the main debtor is secured by a charge over the rateable property.

There are no material financial assets which are individually determined to be impaired.

Council may also be subject to credit risk for transactions which are not included in the balance sheet, such as when Council provides a guarantee for another party. Details of our contingent liabilities are disclosed in Note 8.1(b).

The maximum exposure to credit risk at the reporting date to recognised financial assets is the carrying amount, net of any allowance for impairment of those assets, as disclosed in the balance sheet and notes to the financial statements. Council does not hold any collateral.

(d) Liquidity risk

Liquidity risk includes the risk that, as a result of Council's operational liquidity requirements it will not have sufficient funds to settle a transaction when required or will be forced to sell a financial asset at below value or may be unable to settle or recover a financial asset.

To help reduce these risks Council:

- has a liquidity policy which targets a minimum and average level of cash and cash equivalents to be maintained;

continued on next page ...

Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 8. Managing uncertainties (continued)

- has readily accessible standby facilities and other funding arrangements in place;
- has a liquidity portfolio structure that requires surplus funds to be invested within various bands of liquid instruments;
- monitors budget to actual performance on a regular basis; and
- sets limits on borrowings relating to the percentage of loans to rate revenue and percentage of loan principal repayments to rate revenue.

The Council's maximum exposure to liquidity risk is the carrying amounts of financial liabilities as disclosed on the face of the balance sheet and the amounts related to financial guarantees disclosed in Note 8.1(c)., and is deemed insignificant based on prior periods' data and current assessment of risk.

There has been no significant change in Council's exposure, or its objectives, policies and processes for managing liquidity risk or the methods used to measure this risk from the previous reporting period.

With the exception of borrowings, all financial liabilities are expected to be settled within normal terms of trade. Details of the maturity profile for borrowings are disclosed at Note 5.3.

Unless otherwise stated, the carrying amounts of financial instruments reflect their fair value.

(e) Sensitivity disclosure analysis

Taking into account past performance, future expectations, economic forecasts, and management's knowledge and experience of the financial markets, Council believes the following movements are 'reasonably possible' over the next 12 months:

- A parallel shift of - 0.75% and + 0.75% in market interest rates (AUD) from year-end rates of 4.90%.

These movements will not have a material impact on the valuation of Council's financial assets and liabilities, nor will they have a material impact on the results of Council's operations.

8.4 Fair value measurement

Fair Value Hierarchy
Council's financial assets and liabilities are not valued in accordance with the fair value hierarchy, Council's financial assets and liabilities are measured at amortised cost.

Council measures certain assets and liabilities at fair value where required or permitted by Australian Accounting Standards. AASB 13 Fair value measurement, aims to improve consistency and reduce complexity by providing a definition of fair value and a single source of fair value measurement and disclosure requirements for use across Australian Accounting Standards.

Council has considered the amendments to AASB 13 Fair Value Measurement that apply for the 2024-25 financial year as a result of AASB 2022-10 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards - Fair Value Measurement of Non-Financial Assets of Not-for-Profit Public Sector Entities. For assets, where the Council adopts a current replacement cost approach to determine fair value, the Council now considers the inclusion of site preparation costs, disruption costs and costs to restore another entity's assets in the underlying valuation.

The AASB 13 amendments apply prospectively, comparative figures have not been restated.
The AASB 13 amendments have not resulted in any material impacts to Councils financial statements.

All assets and liabilities for which fair value is measured or disclosed in the financial statements are categorised within a fair value hierarchy, based on the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement as a whole are described as followed:

Level 1 — Quoted (unadjusted) market prices in active markets for identical assets or liabilities
Level 2 — Valuation techniques for which the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement is directly or indirectly observable; and
Level 3 — Valuation techniques for which the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement is unobservable.

For the purpose of fair value disclosures, Council has determined classes of assets and liabilities on the basis of the nature, characteristics and risks of the asset or liability and the level of the fair value hierarchy as explained above.

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 8. Managing uncertainties (continued)

In addition, Council determines whether transfers have occurred between levels in the hierarchy by re-assessing categorisation (based on the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement as a whole) at the end of each reporting period.

Revaluation
Subsequent to the initial recognition of assets, non-current physical assets, other than plant and equipment, are measured at their fair value, being the price that would be received to sell an asset (or paid to transfer a liability) in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. For plant and equipment, the carrying amount is considered to approximate fair value given short useful lives. At balance date, the Council reviewed the carrying value of the individual classes of assets measured at fair value to ensure that each asset materially approximated its fair value. Where the carrying value materially differed from the fair value at balance date, the class of asset was revalued.

Fair value valuations are determined in accordance with a valuation hierarchy. Changes to the valuation hierarchy will only occur if an external change in the restrictions or limitations of the use of an asset results in changes to the permissible or practical highest and best use of the asset. In addition, Council undertakes a formal revaluation of land, buildings, and infrastructure assets on a regular basis ranging from 1 to 4 years. The valuation is performed either by experienced council officers or independent experts. The following table sets out the frequency of revaluations by asset class.

Asset Class	**Revaluation frequency**
Land	1 to 2 years
Buildings	1 to 2 years
Roads	1 to 4 years
Bridges	1 to 4 years
Footpaths and cycleways	1 to 4 years
Drainage	1 to 4 years
Recreational, leisure and community facilities	1 to 4 years
Waste management	1 to 4 years
Parks, open space and streetscape	1 to 4 years
Other infrastructure	1 to 4 years

Where the assets are revalued, the revaluation increases are credited directly to the asset revaluation reserve. In the case that an increase reverses a prior year decrease for that class of asset that had been recognised as an expense, the increase is recognised as revenue up to the amount of the expense. Revaluation decreases are recognised as an expense except where prior increases are included in the asset revaluation reserve for that class of asset. In that case, the decrease is taken to the reserve and the remaining increases. Within the same class of assets, revaluation increases and decreases within the year are offset.

Impairment of assets

At each reporting date, the Council reviews the carrying value of its assets to determine whether there is any indication that these assets have been impaired. If such an indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset, being the higher of the asset's fair value less costs of disposal and value in use, is compared to the assets carrying value. Any excess of the assets carrying value over its recoverable amount is expensed to the comprehensive income statement. If the asset is carried at the revalued amount, the impairment loss is recognised directly against the revaluation surplus in respect to the same class of asset if the impairment loss does not exceed the amount in the revaluation surplus for that same class of asset.

8.5 Events occurring after balance date

No matters have occurred after balance date that require disclosure in the financial report.

Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 9. Other matters

	Balance at beginning of reporting period $ '000	Increase (decrease) $ '000	Balance at end of reporting period $ '000
9.1 Reserves			
(a) Asset revaluation reserves			
2025			
Property			
Land and land improvements	1,219,217	(1,399)	1,217,818
Buildings	110,665	–	110,665
	1,329,882	(1,399)	1,328,483
Plant and equipment			
Artwork	469	–	469
	469	–	469
Infrastructure			
Bridges	13,505	–	13,505
Footpaths and cycleways	111,400	(57,116)	54,284
Drainage	144,557	19,416	163,973
Road surface	74,527	(31,466)	43,061
Road pavement	213,022	(83,454)	129,568
Kerb and channel	86,803	(40,730)	46,073
Other infrastructure	92,042	2	92,044
	735,856	(193,347)	542,509
Total asset revaluation reserves	2,066,207	(194,746)	1,871,461
2024			
Property			
Land and land improvements	1,234,554	(15,337)	1,219,217
Buildings	118,322	(7,657)	110,665
	1,352,876	(22,994)	1,329,882
Plant and equipment			
Artwork	468	1	469
	468	1	469
Infrastructure			
Bridges	13,435	70	13,505
Footpaths and cycleways	111,365	35	111,400
Drainage	144,426	131	144,557
Road surface	74,564	(37)	74,527
Road pavement	213,075	(53)	213,022
Kerb and channel	86,791	12	86,803
Other infrastructure	92,065	(23)	92,042
	735,721	135	735,856
Total asset revaluation reserves	2,089,065	(22,858)	2,066,207

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 9. Other matters (continued)

The asset revaluation reserve is used to record the increased (net) value of Council's assets over time.

	Balance at beginning of reporting period $ '000	Transfer from Accumulated Surplus $ '000	Transfer to Accumulated Surplus $ '000	Balance at end of reporting period $ '000
(b) Other reserves				
2025				
Waste Charge Reserve (restricted)	2,551	569	–	3,120
Public resort and recreation land fund (restricted)	20,308	8,322	(12,849)	15,781
Social & affordable housing reserve	496	210	–	706
Defined benefits superannuation reserve	13,500	–	–	13,500
Significant Projects reserve	9,833	14,196	(21,431)	2,598
Local Government Funding Vehicle reserve	6,579	2,208	–	8,787
Developer Contribution Plan reserve (restricted)	2,026	447	(929)	1,544
Carry Forward Reserve	21,276	20,664	(21,277)	20,663
Total Other reserves	76,569	46,616	(56,486)	66,699
2024				
Waste Charge Reserve (restricted)	3,504	–	(953)	2,551
Public resort and recreation land fund (restricted)	19,595	8,916	(8,203)	20,308
Social & affordable housing reserve	397	99	–	496
Defined benefits superannuation reserve	13,500	–	–	13,500
Significant Projects reserve	23,597	14,306	(28,070)	9,833
Local Government Funding Vehicle reserve	4,210	2,369	–	6,579
Developer Contribution Plan reserve (restricted)	2,392	982	(1,348)	2,026
Carry Forward Reserve	19,292	20,771	(18,787)	21,276
Total restricted reserves	86,487	47,443	(57,361)	76,569
Total Other reserves	86,487	47,443	(57,361)	76,569

The Waste Charge Reserve, factoring in under or over expenditure on the provision of kerbside waste services. The reserve is then used to offset the future waste charge calculation of service delivery, strategic projects, compliance, and long-term planning for Council's waste management responsibilities.

The Public Resort and Recreation Land Fund holds the balance of open space contributions paid to Council by developers and is utilised to fund the development of new open space and recreation assets, as well as upgrade or expansion of existing assets.

The Social and Affordable Housing Strategic Reserve provides funds for the purchase of community housing projects along with other housing initiatives.

Merri-bek Defined Benefit Reserve provides funds for payments requested by Vision Super to meet our superannuation obligations under the defined benefit scheme.

The Significant Projects Reserve accumulates funds to assist with the development of major Council assets. Currently the reserve is utilised to fund the redevelopment of Fawkner Leisure Centre and the construction of the Saxon Street Community Hub.

The Local Government Funding Vehicle reserve accumulates funds to be used to reduce the LGFV bonds held by Council. LGFV is a group borrowing scheme with interest only repayments.

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Merri-bek City Council

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 9. Other matters (continued)

The Developers Contribution Plan Reserve (DCP) accumulates development contributions paid to Council in respect of developments within particular Plan areas and is used to contribute towards delivery of a ten-year Capital works program with each of the twelve DCP areas.

Carry Forward Reserve is used to set aside funding for incomplete operating or capital works projects carried forward from the current financial year to future financial years.

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
9.2 Reconciliation of cash flows from operating activities to surplus/(deficit)		
Surplus for the year	30,420	25,761
Non-cash adjustments:		
Depreciation/amortisation	39,697	39,083
Loss on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	12,827	3,309
Fair value adjustments for investment property	(818)	(375)
Contributions - Non-monetary assets	(503)	(1,887)
Amounts disclosed in financing activities	924	715
Change in assets and liabilities:		
(Increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables	(191)	(5,599)
(Increase)/decrease in inventories	(31)	(411)
(Increase)/decrease in prepayments	(2,671)	(1,244)
(Increase)/decrease in contract assets	(4,596)	5,075
(Increase)/decrease in other assets	(8)	(347)
Increase/(decrease) in trade and other payables	925	3,850
Increase/(decrease) in provisions	(1,366)	1,390
Increase/(decrease) in trust funds	596	108
Net cash provided by operating activities	75,205	69,428

9.3 Parking fine refund scheme

During the financial year ended 30 June 2025, Merri-bek City Council identified an administrative oversight relating to the penalty amounts applied to certain parking infringements issued between 1 July 2013 and 11 June 2025. Under the Road Safety Act 1986, councils are required to formally resolve the applicable penalty rate for specific infringement categories, within a prescribed range of 0.2 to 0.5 penalty units.

Council has historically applied the maximum rate of 0.5 penalty units in line with sector practice. However, it was determined that a valid resolution authorising this rate had not been in place since the 2012–13 financial year. As a result, the higher penalty amount applied to 11 minor infringement categories was not formally authorised during the affected period.

Following a detailed review, Council identified that the financial impact of this oversight amounted to $2.75 million in parking infringement revenue that had been incorrectly recognised over the affected period. This error has been corrected by restating the relevant financial statement line items in accordance with AASB 108 Accounting Policies, Changes in Accounting Estimates and Errors.

Note 10. Changes in accounting policies

There have been no changes to accounting policies in the 2024-25 year.

7.2 ADOPTION OF 10-YEAR FINANCIAL PLAN 2025-2035

Director Business Transformation, Sue Vujcevic

Finance Management

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Adopts the proposed 10-year Financial Plan 2025-2035 (provided as Attachment 1) in accordance with the legislative requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020.*
2. Advises the submitter that Council has considered their submission relating to the Proposed 10-year financial plan 2025-2035 and that the submitter be advised of the outcome of the consideration as it relates to their specific submission through this council report, and they be thanked for their contributions
3. Authorises the Director Business Transformation to finalise the Merri-bek Council 10-year financial plan 2025-2035, including any amendments as a result of the adoption and or/minor administrative changes, including making the final documents available for public inspection.

REPORT

Executive Summary

The *Local Government Act 2020* requires each Council to prepare a Financial Plan covering a minimum period of 10-years following each Council election. The 10-year Financial Plan 2025-2035 (the financial plan) was developed through deliberative engagement and covers the periods 2025-26 to 2034-35.

The purpose of this report is to seek Council adoption of the Financial Plan (Attachment 1).

The Financial Plan is one of a number of integrated documents that have been developed to provide a robust and transparent system of financial management aligned to the longer-term aspirations for Merri-bek and as expressed in the newly refreshed Community Vision and Council Plan.

The Financial Plan is an important document as it sets out broadly how Council can fund essential services and projects in coming years. The Financial Plan is a decision-making tool to identify Council's current and projected financial capacity to meet Council's future needs in providing services and facilities to the community based on the goals and aspirations of the Council Plan. The long-term outlook for Council displays prudent financial management.

The draft Financial Plan was presented to Council at its meeting on 13 August 2025 and subsequently went out for public exhibition for 28 days. Following this, one submission was received. The submission (included in the issues section of the report) references specific projects to be funded and/or retain funding annually. Officers are not recommending any changes to the financial plan as a result of the submission, the rationale for this being that the Financial Plan does not go into the level of detail of specific projects, like the submitter mentioned. This detail is included in the annual 4-year budget which goes out for public exhibition annually in April/May.

Since public exhibition of the draft plan, officers have updated the forecast actuals to reflect the actual 2024-25 numbers as endorsed by Council on 10 September 2025.

Previous Council Decisions

Draft Merri-bek City Council 10-year Financial Plan 2025-2035 - 13 August 2025

That Council:

1. *Endorses the draft 10-year Financial Plan 2025-2035, at Attachment 1 to this report, for the purpose of community exhibition.*

2. *Invites feedback on the draft 10-year Financial Plan 2025-2035 for the public exhibition period, from 15 August 2025 until 12 September 2025.*

3. *Makes the draft 10-year Financial Plan 2025-2035 available on the Council website and hard copies available at the three civic centres and all libraries.*

1. Policy Context

In accordance with section 91 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council must:

a) Develop, adopt and keep in force a Financial Plan for at least the next 10 financial years in accordance with its deliberative engagement practices.

The Financial Plan must be prepared in accordance with Council's deliberative engagement practices by 31 October in the year following a general election.

2. Background

The Financial Plan looks at the assumptions and budget parameters that have been applied to the 4-Year budget and extends these out into years 5 to 10 in order to give a long-term view of Council's financial viability and outcomes.

Each year the 10-Year Financial Plan will be reviewed and updated to reflect the circumstances of Council at the time, and any proposed changes will be considered for adoption by Council as a part of the annual budget process.

Under the *Local Government Act 2020*, and in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy, Council is required to prepare the Financial Plan in accordance with its deliberative engagement practices in future years.

The Financial Plan is included as **Attachment 1** to this report.

3. Issues

The preparation of a 10-year Financial Plan generates improved information to guide Council's decisions about the need, timing and priority of proposed expenditure. Key financial indicators are also used to monitor Council's long-term financial sustainability are in line with established benchmarks.

The Financial Plan seeks to ensure we have the financial capacity to continue to provide service levels which meet the needs of our community in a financially sustainable way by:

- Maintaining a modest operating surplus over the life of the Financial Plan whilst spending on renewal and upgrade of community assets.
- Striving to continually improve the way that we deliver our existing and future services and proactively seeking out savings without affecting service delivery levels to the community.
- Monitoring our asset condition data and prioritising the renewal of community infrastructure and facilities.
- Addressing the increasing costs, environmental impacts and potential service changes to council waste services. This includes the investigation of a transition to a four-bin service to reduce waste to landfill and improve the quality of recyclables.
- Monitoring and planning for the ongoing demand for new infrastructure driven by growth, changes in demographics, and increasing community expectations via the development of a comprehensive and evidence driven Asset Management Plan that is discussed and supported by the community.

- Saving for significant investment in placemaking projects (such as the Coburg library and piazza project). Placemaking projects capitalise on a community's assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and wellbeing'.
- Saving for the 'Parks close to home' strategies that will utilise a large proportion of the broader open space reserve funding to fill open space gaps across Merri-bek. Not only creating and improving access to open space in the area but ensuring new parks and locations are sought opportunistically each year.
- Saving for significant investment in aquatic projects including the Coburg Leisure Centres redevelopment. Upgrading and maintaining Aquatic and Leisure Facilities as outlined in the Moreland Aquatic and Leisure Strategy. Unlike general building infrastructure, Council's six facilities aquatic infrastructure have a life cycle of approximately 50 years and significant ongoing investment is required. Investment in this strategy reinforces Council's commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of residents by providing infrastructure and services that support good health outcomes;
- Maximise external contributions in relation to Development and Open Space Contributions Reserve.
- Ensuring that our debt and interest profile remains at a level that is low enough to guarantee our capacity to service and repay this debt into the future.
- Operating within the key financial indicators and benchmarks to ensure we maintain a sound financial position.
- Advocate strongly within the sector to secure funding where possible and strive to increase sustainable opportunities to diversify Council's revenue base.

In summary, Merri-bek Council is committed to ensuring the responsible and the maximum allocation of funds to initiatives to progress the ongoing and future needs of the local community.

Submissions received to the draft Financial Plan

The draft Financial Plan was presented to Council at its meeting on 13 August 2025 and subsequently went out for public exhibition for 28 days. One submission was received as shown in the table below, with the accompanying officer response:

Submission received:	**Officer response:**
Merri-bek City Council's Financial Plan would include Exercise and gym equipment in local parks, Fawkner Festa, Fawkner Marketplace, 98.9 North West FM Hadfield studios and more for the allocated monies from $1,000 to $15,000 as well.	Proposing no change to the financial plan. The Financial Plan is an important document as it sets out broadly how Council can fund essential services and projects in coming years. The Financial Plan is a decision-making tool to identify Council's current and projected financial capacity to meet Council's future needs in providing services and facilities to the community based on the goals and aspirations of the Council Plan. The Financial Plan does not go into the level of detail of specific projects, like the submitter mentioned. This type of detail is usually considered in the annual 4-year budget, which goes out for public exhibition annually in April/May.

Since public exhibition of the draft plan, officers have updated the forecast actuals to reflect the actual 2024-25 numbers as endorsed by Council on 10 September 2025.

Human Rights Consideration

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

4. Community consultation and engagement

Council launched its engagement program in November 2024 with consultation on the Budget 2025-2029 where over 40 ideas were submitted and over 1,000 people participated. Earlier this year deliberative engagement commenced to realise the Community's vision for the future of Merri-bek.

Deliberative workshops were held over 3 days in February on the Community Vision and priorities for strategic plans. Over 60 residents, representative of the Merri-bek community, refreshed our Community Vision and provided an insight into what is important to the Merri-bek community.

Councillors also participated in three workshop sessions during January to May to formulate and consolidate Council Plan priorities to inform all other strategic documents. A review and analysis was also undertaken of all significant community engagement projects undertaken by Council in the last 4 years.

The draft Community Vision and draft Council Plan 2025-2029 was out for community consultation from 25 June 2025 to 22 July 2025 and were subsequently adopted by Council at its meeting on 10 September 2025.

The next stage of the engagement process, as endorsed by Council at its meeting on 13 August 2025, involved the draft Asset Management Plan and draft 10- Year Financial Plan going out on public exhibition from 15 August 2025 until 12 September 2025.

One submission was received which stated *Merri-bek City Council's Financial Plan would include Exercise and gym equipment in local parks, Fawkner Festa, Fawkner Marketplace, 98.9 North West FM Hadfield studios and more for the allocated monies from $1,000 to $15,000 as well.* Officers do not recommend any changes to the financial plan as a result of submissions received.

5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

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

6. Financial and Resources Implications

Costs associated with finalising the Financial Plan are funded from existing operating budget allocations.

7. Implementation

Subject to Council's decision, the Financial Plan will be published on Council's website.

Attachment/s

1⇩ Proposed 10-year Financial Plan - 2025-26 to 2034-35 D25/492047


Merri-bek
City Council
Proposed 10-Year
Financial Plan
2025-26 to 2034-35

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1. Introduction

1.1 Executive summary

The 10-year Financial Plan (The Plan) is a key strategic document that sets out 10-year financial projections based on a set of assumptions, known at the time of developing this plan. It is designed to reflect the financial impacts of providing the current service levels and our program of capital works.

The Local Government Act 2020 stipulates a requirement for all Victorian councils to prepare and endorse a 10-year financial plan following each general election, aligning with the Community Vision, Council Plan and other strategic plans of Council.

The Plan is a strategic document that does not override the Annual Budget process and/or decisions in relation to timing of expenditure but will assist to provide information that is crucial to long-term decision making.

The Plan also aligns with the financial management principles within the Local Government Act 2020; alongside Council's financial objectives we apply to our financial planning, control and management as follows:

1. Adopting a balanced budget – by adopting a balanced unrestricted result, this ensures that each financial years' expenses are fully funded by an identified funding source (including savings via the reserves)
2. Fund existing service levels – ensure that the current services levels that Council provides continues to be fully funded when preparing budgets and making financial decisions
3. Fund infrastructure renewals – the funding allocated to annual capital works programs is to remain at greater than $1.30 for every $1 of depreciation, this ensures existing infrastructure assets are being maintained and kept up with the pace of consumption (depreciation) of these assets
4. Victorian Auditor-General Office (VAGO) measures – maintain an average low-risk for the seven indicators used by VAGO to measure financial sustainability
5. Financial sustainability – the capacity to meet the agreed service and infrastructure needs of the community and absorb foreseeable changes and unexpected shocks into the future (both short and long term).

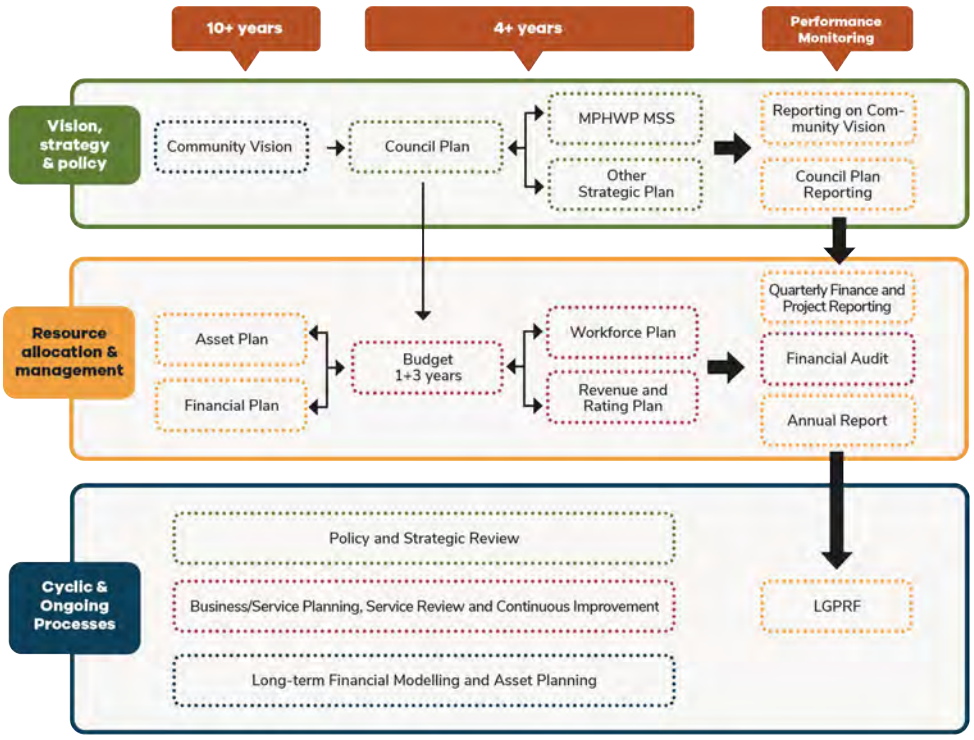
The Plan as proposed indicates that Council is able to maintain the above five financial objectives for the next 10-years.

2. Legislative Requirements & Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework

2.1 Integrated Planning & Reporting Framework

The *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) addresses planning and financial management requirements including development of strategic planning, budgeting and annual reporting documents. At each stage of the integrated planning and reporting framework there are opportunities for community and stakeholder input. This is important to ensure transparency and accountability to both residents and ratepayers.

The diagram below depicts the integrated planning and reporting framework that applies to local government in Victoria.



2.3 Strategic Planning Principles

The Plan provides a 10 year financially sustainable projection regarding how the actions of the Council Plan may be funded to achieve the Community Vision. The Plan is developed in the context of the following strategic planning principles:

a) Council has an integrated approach to planning, monitoring and performance reporting.

b) The Plan addresses the Community Vision by funding the aspirations of the Council Plan. The Council Plan aspirations and actions are formulated in the context of the Community Vision.

c) The Plan statements articulate the 10-year financial resources necessary to implement the goals and aspirations of the Council Plan to achieve the Community Vision.

d) Council's strategic planning principles identify and address the risks to effective implementation of The Plan.

e) The Plan allows for the strategic planning principles of progress monitoring and reviews, to adapt to changing circumstances.

2.4 Financial Management Principles

The Plan demonstrates the following financial management principles:

a) Revenue, expenses, assets, liabilities, investments and financial transactions are managed in accordance with Council's financial policies and strategic plans.

b) Management of the following financial risks:

- The financial viability of the Council (refer to Section 3.3 Financial Policy Statements).
- The management of current and future liabilities of the Council. The estimated 10-year liabilities are disclosed in section 4.2 Balance Sheet projections.
- The beneficial enterprises of Council (where appropriate).

c) Financial policies and strategic plans are designed to provide financial stability and predictability to the community.

d) Council maintains accounts and records that explain its financial operations and financial position (refer to section 4 Financial Statements).

2.5 Engagement Principles

The *Local Government Act 2020* requires Victorian councils to develop their key strategic plans through deliberative engagement practices (as outlined in their community engagement policy). Our Community Engagement Policy defines deliberative engagement as *providing our community with sufficient time and information to enable critical reasoning, and consideration of options as part of a decision-making process.*

To develop our 10-year Financial Plan, we undertook the following engagement activities:

- Community consultation on Council Budget 2025-2029 – including over 40 Community Budget Ideas submitted, 1,060 people participated in the Budget Ideas voting, and 196 submissions to the Draft Council Budget 2025-29 (November'24, April-May'25);

- 3-day deliberative workshop on Community Vision and priorities for strategic plans - over 60 residents, representative of the Merri-bek community, refreshed our Community Vision and provided an insight into what is important to the Merri-bek community. This insight helped to guide our Council Plan 2025-29, Health and Wellbeing Plan, 10-year Financial Plan, and 10-year Asset Management Plan (February'25);
- 3 workshop sessions for Merri-bek Councillors to formulate and consolidate Council Plan priorities, which inform all other strategic documents (January-May'25);
- Review and analysis of Context report, a summary report of all significant community engagement projects Council undertook in the last 4 years;

Following endorsement the final engagement step is:

- Community feedback submitted on the Draft 10-year Financial Plan – submissions to be provided via Conversations Merri-bek online portal and in writing for 28 days (August'25);

The Financial Plan, including any revisions, will be presented to the Council meeting on 8 October'25 for adoption

2.6 10-year Asset Plan Integration

Integration to the Asset Plan is a key principle underpinning Council's strategic financial planning. The purpose of this integration is to ensure that future funding is allocated in a manner that supports service delivery in terms of the plans and the effective management of Council's assets into the future.

The Asset Plan identifies the operational and strategic practices that will ensure that Council manages assets across their life cycle in a financially sustainable manner. The Asset Plan and associated asset management category plans provide council with a sound base to understand the risk associated with managing its assets for the community's benefit.

2.7 Revenue and Rating Plan Integration

Integration to the Revenue and Rating Plan is another key strategic financial planning principle. The Revenue and Rating Plan provides the framework for the setting of fees and charges, statutory charges, rates, and other Council income sources. It also documents assumptions regarding the levels of non-controlled revenues that the Council expects to generate over the 4-year period covered by the Plan, such as grants, subsidies, and contributions.

Additionally, it defines the amounts of rates to be generated either through a uniform rate, or from different ratepayer/property classes through municipal charges, differential rates, service rates and charges, and special rates and charges (where they have been adopted).

3. Financial Plan Context Setting

3.1 Challenges that may impact our financial sustainability:

There are a range of challenges Council continues to face which may affect future assumptions in The Plan and Councils financial sustainability, these include:

- Rate capping – Victorian councils are subject to rate capping, which sets the maximum percentage limit that the total income received from rates can increase annually. Rate capping provides substantial financial challenges to Council's long term financial sustainability and continues to restrict Councils ability to raise revenue to maintain service delivery levels and invest in community assets.
- Population growth – While population is estimated to be 191,747 currently and forecast suggest population will grow to 222,733 by 2036. The current financial plan assumes service levels remain the same and has not allowed for change/expansion in service delivery.
- Cost shifting from Federal and State Governments – Cost shifting from State or Federal Government is a continuous challenge and happens when these higher levels of government reduce funding or stop providing certain services but still expect Councils to fund the gap or provide those services; as a result, local governments have to pay for them instead. Also, over time, when financial contributions received from the State or Federal government do not increase in line with the real cost of providing services, Council is then required to bridge the gap in funding using rating income and/or needing to reprioritise funding away from providing important services to the community.
- Aged Care Reforms -The move from the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) to the Support at Home program creates financial pressure for local governments, mainly because funding will shift from guaranteed block payments to individualised client-based funding. This means councils will have less predictable income and must compete with other providers for clients, which could make some services harder to sustain. On top of that, councils face extra costs for upgrading digital systems and training staff, all while dealing with uncertainty around when the changes will take effect.
- Developer contributions - If the Minister for Planning of Victoria does not approve the proposed amendments to the Merri-bek planning scheme to introduce a new open space levy and new Development Contributions Plan, Council will face significant detrimental financial impacts. Without these mechanisms, we'll have limited ability to secure funding from new developments to support essential new infrastructure - such as parks, community facilities, and local roads, which are all needed to accommodate population growth. Any shortfall will lead to budgetary strain and would compromise the quality and sustainability of urban development within the municipality.
- Significant capital works projects – The Plan has allowed for the construction of the $60 million Coburg library and piazza project (completion expected by November 2029). While the next significant capital works project is not confirmed, the assumptions is to save for the next potential project is likely to take place in the next 10-15 years, such as Coburg Leisure Centre redevelopment.
- Capital works program – There are some capital projects with allowance made only for feasibility or investigation works in the next 4-years but not implementation. These

unfunded projects include, but are not limited to, McDonald Reserve – stage 2, Coburg basketball stadium and Pascoe Vale Outdoor Pool.

- Maintaining existing assets – Council manages $2.8 billion of essential community assets. According to the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia (IPWEA), 1 in 10 of all local government assets across the nation needs significant attention, and 3 in every 100 assets may need to be replaced. We know Council is investing significantly year-on-year on the capital works program in comparison to other local governments. The goal of asset renewal is to bring the asset back to its "as-new" condition or a state where it can provide the same level of service as when it was first build. While our indicators show that we sit within a low risk for asset renewal year-on year, we know we have ageing infrastructure and that each individual asset is not being maintained to this level.
- Changes in regulations, legislation or policy – many changes in regulation or policy imposed by the state or commonwealth lead to additional, unplanned costs being incurred. Even when Council is fully supportive of such a change, it becomes increasingly difficult to implement in the rate capped environment.
- Climate change and increase in extreme weather events - as the intensity and frequency of extreme weather events increase, the need for investment in climate change adaptation and mitigation is increasing. Climate change affects all areas of Council's operations – from planning to parks and recreation, maintaining assets and delivering much loved community services. The most substantial financial impacts are anticipated in infrastructure. Damage from extreme weather will likely result in asset damage, reduce the useful life of infrastructure, and increase the cost and frequency of repairs and renewals. Additional investment will be required to upgrade assets to be climate-resilient and maintain service levels. Embedding climate risk into planning, asset management, and decision-making processes will also require investment in supporting staff capability and systems development to respond to new challenges.
- Global uncertainty – events, global affairs and policy changes that occur outside of Council's sphere of influence can impact on Council operations.

3.2 Understanding our operating surplus

Our operating surplus (accounting surplus) is calculated as our total revenue received less our total operating expenditure and on face value, the operating surplus looks like Council is generating a significant surplus each year. However, 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 Fawkner Leisure Centre redevelopment or Balam Balam Place, Brunswick.

Significant amounts of surplus are restricted by legislation and must be used for future infrastructure investment.

To calculate the underlying result, you need to remove key revenue items such:

- Capital grants – this is funding that is tied to the capital works program and cannot be used to fund the day-to-day operations of Council
- Contributions – this is funding received from developers that is tied and cannot be used to fund the day-to-day operations of Council.

Following this, Council then calculates the unrestricted result. This is the net funding result after considering:

- Rates funded capital works program – this is Council's contribution to the capital works program;
- Loan repayments – this is the principal component of our loan portfolio;
- Transfers to and from reserve – this is essentially used like a saving account for key projects and is governed by the *Financial Reserves and Capital Management Policy*.

3.3Victorian Auditor-General Office (VAGO) financial sustainability measures

Indicator	How is it calculated?	What does a low risk mean?
Net result (%)	Net result/Total revenue	A positive result indicates a surplus, and the larger the percentage, the stronger the result.
Adjusted underlying result (%)	Adjusted underlying surplus/Adjusted underlying revenue	A ratio of greater than 5% indicates that Council is generating strong surpluses to fund operations (the ordinary course of business).
Liquidity (ratio)	Current assets/Current liabilities	A ratio of greater than 1.0 indicates that Council has no immediate issues with repaying short-term liabilities as they fall due.
Internal financing (%)	Net operating cash flow/Net capital expenditure	This measures the ability of Council to finance capital works from generated cash flows. The ratio looks at whether Council's cash flow from the current year can fund the current year's capital works program.
Indebtedness (%)	Non-current liabilities/own-sourced revenue Non-current liabilities / (Total revenue – contributions – grants)	A ratio of less than 40% indicates that there is no concern over the ability to repay debt from Council's own-source revenue.
Capital replacement (ratio)	Cash outflows for property, plant and equipment/Depreciation	A ratio higher than 1.5 indicates that there is low risk of insufficient spending on asset renewal
Renewal gap (ratio)	Renewal and upgrade expenditure/depreciation	More than 1.0 indicates low risk of insufficient spending on existing asset base. It is the comparison of the rate of spending on existing assets through renewing, restoring, and replacing existing assets with depreciation.

Indicator	Measure	Notes	10-year average	Projections										Trend
				2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34	2034-35	+/o/-
VAGO indicators (green = low risk, orange = medium risk, red = high risk)														
Net result	Net result / total revenue	1	**14.5%**	15.4%	11.4%	12.6%	12.3%	13.2%	16.1%	16.1%	15.9%	15.6%	16.1%	+
Adjusted underlying result	Adjusted underlying surplus (deficit) / adjusted underlying revenue	1	**12.4%**	11.5%	9.1%	10.9%	11.2%	13.2%	13.7%	13.8%	13.5%	13.2%	13.8%	+
Liquidity (Working Capital)	Current assets / current liabilities	1	**2.84**	2.33	2.53	2.61	2.54	2.58	2.82	2.97	3.11	3.35	3.57	+
Internal financing	Net operating cash flow / net capital expenditure	1	**124.7%**	95.8%	136.6%	121.3%	94.2%	117.9%	135.0%	130.1%	130.1%	141.7%	144.0%	+
Indebtedness	Non-current liabilities / own source revenue	1	**5.0%**	6.0%	4.9%	3.8%	8.1%	6.7%	5.8%	4.8%	3.9%	3.2%	2.6%	+
Capital replacement	Cash outflows for property, plant and equipment / depreciation	1	**1.64**	2.15	1.30	1.52	1.96	1.61	1.57	1.65	1.65	1.51	1.52	-
Asset renewal	Asset renewal & upgrade expenditure / depreciation	1	**1.37**	1.87	1.07	1.16	1.60	1.48	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30	-
Other indicators														
Unrestricted cash	Unrestricted cash / current liabilities	2	**-28.1%**	-12.9%	-5.7%	-14.0%	-7.5%	-13.6%	-38.1%	-49.3%	-45.3%	-48.0%	-46.7%	+
Loans and borrowings	Interest bearing loans and borrowings / rate revenue	3	**5.7%**	6.8%	5.5%	4.3%	9.9%	8.1%	6.6%	5.6%	4.5%	3.4%	2.8%	+
Loans and borrowings	Interest and principal repayments / rate revenue		**1.9%**	7.4%	1.2%	1.1%	1.1%	2.0%	1.6%	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%	0.8%	+
Rates concentration	Rate revenue / adjusted underlying revenue	4	**75.4%**	75.2%	75.9%	76.1%	75.4%	75.4%	75.3%	75.3%	75.2%	75.2%	75.2%	o
Rates effort	Rate revenue / property values (CIV)		**0.3%**	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	o
Expenditure level	Total expenditure / no. of assessments		**2,634**	$2,705	$2,760	$2,709	$2,718	$2,636	$2,601	$2,579	$2,565	$2,551	$2,515	o
Revenue level	Residential rate revenue / No. of residential assessments		**1,964**	$1,991	$1,997	$2,002	$1,997	$1,981	$1,966	$1,950	$1,934	$1,918	$1,903	o

Key to Forecast Trend:

+ Forecasts an improvement in Council's financial performance/financial position indicator

o Forecasts that Council's financial performance/financial position indicator will be steady

- Forecasts a deterioration in Council's financial performance/financial position indicator

Notes to Financial Plan Indicators

The targeted performance indicators above include both the VAGO financial sustainability measures as well as the prescribed performance indicators contained in Schedule 4 of the Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020. Results against these indicators and targets will be reported in Council's Performance Statement included in the Annual Report.

1. VAGO financial sustainability indictors – These seven indicators show that Council is considered low risk for the next 10-years.

2. Unrestricted cash - This remains low, as Council has invested a greater amount of term deposits over 90 days (which is considered restricted assets). The indicator looks at unrestricted cash (cash in the bank and investments that can be redeemed in under 90 days). Overall cash levels (both restricted and unrestricted) are forecast to remain sufficient to meet Council's commitments as they become due.

3. Loans and borrowings – This shows a reduction of borrowings in the first three years and then an increase in 2028-29 when borrowings of $15 million are projected for the Coburg Library and Piazza project. Following this, debt continues to be paid off, freeing up borrowing capacity in years 10 onwards for the next major project.

4. Rates concentration - It is anticipated that this indicator will remain consistent with the small forecast increase year on year due to anticipated supplementary rates.

3.4 Assumptions

This section describes the internal and external contexts which informed the 10-year financial projections and assumptions. Whilst we take every care in assessing each of these assumptions, the information is sensitive to changes that are often outside of the control of Council.

Our confidence in the accuracy of our assumptions is greatest in the near-future and decreases as we approach the outer years.

	Notes	Projections									
		2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34	2034-35
Rate Cap Increase	1	3.00%	2.50%	2.50%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%
Population Growth	2	1.80%	1.70%	1.70%	1.70%	1.70%	1.70%	1.70%	1.70%	1.70%	1.70%
Investment Interest Rate	3	3.40%	3.20%	3.20%	3.20%	3.20%	3.20%	3.20%	3.20%	3.20%	3.20%
Statutory Fees & Fines	4	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%
User Fees	4	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%
Grants - Operating (recurrent)	5	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%
Grants - Capital (non-recurrent)	5	625.46%	(42.02%)	(17.86%)	(29.54%)	(93.10%)	2972.61%	2.19%	2.19%	2.19%	2.18%
Contributions	6	(39.34%)	3.00%	16.15%	34.28%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%
Other Income	7	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%
CPI	8	2.75%	2.75%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%
Materials and Services	9	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%
Depreciation	10	3.69%	3.36%	0.61%	2.42%	0.58%	0.58%	0.58%	0.58%	0.58%	0.58%
Borrowing Interest Rate	11	2.88%	2.88%	2.88%	2.88%	3.41%	2.03%	1.85%	1.85%	1.85%	1.25%
Bad and Doubtful Debts		1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%
Other Expenses		1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%

Notes to the assumptions

1. Rates cap increase

The rate cap for 2025-26 was set at 3.0 per cent as approved by the Minister for Local Government, in comparison to 2.75 per cent for 2024-25. It should be noted that the Minister for Local Government announces the actual rate cap in December of the year preceding the annual budget.

The Plan is based on Council adopting the annual rate cap, which for the purposes of this document is assumed to be 2.0 per cent for future years outside of the annual 2025-29 budget.

2. Population growth

The municipality's population is currently estimated to be 191,747 and our forecast suggests population will grow to 222,733 by 2036.

3. Investment Interest Rate

Surplus funds are invested in line with Council's Investment Policy. Interest income is based on predicted cashflows, cash balance and investment returns. Council has committed through the Fossil Fuel Divestment Strategy to actively invest with fossil free financial institutions within the Investment Policy parameters.

Currently, Council has committed to ensuring that a minimum of 70 per cent of all term deposits held are a green investment. The official RBA Cash rate is now 3.85 per cent (as at 21 May 2025) with expectation of further rate decreases linked to the most recent RBA cash rate forecasts.

4.Statutory & User fees and charges

Future increases in user fees are assumed to increase by 3.0 per cent per annum. The increase to statutory fees and charges are controlled by the increase to the unit rate as determined in the Monetary Units Act 2004.

Council has estimated that statutory fees and fines will increase by 3.0 per cent, this is subject to change when the unit rates are set in May each year.

5. Grants (Operating & Capital)

Council recognises the importance of actively pursuing and maintaining grant funding from all available sources.

Commonwealth Operating Grants for Aged Services, Home Support and Children's Services are estimated at $8.1 million for 2025/26. State based funding for Library Services, Maternal Child and Health and Financial Assistance Grants are estimated at $10.5 million for 2025/26. Forward estimates project an annual increase of 2.0 per cent for the life of The Plan.

The level of capital grants is determined based on the nature and level of projects included in the Capital Works Program and vary widely. For the life of the plan, it has been assumed that non-recurrent 'specific purpose' grant funding will be maintained at 1.4 per cent of overall income and reflects a minor escalation in the levels of funding anticipated from the State and Federal Government.

Both sources of grant funding are reliant on external parties and there is an inherent level of risk in placing a reliance on these funds.

6.Contribution income

The council receives income from development for two main purposes:

- to improve open space and recreation (public open space contributions); and
- to improve the infrastructure and amenity of the municipality (developer contributions).

Public open space contributions - Amendment C235mbek to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme proposes a new municipal-wide Open Space Contribution Rate. The new municipal-wide contribution rate is predicted to substantially increase the revenue collected under this scheme, enabling Council to keep pace with the need for land acquisition for new and upgraded public open spaces. It is anticipated that Amendment C235mbek will be approved in 2026/27. This approval is subject to approval by the Victorian Minister for Planning.

A Development Contributions Plan (DCP) imposes a development infrastructure levy to fund a range of social and physical infrastructure to meet the future needs of current and future communities. The collection of DCP levies for planning permits under Council's current DCP ceased for permits issued after 30 June 2023. A new DCP has been prepared which will enable Council to collect DCP levies from new development. It is anticipated that collection of levies under the new DCP will commence in 2026/27 when the DCP is introduced into the Merri-bek Planning Scheme through Amendment C236mbek. This approval is subject to approval by the Victorian Minister for Planning.

7.Other Income

Council has estimated that other income will increase annually by 3.0 per cent. This includes revenue such as rental and lease income.

8. CPI

Consumer price index is consistent with the Victoria State Government's CPI outlook which is set in its 2025-26 budget.

9. Materials & services

Materials and services basic indexation has been set at 1.0 per cent for 2025-26 and for the outer years (except for major contracts and utilities). This is below the CPI increase and reflects Council's commitment to continuous improvement and finding efficiencies to continue delivering Council services without seeking an exemption from the rate cap.

10. Depreciation

Depreciation is a non-cash accounting entry that represents the monetary value of an asset decreasing overtime due to wear, tear and obsolescence.

Depreciation of council's infrastructure assets is determined from information contained within the various asset management plans and strategies. Depreciation is subject to periodic asset revaluations and indexation informed by market conditions. This can lead to significant year-on-year fluctuations, making precise predictions extremely difficult.

11. Borrowing costs

Council has both fixed and variation loans and the movement year-on-year is reflective of the estimated average borrowing rate. The interest expense to service Councils loan portfolio is detailed in section 5.1 of The Plan.

4. Financial Plan Statements

This section presents information regarding the following Financial Plan Statements for the 10 years from 2025-26;

Comprehensive Income Statement
This is an accrual-based statement that includes non-cash items such as depreciation charges but does not include capital items such as capital works expenditure.

Balance Sheet
This statement is a representation of the projected assets and liabilities of the Council.

Statement of Changes in Equity
This statement represents projected accumulated surplus, revaluation reserve and other reserve movements at 30 June each financial year.

Statement of Cash Flows
This statement provides a summary of projected cash inflow and outflows by type of activity – being either operating, investing or financing.

Statement of Capital Works
This statement sets out all the expected capital expenditure in relation to non-current assets for the year. It provides information related to the capital works expenditure including the funding source, the value of renewal of assets, upgrades and expansion of assets, and new assets.

Statement of Human Resources
This statement sets out projected Council staff expenditure and staff numbers.

4.1 Comprehensive Income Statement

	Actual	Projections									
	2024-25 $'000	2025-26 $'000	2026-27 $'000	2027-28 $'000	2028-29 $'000	2029-30 $'000	2030-31 $'000	2031-32 $'000	2032-33 $'000	2033-34 $'000	2034-35 $'000
Income / Revenue											
Rates and charges	195,088	202,778	209,622	216,597	222,691	227,547	232,453	237,460	242,573	247,792	253,092
Statutory fees and fines	18,025	19,323	19,717	20,256	20,832	21,439	22,064	22,707	23,369	24,051	24,752
User fees	9,132	8,899	8,269	7,650	7,813	8,041	8,275	8,516	8,764	9,020	9,283
Grants - Operating	25,531	21,205	20,587	20,456	20,605	20,915	21,232	21,555	21,885	22,221	22,564
Grants - Capital	6,466	12,964	7,516	6,174	4,350	300	9,218	9,419	9,625	9,836	10,050
Contributions - monetary	13,570	8,232	8,479	9,848	13,224	13,489	13,759	14,034	14,314	14,601	14,893
Contributions - non-monetary	503	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Net gain on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	-	92	95	98	101	104	107	110	114	117	121
Fair value adjustments for investment property	818	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other income	11,918	7,797	7,936	8,272	8,523	9,083	9,372	9,597	9,827	10,064	10,306
Total income / revenue	**281,051**	**281,292**	**282,220**	**289,351**	**298,140**	**300,918**	**316,479**	**323,398**	**330,471**	**337,701**	**345,060**
Expenses											
Employee costs	115,692	116,144	118,863	120,257	124,005	128,044	132,483	136,802	141,262	145,868	150,622
Materials and services	78,352	73,203	81,730	81,519	85,906	79,760	79,497	80,643	82,670	84,777	84,249
Depreciation	39,312	43,621	45,230	46,749	47,036	48,175	48,454	48,735	49,018	49,302	49,587
Depreciation - right of use assets	385	236	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Allowance for impairment losses	2,423	3,153	3,247	3,344	3,444	3,478	3,513	3,548	3,584	3,619	3,656
Borrowing costs	853	816	285	234	181	877	771	684	596	504	421
Finance costs - leases	71	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Net loss on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	12,827	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other expenses	716	790	803	823	843	852	860	869	877	886	895
Total expenses	**250,631**	**237,964**	**250,158**	**252,926**	**261,415**	**261,187**	**265,578**	**271,280**	**278,006**	**284,956**	**289,429**
Surplus for the year	**30,420**	**43,328**	**32,062**	**36,425**	**36,725**	**39,732**	**50,901**	**52,118**	**52,465**	**52,745**	**55,632**
Other comprehensive income											
Net asset revaluation gain /(loss)	(194,747)	49,206	-	69,641	-	52,202	-	73,296	-	55,381	-
Total comprehensive result	**(164,327)**	**92,534**	**32,062**	**106,066**	**36,725**	**91,934**	**50,901**	**125,415**	**52,465**	**108,126**	**55,632**

4.2 Balance Sheet

	Actual	Projections								
	2024-25 $'000	2025-26 $'000	2026-27 $'000	2027-28 $'000	2028-29 $'000	2029-30 $'000	2030-31 $'000	2031-32 $'000	2032-33 $'000	2033-34 $'000	2034-35 $'000
Assets											
Current assets											
Cash and cash equivalents	36,116	22,155	31,180	33,827	41,005	50,412	43,348	44,691	56,151	64,454	75,826
Trade and other receivables	41,677	42,710	43,167	43,630	44,099	44,624	45,204	45,842	46,540	47,299	48,120
Other financial assets	60,000	55,007	65,007	75,007	75,007	75,007	105,007	125,007	135,007	155,007	175,007
Inventories	690	690	690	690	690	690	690	690	690	690	690
Prepayments	3,160	3,160	3,160	3,160	3,160	3,160	3,160	3,160	3,160	3,160	3,160
Non-current assets classified as held for sale	22,975	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other assets	4,156	4,156	4,156	4,156	4,156	4,156	4,156	4,156	4,156	4,156	4,156
Total current assets	**168,774**	**127,878**	**147,360**	**160,470**	**168,117**	**178,049**	**201,565**	**223,547**	**245,704**	**274,766**	**306,960**
Non-current assets											
Investments in associates, joint arrangements and subsidiaries	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Property, infrastructure, plant & equipment	2,635,162	2,757,608	2,771,095	2,864,947	2,909,963	2,991,666	3,019,443	3,124,253	3,155,930	3,236,437	3,262,262
Right-of-use assets	813	577	577	577	577	577	577	577	577	577	577
Investment property	37,232	37,232	37,232	37,232	37,232	37,232	37,232	37,232	37,232	37,232	37,232
Total non-current assets	**2,673,209**	**2,795,419**	**2,808,905**	**2,902,758**	**2,947,773**	**3,029,476**	**3,057,254**	**3,162,064**	**3,193,740**	**3,274,247**	**3,300,072**
Total assets	**2,841,983**	**2,923,297**	**2,956,265**	**3,063,228**	**3,115,891**	**3,207,525**	**3,258,820**	**3,385,610**	**3,439,444**	**3,549,014**	**3,607,032**
Liabilities											
Current liabilities											
Trade and other payables	19,603	19,640	19,680	19,721	19,764	19,804	19,844	19,884	19,925	19,968	20,010
Trust funds and deposits	6,761	7,363	7,971	8,585	9,205	9,832	10,464	11,103	11,749	12,400	13,059
Contract and other liabilities	2,302	2,302	2,302	2,302	2,302	2,302	2,302	2,302	2,302	2,302	2,302
Provisions	20,922	23,396	25,928	28,489	31,130	33,858	36,680	39,594	42,602	45,709	48,918
Interest-bearing liabilities	14,209	2,172	2,220	2,270	3,598	3,038	2,217	2,327	2,358	1,522	1,598
Lease liabilities	121	102	100	97	95	63	-	-	-	-	-
Total current liabilities	**63,918**	**54,974**	**58,201**	**61,464**	**66,095**	**68,896**	**71,507**	**75,210**	**78,936**	**81,902**	**85,886**
Non-current liabilities											
Provisions	2,510	2,510	2,510	2,510	2,510	2,510	2,510	2,510	2,510	2,510	2,510
Interest-bearing liabilities	13,667	11,492	9,273	7,003	18,405	15,367	13,150	10,823	8,465	6,943	5,345
Lease liabilities	457	355	255	158	63	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total non-current liabilities	**16,634**	**14,357**	**12,038**	**9,671**	**20,978**	**17,877**	**15,660**	**13,333**	**10,975**	**9,453**	**7,855**
Total liabilities	**80,552**	**69,332**	**70,238**	**71,135**	**87,072**	**86,773**	**87,166**	**88,542**	**89,911**	**91,355**	**93,741**
Net assets	**2,761,431**	**2,853,965**	**2,886,027**	**2,992,093**	**3,028,818**	**3,120,752**	**3,171,653**	**3,297,068**	**3,349,533**	**3,457,659**	**3,513,291**
Equity											
Accumulated surplus	823,271	893,206	907,010	933,420	967,080	999,393	1,029,740	1,063,552	1,096,361	1,127,120	1,154,027
Reserves	1,938,160	1,960,759	1,979,016	2,058,673	2,061,738	2,121,359	2,141,913	2,233,516	2,253,172	2,330,539	2,359,263
Total equity	**2,761,431**	**2,853,965**	**2,886,027**	**2,992,093**	**3,028,818**	**3,120,752**	**3,171,653**	**3,297,068**	**3,349,533**	**3,457,659**	**3,513,290**

4.3 Statement of Changes in Equity

	Actual	Projections									
	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34	2034-35
	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000
Accumulated Surplus											
Balance at beginning of the financial year	785,732	766,785	794,130	802,498	821,774	836,037	843,194	870,026	900,338	928,349	955,769
Parking fine refund scheme	(2,751)										
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	30,420	43,328	32,062	36,425	36,725	39,732	50,901	52,118	52,465	52,745	55,632
Transfers to other reserves	(46,616)	(15,983)	(23,694)	(17,149)	(22,462)	(32,574)	(24,070)	(21,806)	(24,454)	(25,325)	(32,067)
Closing Balance	**766,785**	**794,130**	**802,498**	**821,774**	**836,037**	**843,194**	**870,026**	**900,338**	**928,349**	**955,769**	**979,334**
Revaluation Reserve											
Balance at beginning of the financial year	2,066,207	1,871,460	1,920,666	1,920,666	1,990,307	1,990,307	2,042,509	2,042,509	2,115,806	2,115,806	2,171,187
Net asset revaluation gain/(loss)	(194,747)	49,206	-	69,641	-	52,202	-	73,296	-	55,381	-
Closing Balance	**1,871,460**	**1,920,666**	**1,920,666**	**1,990,307**	**1,990,307**	**2,042,509**	**2,042,509**	**2,115,806**	**2,115,806**	**2,171,187**	**2,171,187**
Other Reserves											
Balance at beginning of the financial year	76,569	123,185	139,168	162,863	180,012	202,474	235,048	259,118	280,924	305,378	330,703
Transfers to other reserves	46,616	15,983	23,694	17,149	22,462	32,574	24,070	21,806	24,454	25,325	32,067
Closing Balance	**123,185**	**139,168**	**162,863**	**180,012**	**202,474**	**235,048**	**259,118**	**280,924**	**305,378**	**330,703**	**362,770**
Balance at end of the financial year	**2,761,431**	**2,853,965**	**2,886,027**	**2,992,093**	**3,028,818**	**3,120,752**	**3,171,653**	**3,297,068**	**3,349,533**	**3,457,659**	**3,513,290**

4.4 Statement of Cash Flows

	Actual	Projections									
	2024-25 $'000	2025-26 $'000	2026-27 $'000	2027-28 $'000	2028-29 $'000	2029-30 $'000	2030-31 $'000	2031-32 $'000	2032-33 $'000	2033-34 $'000	2034-35 $'000
	Inflows (Outflows)	Inflows (Outflows)	Inflows (Outflows)	Inflows (Outflows)	Inflows (Outflows)	Inflows (Outflows)	Inflows (Outflows)	Inflows (Outflows)	Inflows (Outflows)	Inflows (Outflows)	Inflows (Outflows)
Cash flows from operating activities											
Rates and charges	194,509	199,737	206,478	213,348	219,351	224,134	228,966	233,898	238,934	244,075	249,295
Statutory fees and fines	14,046	18,357	19,322	19,851	20,416	21,010	21,623	22,253	22,902	23,570	24,257
User fees	9,142	8,721	8,104	7,497	7,657	7,880	8,109	8,345	8,589	8,839	9,097
Grants - operating	25,604	21,205	20,587	20,456	20,605	20,915	21,232	21,555	21,885	22,221	22,564
Grants - capital	1,787	12,964	7,516	6,174	4,350	300	9,218	9,419	9,625	9,836	10,050
Contributions - monetary	13,570	8,232	8,479	9,848	13,224	13,489	13,759	14,034	14,314	14,601	14,893
Trust funds and deposits taken	48,957	49,447	49,941	50,440	50,945	51,454	51,969	52,489	53,013	53,544	54,079
Other receipts	13,696	7,797	7,936	8,272	8,523	9,083	9,372	9,597	9,827	10,064	10,306
Employee costs	(117,058)	(113,670)	(116,331)	(117,696)	(121,363)	(125,317)	(129,661)	(133,888)	(138,253)	(142,761)	(147,413)
Materials and services	(80,129)	(73,167)	(81,689)	(81,478)	(85,863)	(79,721)	(79,457)	(80,602)	(82,629)	(84,734)	(84,206)
Trust funds and deposits repaid	(48,361)	(48,845)	(49,333)	(49,826)	(50,325)	(50,828)	(51,336)	(51,850)	(52,368)	(52,892)	(53,421)
Other payments	(724)	(790)	(803)	(823)	(843)	(852)	(860)	(869)	(877)	(886)	(895)
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	**75,205**	**89,989**	**80,206**	**86,063**	**86,676**	**91,549**	**102,933**	**104,382**	**104,963**	**105,475**	**108,606**
Cash flows from investing activities											
Payments for property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	(89,722)	(93,886)	(58,717)	(70,961)	(92,052)	(77,676)	(76,232)	(80,248)	(80,694)	(74,427)	(75,412)
Proceeds from sale of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	6,443	92	95	98	101	104	107	110	114	117	121
(Payments for) / proceeds from investments	24,818	4,993	(10,000)	(10,000)	-	-	(30,000)	(20,000)	(10,000)	(20,000)	(20,000)
Net cash provided by/ (used in) investing activities	**(58,461)**	**(88,801)**	**(68,622)**	**(80,863)**	**(91,950)**	**(77,572)**	**(106,125)**	**(100,138)**	**(90,581)**	**(94,310)**	**(95,292)**
Cash flows from financing activities											
Finance costs	(853)	(816)	(285)	(234)	(181)	(877)	(771)	(684)	(596)	(504)	(421)
Proceeds from borrowings	-	-	-	-	15,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
Repayment of borrowings	(1,942)	(14,212)	(2,172)	(2,220)	(2,270)	(3,598)	(3,038)	(2,217)	(2,327)	(2,358)	(1,522)
Interest paid - lease liability	(71)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Repayment of lease liabilities	(149)	(121)	(102)	(100)	(97)	(95)	(63)	-	-	-	-
Net cash provided by/(used in) financing activities	**(3,015)**	**(15,149)**	**(2,559)**	**(2,553)**	**12,452**	**(4,570)**	**(3,872)**	**(2,901)**	**(2,923)**	**(2,861)**	**(1,943)**
Net increase/(decrease) in cash & cash equivalents	13,729	(13,961)	9,025	2,647	7,178	9,407	(7,064)	1,343	11,459	8,304	11,372
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year	22,387	36,116	22,155	31,180	33,827	41,005	50,412	43,348	44,691	56,151	64,454
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year	**36,116**	**22,155**	**31,180**	**33,827**	**41,005**	**50,412**	**43,348**	**44,691**	**56,151**	**64,454**	**75,826**

4.5 Statement of Capital Works

	Actual	Projections									
	2024-25 $'000	2025-26 $'000	2026-27 $'000	2027-28 $'000	2028-29 $'000	2029-30 $'000	2030-31 $'000	2031-32 $'000	2032-33 $'000	2033-34 $'000	2034-35 $'000
Property											
Land	5,040	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total land	5,040	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Buildings	29,181	8,910	6,270	16,570	40,375	29,925	17,322	20,901	16,951	14,563	15,022
Building improvements	4,102	7,535	4,181	3,146	1,652	2,461	11,572	11,639	11,706	11,774	11,841
Total buildings	33,283	16,445	10,451	19,716	42,027	32,386	28,894	32,540	28,657	26,337	26,864
Total property	38,323	16,445	10,451	19,716	42,027	32,386	28,894	32,540	28,657	26,337	26,864
Plant and equipment											
Plant, machinery and equipment	4,334	5,877	8,686	6,984	4,399	7,672	7,902	8,139	8,383	8,635	8,894
Fixtures, fittings and furniture	216	171	173	175	177	179	250	251	253	254	256
Computers and telecommunications	886	1,125	875	893	928	1,255	1,352	1,360	1,368	1,376	1,384
Artw orks	35	47	49	52	54	56	58	59	61	63	65
Library books	1,082	1,082	1,082	1,082	1,082	1,110	1,139	1,168	1,198	1,229	1,261
Total plant and equipment	6,553	8,302	10,865	9,186	6,640	10,272	10,701	10,979	11,264	11,558	11,860
Infrastructure											
Roads	18,801	27,223	13,400	16,057	15,017	15,026	15,912	16,004	16,097	16,190	16,284
Bridges	324	3,334	2,100	-	-	-	579	582	586	589	592
Footpaths and cyclew ays	2,457	6,662	3,999	4,631	4,512	4,165	5,266	5,296	5,327	5,358	5,389
Drainage	1,849	2,946	2,376	370	865	969	4,667	4,694	4,721	4,749	4,776
Recreational, leisure and community facilities	-	14,025	6,429	12,082	9,349	6,427	-	-	-	-	-
Waste management	200	2,183	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
Parks, open space and streetscapes	21,476	12,767	8,817	8,890	13,612	8,402	10,183	10,123	14,012	9,617	9,617
Other infrastructure	1,285	-	250	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total infrastructure	46,392	69,140	37,401	42,059	43,385	35,018	36,637	36,730	40,773	36,533	36,688
Total capital works expenditure	**91,268**	**93,886**	**58,717**	**70,961**	**92,052**	**77,676**	**76,232**	**80,248**	**80,694**	**74,427**	**75,412**
Represented by:											
New asset expenditure	19,374	12,345	10,186	16,662	16,812	6,492	13,046	17,112	17,118	10,507	10,755
Asset renew al expenditure	53,932	60,647	38,518	45,945	61,644	59,894	48,891	48,758	49,116	49,375	50,028
Asset upgrade expenditure	17,962	20,894	10,013	8,354	13,596	11,291	14,295	14,378	14,461	14,545	14,629
Total capital works expenditure	**91,268**	**93,886**	**58,717**	**70,961**	**92,052**	**77,676**	**76,232**	**80,248**	**80,694**	**74,427**	**75,412**

4.6 Statement of Human Resources ($)

	Actual	Projections								
	2024-25 $'000	2025-26 $'000	2026-27 $'000	2027-28 $'000	2028-29 $'000	2029-30 $'000	2030-31 $'000	2031-32 $'000	2032-33 $'000	2033-34 $'000	2034-35 $'000
Total staff expenditure											
Women	58,880	60,663	62,083	62,811	64,769	66,879	69,197	71,453	73,782	76,188	78,671
Men	47,215	49,944	51,113	51,713	53,324	55,062	56,970	58,828	60,745	62,726	64,770
Persons of self-described gender	371	424	434	439	453	467	484	499	516	533	550
Casuals, temporary and other expenditure	9,226	5,113	5,232	5,294	5,459	5,637	5,832	6,022	6,219	6,422	6,631
Capitalised labour costs	1,886	1,814	837	804	807	833	862	890	919	949	980
Total staff expenditure	**117,578**	**117,958**	**119,700**	**121,061**	**124,812**	**128,878**	**133,346**	**137,693**	**142,181**	**146,818**	**151,602**
Permanent full-time											
Women	36,470	38,228	39,123	39,582	40,816	42,145	43,606	45,028	46,496	48,012	49,576
Men	44,263	47,067	48,169	48,734	50,253	51,890	53,689	55,439	57,246	59,113	61,039
Persons of self-described gender	215	218	223	226	233	241	249	257	265	274	283
Total permanent full-time expenditure	**80,948**	**85,514**	**87,515**	**88,542**	**91,301**	**94,275**	**97,544**	**100,723**	**104,007**	**107,399**	**110,898**
Permanent part-time											
Women	22,410	22,435	22,960	23,229	23,953	24,734	25,591	26,425	27,287	28,177	29,095
Men	2,952	2,877	2,944	2,979	3,072	3,172	3,282	3,389	3,499	3,613	3,731
Persons of self-described gender	157	206	211	213	220	227	235	242	250	258	267
Total permanent part-time expenditure	**25,519**	**25,518**	**26,115**	**26,422**	**27,245**	**28,132**	**29,108**	**30,057**	**31,036**	**32,048**	**33,093**
Casuals, temporary and other expenditure	**9,226**	**5,113**	**5,232**	**5,294**	**5,459**	**5,637**	**5,832**	**6,022**	**6,219**	**6,422**	**6,631**
Capitalised labour costs	**1,886**	**1,814**	**837**	**804**	**807**	**833**	**862**	**890**	**919**	**949**	**980**

4.7 Statement of Human Resources (FTE)

	Actual	Projections								
	2024-25 FTE	2025-26 FTE	2026-27 FTE	2027-28 FTE	2028-29 FTE	2029-30 FTE	2030-31 FTE	2031-32 FTE	2032-33 FTE	2033-34 FTE	2034-35 FTE
Total full-time equivalent (FTE)											
Women	487.2	485.1	485.1	485.1	485.1	485.1	485.1	485.1	485.1	485.1	485.1
Men	390.5	401.9	401.9	401.9	401.9	401.9	401.9	401.9	401.9	401.9	401.9
Persons of self-described gender	3.5	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Casuals and temporary staff	72.0	46.6	35.2	18.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5
Capitalised labour	13.0	15.0	7.0	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5
Total full-time equivalent (FTE)	**966.2**	**952.6**	**933.2**	**916.0**	**915.0**	**915.0**	**915.0**	**915.0**	**915.0**	**915.0**	**915.0**
Permanent full-time											
Women	277.0	279.0	279.0	279.0	279.0	279.0	279.0	279.0	279.0	279.0	279.0
Men	361.0	374.0	374.0	374.0	374.0	374.0	374.0	374.0	374.0	374.0	374.0
Persons of self-described gender	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Total permanent full-time FTE	**640.0**	**655.0**	**655.0**	**655.0**	**655.0**	**655.0**	**655.0**	**655.0**	**655.0**	**655.0**	**655.0**
Permanent part-time											
Women	210.3	206.1	206.1	206.1	206.1	206.1	206.1	206.1	206.1	206.1	206.1
Men	29.5	27.9	27.9	27.9	27.9	27.9	27.9	27.9	27.9	27.9	27.9
Persons of self-described gender	1.5	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Total permanent part-time FTE	**241.3**	**236.0**	**236.0**	**236.0**	**236.0**	**236.0**	**236.0**	**236.0**	**236.0**	**236.0**	**236.0**
Casuals and temporary FTE	**72.0**	**46.6**	**35.2**	**18.5**	**17.5**	**17.5**	**17.5**	**17.5**	**17.5**	**17.5**	**17.5**
Capitalised FTE	**13.0**	**15.0**	**7.0**	**6.5**	**6.5**	**6.5**	**6.5**	**6.5**	**6.5**	**6.5**	**6.5**

5. Strategies and Plans

This section describes the strategies and plans that support the 10-year financial projections included to the Financial Plan.

5.1 Borrowing Strategy

Whilst not a source of income, borrowings are an important cash management tool and can assist to bring forward the timing of expenditure and are often a major source of funding for significant infrastructure projects that will provide benefits for future generations. This is known as 'intergenerational equity' - where future debt repayments are matched with future benefits derived from the infrastructure developed.

Loans can only be approved by council resolution and all new borrowings are required to be included and approved in the annual budget year to which the borrowings relate.

The 10-year financial plan follows the following principles related to borrowings:

- Borrowing based Sustainability ratios must not be exceeded.
- Loan duration is not to exceed the lesser of 10 years or the life of the asset.
- Priority is given to projects with above loan repayment returns.
- Where an interest only loan is secured, an amount equivalent to the annual principal repayment will be reserved annually to ensure full repayment at maturity.
- Council will actively seek to reduce interest payable.
- Council will not borrow to fund operating expenses.

Current Debt Position

The total amount of borrowings as at 30 June 2026 is $13.6 million.

Council has accessed debt funding to complete a range of major infrastructure projects including the construction of the $27.5 million Glenroy Community Hub (completed in March 2022) and the $36.8 million Fawkner Leisure Centre redevelopment (completed in November 2024).

Future Borrowing Requirements

The following table highlights Council's projected loan balance, including new loans and loan repayments for the 10 years of the Financial Plan. Council has assumed new borrowings in 2028-29 of $15 million are projected for the Coburg Library and Piazza project. Following this debt continues to be paid off, freeing up borrowing capacity in years 10 onwards for the next major project.

	Actual	Projections									
	2024-25 $'000	2025-26 $'000	2026-27 $'000	2027-28 $'000	2028-29 $'000	2029-30 $'000	2030-31 $'000	2031-32 $'000	2032-33 $'000	2033-34 $'000	2034-35 $'000
Opening balance	**29,818**	**27,876**	**13,665**	**11,493**	**9,273**	**22,003**	**18,406**	**15,367**	**13,150**	**10,823**	**8,466**
Plus new loans	-	-	-	-	15,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
Less principal repayments	(1,942)	(14,212)	(2,172)	(2,220)	(2,270)	(3,598)	(3,038)	(2,217)	(2,327)	(2,358)	(1,522)
Closing balance	**27,876**	**13,665**	**11,493**	**9,273**	**22,003**	**18,406**	**15,367**	**13,150**	**10,823**	**8,466**	**6,944**
Interest payment	853	816	285	234	181	877	771	684	596	504	421

Performance Indicators

The following table highlights Council's projected performance across a range of debt management performance indicators.

	Target	Actual	Projections									
		2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34	2034-35
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Total borrowings / rates revenue	Below 60%	14.3%	6.7%	5.5%	4.3%	9.9%	8.1%	6.6%	5.5%	4.5%	3.4%	2.7%
Debt servicing / rates revenue	Below 5%	0.4%	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Debt commitment / rates revenue	Below 10%	1.4%	7.4%	1.2%	1.1%	1.1%	2.0%	1.6%	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%	0.8%
Indebtness / own source revenue	Below 60%	7.1%	6.0%	4.9%	3.8%	8.1%	6.7%	5.8%	4.8%	3.9%	3.2%	2.6%

5.2 Reserves Strategy

Reserves are funds that have been set aside and act as a future funding source for specific purposes. These reserve funds do not have bank accounts of their own but are a theoretical split up of the cash that Council has on hand for a future identified need or obligation.

Restricted Reserves - The usage of these funds is governed by legislation (or other legal requirements) and are not available for other purposes.

Unrestricted Reserves - Unrestricted reserves are a mechanism by which Council re-directs surplus council funds to strategic projects and initiatives that require savings over time. The usage of unrestricted reserves requires resolution of council and the availability of unrestricted cash to meet the intent of the reserve funding objectives is necessary to take advantage of identified opportunities at short notice.

	Actual	Projections									
	2024-25 $'000	2025-26 $'000	2026-27 $'000	2027-28 $'000	2028-29 $'000	2029-30 $'000	2030-31 $'000	2031-32 $'000	2032-33 $'000	2033-34 $'000	2034-35 $'000
Defined Budget Scheme (DBS) - Unrestricted											
The funds are used to assist with the funding of any call that may be made on Council because of a shortfall in the defined benefit superannuation entity.											
Opening balance	**13,500**	**13,500**	**13,500**	**13,500**	**13,500**	**13,500**	**14,000**	**14,500**	**15,000**	**15,500**	**16,000**
Transfer to reserves	-	-	-	-	-	500	500	500	500	500	500
Transfer from reserves	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Closing balance	**13,500**	**13,500**	**13,500**	**13,500**	**13,500**	**14,000**	**14,500**	**15,000**	**15,500**	**16,000**	**16,500**
Significant Projects Reserve - Unrestricted											
Accumulates funds to construct new assets or expand existing ones to meet population growth, such as the proposed Coburg Library and Piazza project as well as recently completed projects (Fawkner Leisure Centre and Balam Balam Place).											
Opening balance	**9,833**	**2,598**	**6,273**	**19,829**	**22,513**	**22,600**	**16,285**	**26,071**	**33,319**	**42,935**	**53,136**
Transfer to reserves	14,196	4,425	15,206	7,284	9,212	18,560	9,786	7,248	9,616	10,201	16,651
Transfer from reserves	(21,431)	(750)	(1,650)	(4,600)	(9,125)	(24,875)	-	-	-	-	-
Closing balance	**2,598**	**6,273**	**19,829**	**22,513**	**22,600**	**16,285**	**26,071**	**33,319**	**42,935**	**53,136**	**69,788**

	Actual	Projections									
	2024-25 $'000	2025-26 $'000	2026-27 $'000	2027-28 $'000	2028-29 $'000	2029-30 $'000	2030-31 $'000	2031-32 $'000	2032-33 $'000	2033-34 $'000	2034-35 $'000
Social & Affordable Housing Strategy Reserve - Unrestricted											
Provides funds to assist with the funding of housing initiatives.											
Opening balance	**496**	**706**	**750**	**793**	**834**	**884**	**934**	**984**	**1,034**	**1,084**	**1,134**
Transfer to reserves	210	45	42	41	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
Transfer from reserves	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Closing balance	**706**	**750**	**793**	**834**	**884**	**934**	**984**	**1,034**	**1,084**	**1,134**	**1,184**
Local Government Funding Vehicle (LGFV) Reserve - Unrestricted											
As per the Investment Policy (2022) if Council were to enter an "interest-only" repayment schedule, an amount equivalent to principal repayments must be deposited to a cash reserve over the life of the loan to fund the principal repayment when it falls due.											
Opening balance	**6,579**	**8,787**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Transfer to reserves	2,208	3,313	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfer from reserves	-	(12,100)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Closing balance	**8,787**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Carry Forward Reserve - Unrestricted											
To fund incomplete operating or capital works projects carried forward from the current financial year to the next financial year.											
Opening balance	**21,277**	**20,664**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Transfer to reserves	20,664	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfer from reserves	(21,277)	(20,664)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Closing balance	**20,664**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**

	Actual	Projections									
	2024-25 $'000	2025-26 $'000	2026-27 $'000	2027-28 $'000	2028-29 $'000	2029-30 $'000	2030-31 $'000	2031-32 $'000	2032-33 $'000	2033-34 $'000	2034-35 $'000
Public Resort & Recreation Land Fund Reserve - Restricted											
Accumulates developer contributions paid to Council and is used for the development of new open space and recreation assets, as well as upgrade or expansion of existing assets.											
Opening balance	**20,308**	**15,781**	**17,742**	**22,402**	**29,692**	**32,620**	**45,803**	**56,022**	**66,530**	**76,020**	**87,254**
Transfer to reserves	8,322	8,200	8,446	9,825	13,200	13,464	13,733	14,008	14,288	14,574	14,865
Transfer from reserves	(12,849)	(6,239)	(3,787)	(2,534)	(10,272)	(281)	(3,515)	(3,500)	(4,798)	(3,340)	(3,342)
Closing balance	**15,781**	**17,742**	**22,402**	**29,692**	**32,620**	**45,803**	**56,022**	**66,530**	**76,020**	**87,254**	**98,778**
Development Contributions Plan Reserve - Restricted											
To fund approved community infrastructure projects in line with the requirements of the DCP. Contributions must be expended on infrastructure projects that service the developments from which the contributions are received.											
Opening balance	**2,026**	**1,544**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Transfer to reserves	447	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfer from reserves	(929)	(1,544)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Closing balance	**1,544**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Waste Charge Reserve - Restricted											
Accumulates variances between the revenue collected from the waste charge and the expenditure in delivering waste services in each financial year. The funds are to be utilised to assist with the cost of strategic projects, compliance and long-term planning for Council's landfills, transfer stations and waste management responsibilities.											
Opening balance	**2,551**	**3,120**	**1,827**	**1,827**	**1,827**	**1,827**	**1,827**	**1,827**	**1,827**	**1,827**	**1,827**
Transfer to reserves	569	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfer from reserves	-	(1,293)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Closing balance	**3,120**	**1,827**	**1,827**	**1,827**	**1,827**	**1,827**	**1,827**	**1,827**	**1,827**	**1,827**	**1,827**

6. Appendixes

Appendices A - Changes in the 10-Year Financial Plan

The Plan expands the assumptions that have been applied to the year one of the annual budget 2025-29 (Adopted Budget). However, it should be noted that the below changes have been made in The Plan:

- The assumption has been made that the Brunswick Early Years Hub project will be rates funded, and the transfers into the significant project reserve will be used to ensure a balanced budget
- The final version of the 10-year plan has the opening balances in the balance sheet and cashflow updated to reflect the actual balances at 1 July 2025.

7.3 ADOPTION OF 10-YEAR ASSET PLAN 2025-2035

Director City Infrastructure, Anita Curnow

Capital Works Planning and Delivery

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Adopts the Asset Plan 2025-2035 at Attachment 1 to this report prepared in accordance with the requirements of Section 92 of the *Local Government Act 2020.*
2. 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 Asset Plan on Council's website.

REPORT

Executive Summary

The *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) requires Council to develop, adopt and maintain a 10-year Asset Plan for maintenance, acquisition, disposal and management of Council-managed assets. A review of the Asset Plan must be completed by 31 October in the year following a General Council election.

Council's $1.9 billion portfolio of assets has been built up progressively over many decades. Assets such as roads and drainage provide the building blocks of our way of life, while others add to the quality of life by facilitating recreation, arts, culture, health and educational activities. Our assets are also integral to us achieving our zero carbon, water management and social inclusion goals, and support local business and economic development.

The Act requires the Asset Plan to be developed and reviewed through deliberative engagement process in accordance with Council's engagement policy. The Asset Plan (Attachment 1) has been developed in line with Council's deliberative engagement practices and have drawn from the engagement outputs from the deliberative panel formed as a part of the Council Plan and Community Vision review. Following a Council resolution in August 2025, the draft Asset Plan was published for public feedback through Conversations Merri-bek webpage.

Previous Council Decisions

Draft Asset Plan for Public Exhibition – 13 August 2025

That Council:

1. Endorses the draft Asset Plan 2025-2035, provided as Attachment 1 to this report, for the purpose of community exhibition.

2. Invites feedback on the draft Asset Plan 2025-2035 for the public exhibition period, from 15 August 2025 until 12 September 2025.

3. Makes the draft Asset Plan 2025-2035 available on the Council website and hard copies available at the three civic centres and all libraries.

1. Policy Context

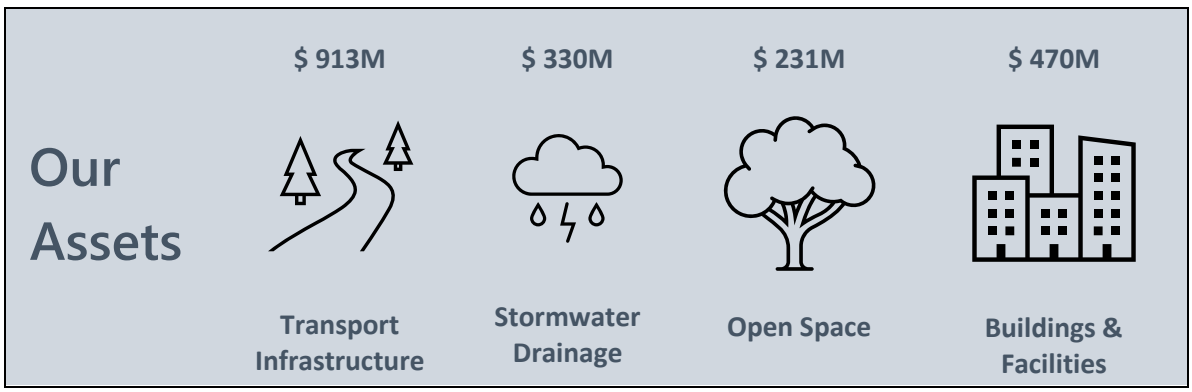
The draft Asset Plan is integrated with the broader Council planning framework that aligns closely with the Community Vision, Council Plan and the draft Long Term Financial Plan. These alignments ensure that the asset management decisions support our overall strategic objectives and are compliant with legislative requirements.

2. Background

Pursuant to Section 92 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act), Council must develop, adopt and keep in force an Asset Plan in accordance with Council's deliberative engagement practices. The plan must encompass information on maintenance, renewal, expansion, acquisition, disposal and decommissioning of assets for which Council is responsible. Council must review the Asset Plance in accordance with its deliberative engagement practices and adopt the Asset Plan by 31 October in the year following a general election.

The Asset Plan (**Attachment 1**) covers Transport assets, Buildings, Stormwater and Open Space assets. Below is a snapshot of from the Asset Plan summarising the current state of Council's infrastructure assets.





3. Issues

Community impact

The Asset Plan is an overarching document that lays a strategic framework for how Council's financial investment decisions are made to provide optimum levels of service to the community by the utilisation of Council's physical assets.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

The scope of capital projects included in the Asset Plan for each asset class will account for both emissions abatement and climate adaptation.

Emissions reduction is achieved by building projects incorporating costs for sustainable design to promote energy efficiency and use of green energy. Use of recycled materials in construction and minimising demolition also reduce the carbon footprint of our asset programs and create opportunities around the circular economy.

Climate risk considerations impact significantly on the design of assets. For example, rather than replace like-with-like, officers will review drainage capacity as drains are replaced to accommodate more severe storm events and reconsider selection of materials based on their performance at higher temperatures given the hotter summers we're experiencing. These challenges are reflected in the forthcoming Climate Risk Strategy which will work together with the Asset Plan.

Economic sustainability implications

The Asset Plan is a key document that sets a strategic framework to enable investment decisions that reflect responsible financial stewardship of the $1.9 billion asset base. The life cycle model of asset from acquisition through to disposal/renewal and inclusion of maintenance costs is a representation of how sustainable our asset management practices are. The plan accounts for the financial sustainability indicators set by the State.

Legal and risk considerations

The Asset Plan is prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020*. Whilst there are no significant risks associated in adopting the reviewed Asset Plan, there are reasonable risks if an Asset Plan is not reviewed, such as non-compliance with the requirements of the Act and lack of strategic framework guiding financial investment decisions for asset sustainability.

Human Rights Consideration

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. The adoption of the Asset Plan does not violate the Victorian Human Rights Charter.

For the Asset Plan as a whole, a Gender Impact Assessment is not deemed required. However, it is noted that for some asset categories, strategies guiding their prioritisation and scoping and individual category asset management plans will need to be developed with the insights gained through Gender Impact Assessments.

4. Community consultation and engagement

The Asset Plan has been developed in line with Council's Deliberative Engagement practices and has drawn from the engagement outputs from the deliberative panel formed as a part of the Council Plan and Community Vision review.

The draft Asset Plan was published in Conversations Merri-bek webpage to obtain feedback from the community. Council did not receive any relevant feedback in relation to the Asset Plan through this process.

Affected persons rights and interests

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

The development and adoption of the Asset Plan has not affected any persons' rights and interests to the best knowledge of Council officers.

Communications

Assuming Council resolves to adopt the Asset Plan, it will be published on Council's website for public access. In addition, physical copies of the Asset Plan can be made available on request at Council's customer service centres. Officers will also use social media to inform the broader community of the adopted Asset Plan.

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 adoption and implementation of the Asset Plan has no direct financial and resource implications. The plan sets out the financial projection in capital and maintenance cost in each asset classes, which is in accordance with the draft Long Term Financial Plan.

The Asset Plan, once adopted, must be reviewed by 31 October in the year following a general election of the Council. The cost to achieve the 31 October 2029 milestone will be incurred in 2028/29 and therefore considered as the 2028/29 budget is prepared.

7. Implementation

The adopted Asset Plan will be published in Council's website and physical copies will be made available at customer facing facilities of Council.

Attachment/s

1⇩ Merri-bek Draft Asset Plan D25/511705



Balam Balam Place, Brunswick.

Draft Asset Plan

2025-2035

Assets for our community | Planning for the future | Information in your language

Italian	Italiano
Arabic	العربية
Greek	Ελληνικά
Urdu	اردو
Nepali	नेपाली
Turkish	Türkçe
Simplified Chinese	中文
Spanish	Español
Vietnamese	Tiếng Việt
Hindi	हिंदी

Acknowledgement of Country

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

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1. Our City at a Glance

Merri-bek is a vibrant and diverse community in Melbourne's north, experiencing steady population growth. It is proudly multicultural, with a rich mix of languages, cultures, and backgrounds that contribute to the unique character and inclusive spirit of the area.

The council area stretches from **Brunswick** in the south to **Fawkner** and **Gowanbrae** in the north. Our local economy is powered by **retail, healthcare, education, manufacturing**, and the **creative industries**.

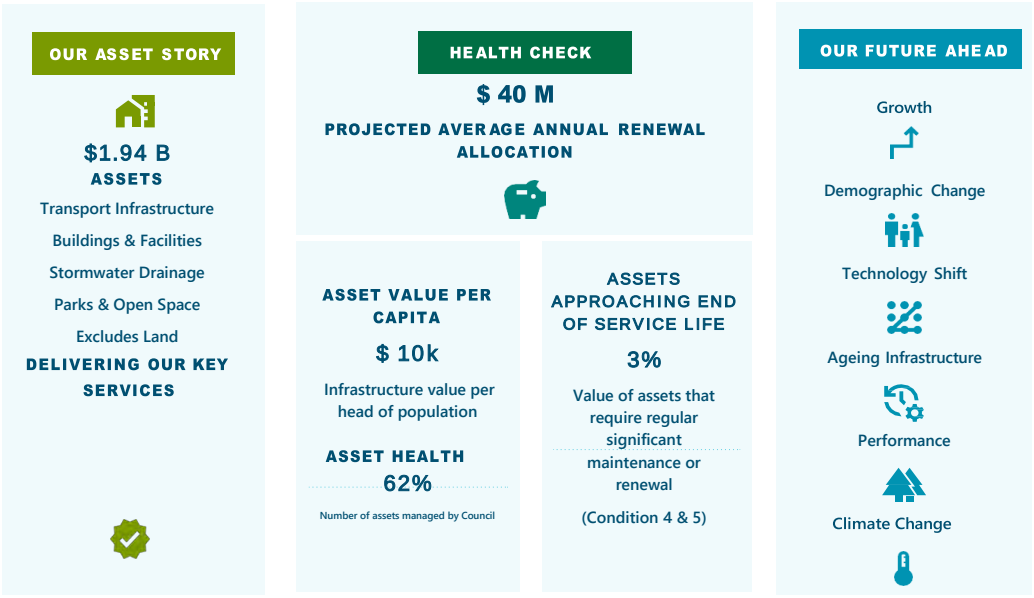
Merri-bek City Council looks after over **$1.94 billion worth of community assets** that help make our neighbourhoods great places to live. These assets include roads, pathways, buildings and facilities (including libraries and aquatic centres), drainage and open space.

These assets support everything from getting around safely to spending time outdoors to accessing services and community spaces. Council is committed to managing these shared assets responsibly making sure they are safe, accessible, and ready to meet the needs of our growing and changing community.

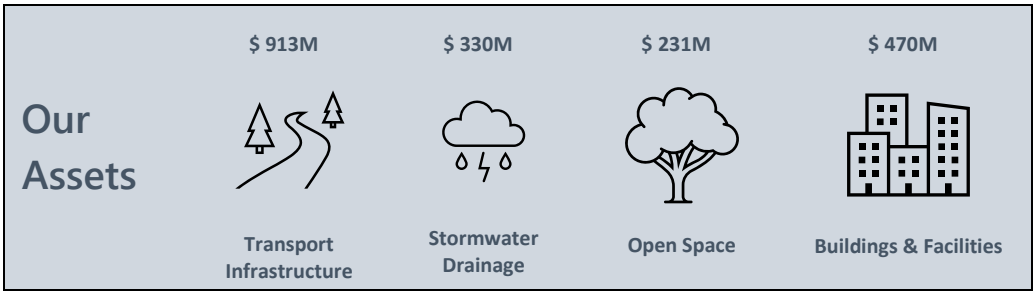
In addition to these community assets, Council owns and manages fleet, equipment and miscellaneous assets which enable services to be provided to the community. The management of these assets are outside the scope of this plan.

2. Our Assets Story on a Page

Our assets are the things you can see or use when you're out and about in the municipality that play an integral role in supporting the effective delivery of services and public amenity. Heritage, new built and natural plus all the things that belong to all of us that help make life better and richer for each of us.



	Community Services	Waste and Recycling	Parks and Recreation	Libraries and Learning	Infrastructure and Planning	Arts and Culture
Delivering our key services	Support for families, youth, older adults, and people with disabilities	Bin collection, hard rubbish, and recycling programs	Maintenance of parks, playgrounds, and leisure facilities	Access to library resources, digital tools, and community programs	Management of roads, footpaths, and urban development	Public art programs, galleries, and community cultural events



Our Plan

Council to review/update

Long Term Decision Making

- Balancing community needs with responsible spending
- Optimising available funding to reduce long term risk
- Transparency in allocating funding to individual programs
- Prioritising New, Upgrade and Renewals with the focus on future needs

Financial Planning

- Average annual capital expenditure = $85 M
- Infrastructure value per capita = $10.4K
- - Infrastructure spend per capita = $455

Challenges and Opportunities

- Ageing infrastructure nearing end of life
- Rising community expectations and population growth
- Rate capping and limited external funding
- Opportunity to improve resilience, data accuracy, and performance-based decision making

Strategic Improvement Initiatives

- Deliberative Community Engagement
- Implementation of AMS for asset data and lifecycle management
- Standardised asset condition assessments across asset classes
- Integration of climate resilience, accessibility, and equity into asset planning
- Continuous improvement aligned with ISO 55000 and Local Government Act 2020

3. Introduction

3.1 Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of this Asset Plan (the Asset Plan) is to provide a framework for Council's commitment to best practice asset management and provide principles for sound asset investment decision making.

The Asset Plan for Merri-bek City Council outlines a comprehensive strategy for managing public assets over the next decade and beyond, ensuring sustainable stewardship for current and future generations. It is intended to be a public facing document which informs the community on how Council will manage community assets to achieve the Council Plan objectives and Vision.

The plan details how we will optimise capital and maintenance requirements, balance new assets and growth with current infrastructure to deliver services in line with evolving community needs and expectations. Our aim is to support consistent, evidence-based decision-making, engage community and Council in asset management performance reporting, improve links between costs and levels of service, articulate our challenges and risks all of which will result in more informed community engagement and best use of Council assets in the interest of the community.

The Asset Plan addresses the challenges of balancing economic, social, cultural, and environmental factors within a constrained budget.

This asset plan also includes Council's assessment of the maturity of our approach to asset management, and provides an action plan to address gaps in our systems and processes where needed.

The Asset Plan provides expenditure forecasts that will guide future maintenance, renewal programs, and capital projects, impacting long-term financial planning and annual budgets.

Compliance with the Local Government Act

Council has prepared this Asset Plan in compliance with *Victoria's Local Government Act 2020* which requires all councils to prepare integrated, long-term, and transparent asset plans to achieve the best outcomes for the community with a 10 year horizon.

Council's Strategic Planning

Our Asset Plan is integrated within the broader Council planning framework. It aligns closely with:

- Community Vision: Reflecting our long term aspirations.
- Council Plan: Outlining short to medium term priorities.
- Financial Plan: Ensuring financial sustainability.

This alignment ensures that asset management decisions support our overall strategic objectives and are compliant with legislative requirements.

Council's Deliberative Engagement

In line with Council's Communication Engagement Policy, we will engage with our community in relation to decisions that affect asset and service delivery.

What is asset management?

A systematic process to guide the planning and design, creation and acquisition, maintenance and operations, renewal, and disposal and rationalisation of assets to balance available funds with community needs.

Why is asset management important?

Our community expects assets to be provided to a standard that ensures public safety, amenity and accessibility and to support the delivery of quality services and programs. Our community also expects that Council's asset when passed on to the next generation will be regarded as a positive legacy.

We need to balance delivering what our community needs and expects with what our community can afford.

Over time, our community needs and expectations are bound to change with demographics, climate and technology constantly evolving.

With a finite budget for investment in assets, a planned and measured approach to asset management is necessary to ensure a fair and fiscally prudent long-term financial plan.

3.2 Our Community and Population

Merri-bek City Council, located in Melbourne's inner-northern suburbs, encompasses a diverse and dynamic community. As of 30 June 2024, the estimated resident population was **191,747**, reflecting steady growth over recent years. The area is characterised by its multiculturalism, with over one-third of residents born overseas and more than 140 languages spoken at home. The age distribution is relatively young, with a significant proportion of residents aged between 25 and 34 years. Looking ahead, the population is projected to reach approximately **222,733** by 2036, indicating a continued upward trend in growth.



Economically, Merri-bek boasts a robust and diverse local economy. The municipality's Gross Regional Product (GRP) stands at **$8.43 billion**, supported by **16,456** local businesses. Key employment sectors include health care and social assistance, retail, education, and manufacturing. The area provides **52,735** local jobs, with **110,518** employed residents, underscoring its role as a significant employment hub in the region.



In response to ongoing growth and development, Merri-bek City Council has implemented strategic plans to guide sustainable urban development and economic prosperity. The Council's Economic Development Action Plan 2024–2027 outlines initiatives to support local businesses and attract investment. Additionally, the Council is engaging in urban revitalisation projects, such as the "Revitalising Coburg" initiative, aimed at transforming central Coburg into a vibrant, mixed-use precinct.

3.3 Our Assets

The assets owned and operated by our Council across four (4) asset portfolios totalling over **$1.94 Billion** in replacement costs as at 30th June 2024.

The mix of infrastructure is detailed in the diagram below as a percent of the total replacement value. These infrastructure assets support nearly every aspect of our day-to-day activities. They keep us safe, healthy, connected, and employed. Maintaining existing infrastructure is just as important as building new infrastructure.

The distribution of Council asset portfolio by asset category and replacement value is shown below.

$1.94 BILLION	Replacement Cost ($M)	Asset Health (% Remaining life)	Average Condition
Buildings and Facilities	$471	71%	1.48
Parks and Open Space	$ 231	42%	2.40
Stormwater Drainage	$330	59%	1.78
Transport Infrastructure	$913	64%	1.65
SUB-Total	$1,944	62%	1.70
Land	$1,611	Not applicable	Not applicable
TOTAL	$ 3,556		

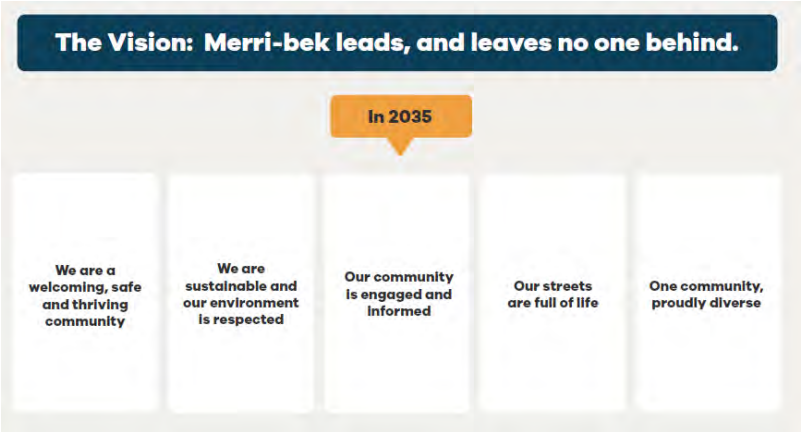
Notes:

1. *Transportation consists of roads, kerbs, bridges, weirs, culverts, and pathways*
2. *Land itself is not a depreciable asset, as it does not deteriorate over time in the same way that built assets do. While the structures and improvements on land (e.g., buildings, roads, footpaths) are subject to depreciation and are accounted for within the relevant asset categories in this plan, the underlying land is excluded from depreciation calculations and hence does not form any further part of this plan.*
3. *The above figures do not include any valuation of trees or other vegetation.*
4. *Condition rating: 0 - excellent, 5 - aged*

4. Strategic Context

4.1 Strategic Alignment

Council adopted the following vision and objectives



The Asset Plan supports these objectives by ensuring that the management, renewal, and development of Council's assets are proactively planned and prioritised to deliver the infrastructure and services needed to realise these goals.

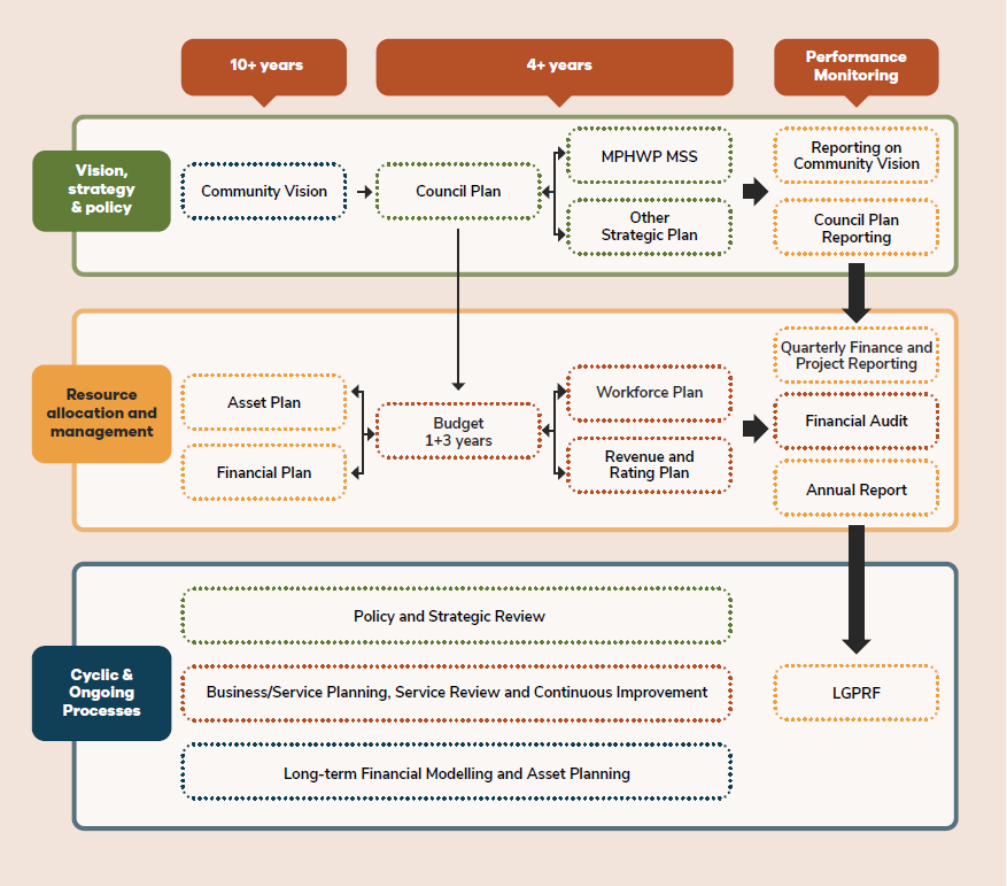
This integrated approach ensures that asset management is not undertaken in isolation but is embedded within Merri-bek's broader strategic direction. By aligning asset investment and service delivery with Council's long-term aspirations and immediate priorities, the Asset Plan plays a critical role in enabling Merri-bek to deliver sustainable, equitable, and resilient outcomes for its community, now and into the future.

4.2 Integrated Planning

Under the Local Government Act (Victoria) 2020, Council is legislatively required to establish a suite of Strategic Management Plans, which guide Council's future planning, asset management and financial sustainability.

The Council Plan, Asset Plan, and Financial Plan are integrated under the Victorian Local Government Act 2020 to ensure that strategic objectives, service delivery, and long-term infrastructure investment are aligned and financially sustainable, supporting informed decision-making that meets both current and future community needs. This integration supports long-term decision making by ensuring that asset maintenance, renewal, and investment are planned in line with available funding and community priorities, enabling Council to manage resources responsibly and deliver services effectively.

An overview of these strategic management plans and how they support their delivery is shown below.


10+ years
4+ years
Performance Monitoring
Vision, strategy & policy
Community Vision
Council Plan
MPHWP MSS
Other Strategic Plan
Reporting on Community Vision
Council Plan Reporting
Resource allocation and management
Asset Plan
Financial Plan
Budget 1+3 years
Workforce Plan
Revenue and Rating Plan
Quarterly Finance and Project Reporting
Financial Audit
Annual Report
Cyclic & Ongoing Processes
Policy and Strategic Review
Business/Service Planning, Service Review and Continuous Improvement
Long-term Financial Modelling and Asset Planning
LGPRF

Strategic Planning Document	Role	Horizon & Review Cycle
Community Vision	Our community's aspirations and priorities for the future of Merri-bek City Council	10 Years
Council Plan	Details the Objectives and Goals to aim for to achieve the Community Vision with a 4-year delivery focus	4 years
Asset Management Policy	Sets the principles for consistent and appropriate asset management practices, processes and systems across the portfolio and sets the strategic intent for the sustainable management of Council's assets	Current practice and 4 Yearly Review
Asset Plan (this document)	Details the Strategic Actions and Asset Management Indicators that provide for Deliberative Community Engagement in line with the Victorian 2020 regulation.	10 years of scenario planning with engaged Review - sign off by Council every 4 years
Financial Plan	Council's Financial Plan detailing the Capital Works Plan, Income and Funding Sources and Local Government Financial metrics.	10 years outlook and Annual Review
Workforce Plan	Outlines how we will manage our resources and budgets to deliver projects	4 years
Annual Business Plan + Budget	Outlines how we will manage our resources and budgets to deliver projects	1-2 years
Individual Asset Class Plans	For each major class – Transport, Buildings, Open Space and Stormwater Drainage, it details the funding need for maintenance and capital for a range of service levels	10-20 years and with a comprehensive update every re-valuation cycle.

4.3 Asset Management Planning

Council takes a lifecycle management approach to asset management planning, considering the resourcing requirements to operate, maintain, rehabilitate and renew assets to meet service level requirements and asset useful life expectancy.

Taking a lifecycle approach ensures we get the best possible return on our asset spending. This considers the costs of an asset over its useful life that is from the time a new asset is built or acquired to the time it is replaced or disposed of.
This approach allows us to get the most out of our assets by meeting required levels of service in the most cost effective way.

Council's Asset management practices are also governed internally by the Asset Management Policy, the Asset Plan and supporting documents, strategies. The whole process is supported by enablers such as technology, data, processes and people and is informed by key corporate and strategic documents. Council's Asset Management Framework is outlined below.

4.4 Lifecycle approach to asset management

1. Planning and design

When identifying asset requirements that meet service delivery needs over the long term, whole-of-life costs and other factors such as affordability, equity, accessibility, maintainability and the environment are considered.

2. Creation and acquisition

Before constructing, expanding, upgrading or acquiring a new asset, alternative service delivery solutions are considered such as leasing or strategic partnerships. Any new build should align to an endorsed management plan or strategy and is supported by a life cycle cost that informs the Financial Plan for long term maintenance and renewal needs.

3. Maintenance and operations

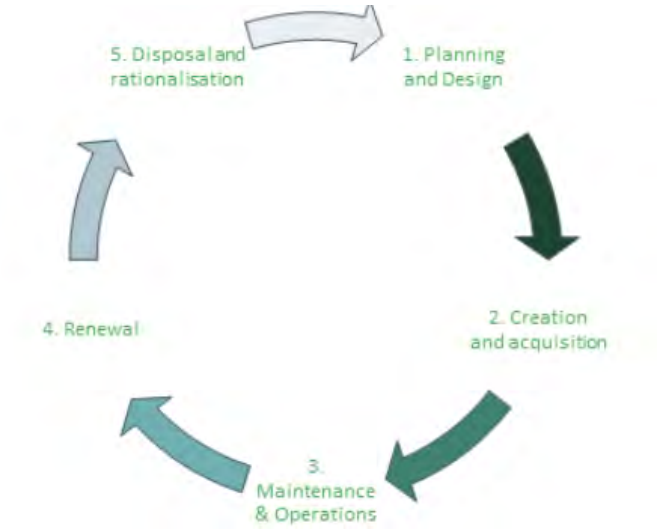
Each asset's operations are monitored consistently over its useful life. A program of planned condition assessments, maintenance and servicing is undertaken to minimise ongoing costs and the risk of asset failure and to ensure the asset remains operational, safe and compliant, and meets current maintenance levels of service.

4. Renewal and Upgrade

Existing assets are replaced as they approach their intervention state– that is, they no longer support the required level of service delivery. Prioritisation of such works is based on criticality of the service and associated assets.

5. Disposal and rationalisation

Where an asset no longer directly supports the required level of service delivery, decommissioning or rationalisation of the asset to reduce lifecycle costs is considered as part of long-term financial planning.



5. Our Community's Role

We are committed to engaging with our community and ensuring transparency in our decision-making by providing opportunities to provide input into decisions that affect asset and service delivery.

In compliance with the Local Government Act 2020, we seek feedback from the community at key points in the decision-making process to ensure we provide services and assets that are sustainable and available for future generations.

Our stakeholders

- The community
- The Council
- User groups
- Community groups

5.1 Community Workshop Details

Council hosted three sessions with the deliberative panel throughout February 2025. Details of each workshop can be found in the table below:

Session	Location	Agenda	Objectives
Session 1 20/02/2025	Coburg Town Hall	• Welcome and introductions • Overview of deliberative process • Council's role and planning process • Q&A with Council staff	• Build understanding of Council's functions • Introduce the deliberative process • Connect panel members and staff
Session 2 22/02/2025	Coburg Town Hall	• Review Council Plan and Community Vision • Explore key values and aspirations • Discuss community priorities for 2035	• Understand current and future community needs • Identify shared values and vision for Merri-bek • Begin developing community priorities
Session 3 23/02/2025	Coburg Town Hall	• Refine Community Vision and Priorities • Prepare presentations • Present advice to Councillors	• Finalise recommendations • Present vision and priorities to Council • Promote community ownership and input

5.2 Council's community engagement principles

These guiding principles are applied at key points in our asset management planning process in line with our commitment to a best practice contemporary approach to community engagement.

1. We will enable the community to provide meaningful input into decision-making.
2. We will be clear about the objectives of engagement and the opportunities to influence decision-making.
3. We will be respectful of all community members including residents, True Custodians, Council officers and Councillors.
4. We will provide accurate, timely and accessible information.
5. We will provide inclusive engagement opportunities for all community members, including those considered hard to reach.
6. We will provide multiple opportunities for the community to participate.
7. We will consider the needs and interests of all people in the decision-making process.
8. We will inform the community of the final decision and how their input was considered.

9. We will review and evaluate the effectiveness of the community engagement.
10. We will plan, resource and report on our engagement processes properly.

5.3 How we engage with our community

Merri-bek City Council is committed to inclusive, transparent, and ongoing community engagement. Engagement is guided by our Community Engagement Policy and the requirements of the Local Government Act 2020, including deliberative processes that inform strategic plans such as the Council Plan, Financial Plan, and Asset Plan.

We use a wide range of engagement methods to reach people across all ages, backgrounds, and abilities, including:

- **In-person activities** such as pop-ups, workshops, and focus groups
- **Online platforms**, especially Conversations Merri-bek, where residents can complete surveys, post ideas, or participate in discussions
- **Translated materials** and targeted outreach to priority groups such as multicultural communities, older adults, young people, people with disability, and the LGBTIQA+ community
- **Community Panels**, including youth and adult representatives, to provide in-depth input into key strategies
- **Advisory committees and champion networks** that support ongoing dialogue between Council and the community

This inclusive approach ensures our asset planning reflects the community's needs, values, and aspirations helping us deliver infrastructure that supports a safe, vibrant, and sustainable city for all.

5.4 What did the Community tell us

Merri-bek City Council has engaged extensively with the community between 2020 and 2025 through workshops, surveys, pop-ups, and online engagement. Many residents contributed to shaping Council's priorities, including through the deliberative panel workshops held in February 2025.

Participants reflected the diverse makeup of Merri-bek, including people from all suburbs, cultural backgrounds, age groups, and abilities. Engagement activities were inclusive and accessible, with translated materials and targeted outreach to underrepresented groups.

The key themes emerging from the consultation include:

- Maintaining and renewing infrastructure such as roads, footpaths, and public spaces
- Enhancing access to safe, inclusive and well-maintained community facilities
- Increasing investment in sustainable transport options and improved accessibility
- Prioritising green and open spaces, tree canopy, and climate resilience
- Ensuring transparency in decision-making and equitable access to information and services

This feedback has informed Council's strategic planning and underscores the importance of investing in community assets that are safe, sustainable, and responsive to future needs.

6. How We Manage Our Assets

6.1 Our Assets Support Our Services

Council provides a range of important and valued services to support the community to be a place for all. t

Our assets are valuable and tangible physical elements within the region that are essential for delivering these services effectively and enhancing public well-being. These assets, both heritage and new, built and natural, belong to all our communities and contribute to provide opportunities for current and future generations to work, live, play and thrive in a safe and habitable environment. Over time, these assets degrade through natural wear and tear, malicious damage or obsolescence. Balancing our ratepayer dollars to ensure these assets are maintained to their fullest potential is integral to our long-term financial sustainability.

Why is asset management important?

Our community expects assets to be provided to a standard that ensures public safety, amenity and accessibility and to support the delivery of quality services and programs.

We need to balance delivering what our community needs, what our community expects and what our community can afford.

Over time, our community needs and expectations are bound to change with demographics, climate and technology constantly evolving.

With a finite budget for investment in assets, a planned and measured approach to asset management is necessary to ensure a fair and fiscally prudent long-term financial plan.

What assets are covered in this plan?

For the purposes of this Asset Plan 'assets' refers to the portfolio of public assets that Council is responsible for managing. To make it easier for our community to understand what these assets are, we have grouped them according to their services they provide and the functions they belong to in the table below.

Transport Infrastructure	Stormwater Drainage	Open Space	Buildings & Facilities
The infrastructure needed for movement, within or beyond our city and as part of our day-to-day activities, whether by vehicle or bike or as a pedestrian.	The infrastructure we need to direct stormwater run-off, mitigate flooding and improve water quality in line with EPA standards.	The locations and environments we frequent while enjoying the natural surroundings or engaging in recreational and leisure activities.	The locations and areas we utilise when accessing community services or participating in recreational, cultural, or social activities.
Includes roads and streets, bridges, footpaths, trails, roundabouts, speed humps and traffic management devices	Includes swales, drains and pipes, pits, sedimentation ponds, dams, wetlands, gross pollutant traps and water-sensitive urban design elements.	Includes parks and gardens (trees,flower beds, fences, gates), playgrounds, waterways, sports fields, public furniture and amenity assets (seats, barbecues, pergolas, shade sails)	Includes town halls, leisure and aquatic centres, sports pavilions, stadiums, libraries, community centres, maternal health and other buildings that house community services, public toilets and shelters.

6.2 How Our Assets Support Community Needs

Our assets exist to support the delivery of Council services and public amenities that, in turn, support our community's social and economic needs.

When making decisions about renewal or maintenance of our assets and/or prioritising our new asset investments, we always undertake life cycle analysis and what the appropriate levels of service for an asset prior to setting budgets.

6.3 Prioritisation of Works

Asset management decisions are informed by a set of guiding principles that reflect community expectations and the intended function of each asset.

In practice, service delivery is shaped by the following factors:

- **Availability** – The extent to which the service can be accessed when required
- **Quality** – The performance or condition of the asset in delivering its intended function
- **Risk** – The likelihood and consequence of asset failure or service interruption
- **Accessibility** – The ability for all community members to use the asset or service
- **Comfort** – The general user experience and satisfaction with the service

These considerations help guide decisions about how assets are maintained, renewed, or upgraded. For example, assets that support high levels of community use or critical services are typically prioritised for more regular maintenance and earlier renewal. Conversely, assets that support lower-priority services may be managed to a lower standard where appropriate.

This framework helps ensure that available budgets are directed where they provide the most benefit to the community and where risks can be most effectively managed.

6.4 Our Asset Response to Gender Impacts Assessment (GIA)

Merri-bek City Council is committed to advancing gender equality across its policies, programs, and services. In line with the Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic), the Council undertakes Gender Impact Assessments (GIAs) to ensure that decisions consider the needs and experiences of people of all genders and promote fair, inclusive outcomes.

Council's commitment to gender equity is embedded in its planning, workforce practices, and service delivery. Through the implementation of the Gender Equality Action Plan 2022–2025, Merri-bek is actively working to remove barriers to participation, enhance workforce diversity, and foster a culture of respect and inclusion.

Gender considerations are integrated into strategic planning processes, including asset management, to ensure that public infrastructure and services are accessible, safe, and equitable for everyone in the community. Ongoing community engagement, supported by advisory structures such as the Gender Equality Reference Group, helps to inform and strengthen the Council's approach to gender equality across all areas of work.

By embedding GIAs into its decision-making and continually reviewing progress, Merri-bek aims to build a more equitable and inclusive city for current and future generations.

In asset management planning, our gender equity considerations include:

- Designing public spaces, buildings, and infrastructure to be safe, accessible, and inclusive for all genders and abilities.

- Applying Gender Impact Assessments (GIAs) to major asset projects and service planning, in line with the Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic).
- Supporting equitable access to community, recreation, and cultural facilities across Merri-bek's diverse population.
- Addressing barriers to participation through inclusive design, location, service delivery and crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED).
- Engaging with the community to understand diverse needs and reflect these in asset priorities and investment decisions.

7. The State of Our Assets

Merri-bek City Council delivers a wide range of services that rely on a diverse and significant portfolio of physical assets. Understanding the current condition, service performance, costs, and risks associated with these assets is essential to ensure we can plan, prioritise, and invest responsibly to meet the needs of our growing and diverse community.

To support more effective management, assets are grouped into asset classes based on their characteristics, usage, and service requirements. Assets within each class are assessed on a regular cycle—typically every 3 to 5 years—to determine their condition, that is their remaining useful life These condition assessments help identify which assets require renewal to function effectively.

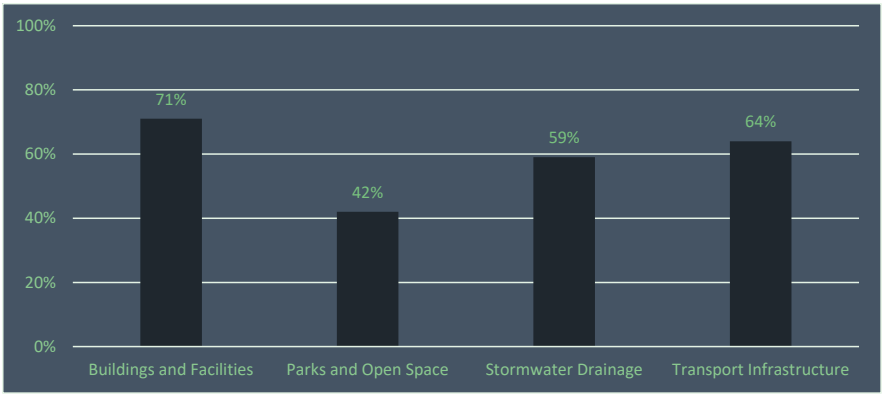
Underground drainage assets, however, present unique challenges. Because they cannot be readily inspected, their condition is typically estimated based on their age. Renewal of these assets is therefore prioritised based on performance indicators such as capacity, failure rates, spot checks using pipe cameras, or service complaints.

This Asset Plan provides a high-level overview of the current state of Council's assets and their long-term sustainability. More detailed information, including service levels, intervention thresholds, condition monitoring, and future financial sustainability considerations, is available in individual Asset Management Plans for each class.

When assessing asset performance, Council not only considers the current condition but also adopts a long-term perspective to protect asset value, maintain service delivery, and minimise the financial burden on future generations.

This section presents the projected performance of Merri-bek's $1.94 billion asset portfolio over the next 10 years.

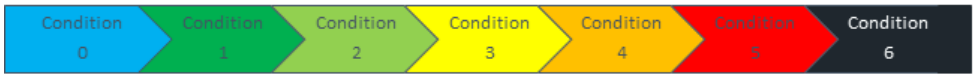
Asset Health is a measure of the remaining useful life of the asset portfolio. The figure below displays the current asset health by asset class.



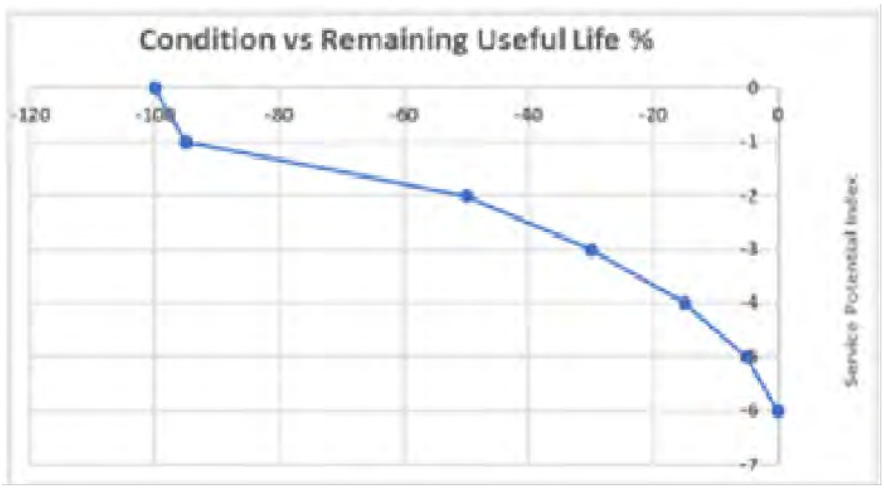
Asset Health (% Remaining life) by Asset Class as at 30th June 2024

Further commentary on the Asset Health of Council's Parks and Open Space Assets is provided in Section 9.4.

The condition for all asset classes is reported using a 0 to 6 rating system as shown below:

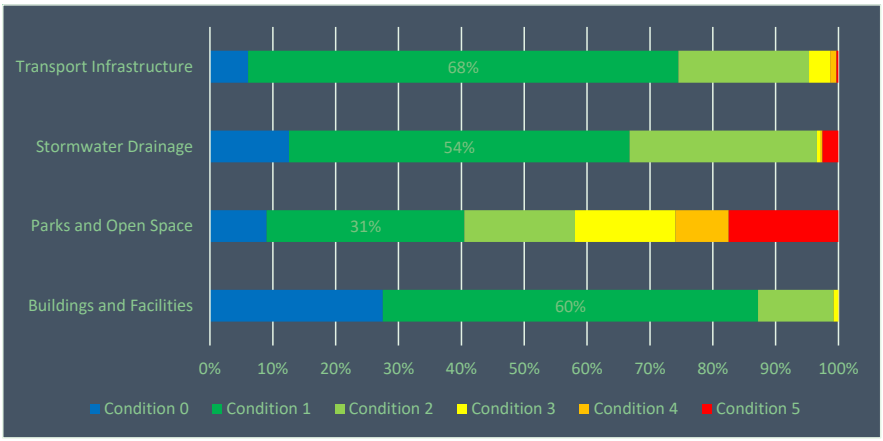


- Condition 0 – as new
- Condition 1 – very good, requiring minimal maintenance
- Condition 2 – good, requiring some maintenance
- Condition 3 – moderate, requiring increased maintenance
- Condition 4 – fair, requiring regular maintenance
- Condition 5 – aged, requiring significant maintenance
- Condition 6 – not functional



Asset Condition Assessment Rating

Within each asset class, there is a distribution of assets from a new to an aged condition. The current distribution is illustrated in the figure below:



No assets in condition 6
Condition distribution as percent of replacement cost as at 30th June 2024

8 . Funding for the Future

To ensure responsible and sustainable stewardship of our assets, we are committed to balancing our community's needs and aspirations with what is affordable for ratepayers.

Making decisions about funding our assets requires ongoing balancing of service levels, risk and the need to adequately maintain and renew assets. Our aim is to achieve long-term asset sustainability.

8.1 Integration with the Financial Plan

Merri-bek City Council's Asset Plan is developed in alignment with Council's long-term Financial Plan to ensure responsible management of community resources. Forecasts for asset renewal, maintenance, and new investment are embedded within financial planning to support sustainable service delivery. This coordinated approach enables Council to balance infrastructure needs with available funding, plan for future demand, and minimise financial risks. By integrating asset management and financial strategies, Merri-bek can maintain the value and performance of its asset portfolio while ensuring decisions today do not compromise the wellbeing of future generations.

8.2 Our asset investment strategies

Merri-bek City Council takes a strategic and long-term approach to managing and investing in community assets. Our investment decisions are guided by the need to provide sustainable, inclusive, and high-quality infrastructure that supports service delivery and meets the evolving needs of our growing and diverse community. Asset investment is closely linked to financial planning, risk management, and community engagement to ensure resources are used effectively and responsibly.

Council's asset investment approach is underpinned by the following principles:

- Sustainable development through environmentally responsible design and construction practices.
- Financial sustainability by aligning asset investment with the 10-Year Financial Plan and future service needs.
- Community-driven priorities shaped through engagement and consultation with Merri-bek's diverse community.
- Strategic property management to maximise the long-term value and use of Council-owned land and buildings.
- Lifecycle and risk-based planning to optimise asset performance, manage risks, and extend asset life.

8.3 Asset investment categories

For the purposes of this Asset Plan, our asset spending is categorised in a way that helps us to plan our budgets and track how we spend our money on assets and services.

Expenditure Type	Asset Management Activity	Description
Recurrent	Maintenance	Scheduled work to keep assets operating at the required level of service, or reactive work to repair defects and ensure that assets meet their service life and don't require early renewal.
	Operations	Recurrent expenditure that is required to use an asset such as utility costs, audit and inspection programs, cleaning or fees paid to other organisations.
Capital	Renewal	Works on assets that are at the end of life that restore their ability to deliver or facilitate the delivery of the desired service
	Upgrade	Works that increase the quality of the existing service that can be delivered through an existing asset.
	New	Works that generate an asset that can provide a service that does not currently exist.

8.4 Lifecycle investment profile

A detailed breakdown of what we expect to spend on each asset function over the next 10 years is outlined within individual asset class profiles under section 9 – Asset Class Detail. The table below summarises the adopted 10-year expenditure by asset class for 2025-2035:

Asset Class	Renewal $,000	Upgrade/New* $,000	Maintenance $,000	Total $,000
Transport Infrastructure	171,408	34,529	59,868	265,805
Buildings & Facilities	168,611	95,921	40,759	305,291
Stormwater Drainage	23,717	58,323	3,809	85,849
Parks & Recreation	49,818	49,833	97,903	197,554
Total Over 10 Years	**413,554**	**238,606**	**202,339**	**854,499**

**Includes major projects funding*

9. Asset Class Detail

9.1 Transport Infrastructure

What assets are included?

Sealed roads, unsealed roads, footpaths, kerbs and car parks.

What does our work involve?

Recurrent	Renewal	Upgrade and Growth
• Maintenance and repairs to roads such as patching potholes, crack sealing and path grinding • Operational servicing such as street sweeping, vegetation management and weed spraying	• Resurfacing of existing roads • Road reconstruction or major patching of road failures • Replacement of sections of existing pathways to an equivalent standard	• New constructed and gifted assets by developers • Road safety improvements such as installation of crash barriers, intersection upgrades, etc. • Traffic calming treatments such as construction of roundabouts, installation of speed humps, etc • Extension of existing pathway network to address gaps in connectivity • Network improvements to better cater for cyclists

How is funding prioritised?

This funding allocation is informed by strategic modelling analysis that predicts the deterioration of our Transport assets and the impact of various renewal funding scenarios on future asset condition.

How much do we plan to spend over the next 10 years?

Projected expenditure 2025-2035:

Projected Expenditure ($,000)											
Expenditure Type	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34	2034-35	Total
Maintenance	5,419	5,536	5,656	5,780	5,907	6,038	6,172	6,310	6,452	6,598	**59,868**
Renewal	23,405	14,462	15,666	17,224	17,369	16,464	16,560	16,65	16,752	16,849	**171,408**
Upgrade/New	5,610	3,230	3,080	5,041	2,871	2,905	2,922	2,939	2,956	2,973	**34,529**
Total	**34,434**	**23,228**	**24,402**	**28,045**	**26,147**	**25,407**	**25,654**	**25,905**	**26,160**	**26,420**	**265,805**

**Includes major projects funding*

What are the future challenges and opportunities?

Changing population	Increased freight task	Climate change	Legislation and compliance
• The increased demand on local roads and their connections with State government and Collector roads due to population growth and increased dwelling density	• The increased deterioration of our road network due to an increased number of heavy vehicles and increased gross loadings	• The lack of availability of sustainable transport options, including public transport • The increased risk of damage to our transport assets due to more frequent and more extreme weather events • The need to consider resilience in the design and construction of new assets	• The need to ensure compliance with the *Road Traffic Act 1961* • The need to meet the requirements of our Road Management Plan • The need to ensure clarity on which roads we are responsible for

- Upcoming major projects for Transport are available for viewing in Council's Annual Budget document,



9.2 Buildings & Facilities

What assets are included?

Buildings, structures,stadiums and facilities..

What does our work involve?

Recurrent	Renewal	Upgrade and Growth
• Minor repairs to building components due to failure, vandalism, etc. • Unblocking drains, service checks, carpet repairs, etc. • Safety, compliance, and condition inspections	• Major structural repairs • Replacement of roof or wall cladding • Replacement of bathrooms and kitchens	• Building extensions • Sustainability improvements (e.g. PV systems, water harvesting and reuse systems, etc.) • Construction of a new building to cater for increased or changing demand • Replacement of amenities with DDA compliance and to meet raised community requirements

How is funding prioritised?

This funding allocation is informed by strategic modelling analysis that predicts the deterioration of our Buildings assets and the impact of various renewal funding scenarios on future asset condition.

How much do we plan to spend over the next 10 years?

Projected expenditure 2025-2035:

Projected Expenditure ($,000)											
Expenditure Type	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34	2034-35	Total
Maintenance	3,793	3,852	3,913	3,975	4,038	4,103	4,169	4,236	4,305	4,376	**40,759**
Renewal	4,886	7,389	11,675	31,765	26,920	17,337	19,524	17,194	15,802	16,118	**168,611**
Upgrade/ New	3,430	4,505	10,686	12,089	7,895	11,558	13,016	11,463	10,535	10,746	**95,921**
Total	**12,109**	**15,746**	**26,274**	**47,829**	**38,853**	**32,998**	**36,709**	**32,893**	**30,642**	**31,240**	**305,291**

**Includes major projects funding*

What are the future challenges and opportunities?

Changing population	Financial	Climate change	Legislation and compliance
• The need to improve access for all genders and abilities and other underrepresented communities • The need to meet diverse and often competing community demands and expectations for facilities	• The need to maximise the use of existing facilities and to manage assets that are surplus to needs • The unplanned maintenance liabilities associated with facilities that community groups are no longer able to manage	• The increased risk of damage to our buildings and facilities due to more frequent and more extreme weather events • The challenge of ensuring we meet our target of net zero	• The need to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation such as in relation to accessibility, fire safety, occupational health and safety, etc. • The need to ensure buildings are provided in line with the National Construction Code.

*Refer Recreation Infrastructure Plan

Upcoming major projects for Buildings are available for viewing in Council's Annual Budget document.



9.3 Stormwater Infrastructure

Council to review/update

What assets are included?

Retaining basins, bio-retention ponds, pipes, pits and box culverts.

What does our work involve?

Recurrent	Renewal	Upgrade and Growth
• Pit cleaning • Pipe cleansing and removal of debris, sediment, etc. • Removal of litter from Gross Pollutant Traps • Programmed inspections	• Replacement of pits and pipes • Periodic renewal of sediment from bio-retention ponds	• Replacement of pipes with a higher hydraulic capacity • Extension of the stormwater drainage network • Installation of stormwater quality improvement devices, such as rain gardens, litter traps, etc. • Stormwater harvesting initiatives

How is funding prioritised?

This funding allocation is informed by strategic modelling analysis that predicts the deterioration of our stormwater assets and the impact of various renewal funding scenarios on future asset condition.

How much do we plan to spend over the next 10 years?

Projected expenditure 2025-2035:

Projected Expenditure ($,000)											
Expenditure Type	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34	2034-35	Total
Maintenance	354	360	367	372	378	384	390	396	402	408	**3,809**
Renewal	3,138	2,200	1,911	2,412	2,822	2,116	2,180	2,245	2,312	2,382	**23,717**
Upgrade/ New	8,471	8,300	6,577	10,415	3,698	4,938	3,973	3,979	3,984	3,988	**58,323**
Total	**11,963**	**10,860**	**8,855**	**13,199**	**6,898**	**7,438**	**6,543**	**6,620**	**6,698**	**6,778**	**85,849**

**Includes major projects funding*

What are the future challenges and opportunities?

Development density	Ageing infrastructure	Climate change	Environmental sustainability
• The need to upgrade the capacity of our existing drainage network to mitigate flooding due to increased volumes of stormwater run-off caused by continued urban consolidation • The need to implement stormwater quality improvement initiatives to protect receiving waterways affected by continued urban consolidation	• The need to upgrade some of our older drainage assets that are currently under capacity to improve flood immunity • The need to deal with more frequent and extreme flooding events • The ability to fund the timely renewal and upgrade of drainage assets that are in poor condition	• The projected reduction in current level of service with respect to flood protection and accessibility due to more frequent and more extreme weather events that lead to more flooding	• The increased need to provide infrastructure for the capture, treatment and reuse of stormwater to enable us to make use of stormwater run-off as a sustainable resource

Upcoming major projects for Drainage are available for viewing in Council's Annual Budget document.



9.4 Open Space

Council to review/update

What assets are included?

Playgrounds, play equipment, sportsgrounds, park furniture, fences, lighting, irrigation and other assets typically found within open space areas.

What does our work involve?

Recurrent	Renewal	Upgrade and Growth
• Hazard/defect inspections • Mowing, vegetation/weed control • Garden bed maintenance • Litter collection and cleaning • Graffiti removal	• Replacement of playground equipment • Replacement of park furniture • Rejuvenation or replacement of entire playing courts or sports fields to an equivalent standard	• Playing court extension • Replacement of playground equipment to a higher standard • Development of a new park or reserve

How is funding prioritised?

This funding allocation is informed by strategic modelling analysis that predicts the deterioration of our Open Space assets and the impact of various renewal funding scenarios on future asset condition. Council also purchases appropriate sites to create more open space, and installing new open space assets as part of its Parks Close to Home Program.

As noted in Section 4, the overall health of Council's Parks and Open Space assets is currently rated at 42%, which is significantly lower than the health ratings of other infrastructure asset groups. This lower rating is, in part, due to the nature of these assets—being exposed to outdoor conditions and typically having shorter life expectancies compared to other infrastructure types.

While they may show signs of ageing sooner, it is important to recognise that these assets exist in generally low-stress environments. They are often located within well-maintained landscapes, surrounded by mature trees, lush vegetation, scenic views, and expansive open areas. These positive contextual features, however, are not reflected in the asset health assessment.

Despite the 42% health rating, the assets remain functional and do not present any risk to public safety. The community continues to use and enjoy these spaces, demonstrating an ongoing acceptance of the condition of these assets within their broader natural setting.

How much do we plan to spend over the next 10 years?

Projected expenditure 2025-2035:

Projected Expenditure ($,000)											
Expenditure Type	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34	2034-35	Total
Maintenance	8,706	8,880	9,123	9,365	9,620	9,883	10,154	10,433	10,721	11,017	**97,903**
Renewal	6,350	4,057	7,974	4,667	2,670	4,583	4,555	6,305	4,327	4,327	**49,818**
Upgrade/ New	7,674	7,770	8,042	7,510	3,610	5,601	5,568	7,707	5,289	5,289	**49,833**
Total	**22,730**	**20,707**	**25,139**	**21,542**	**15,900**	**20,067**	**20,277**	**24,445**	**20,337**	**20,633**	**197,554**

**Includes major projects funding*

What are the future challenges and opportunities?

Changing population	Open space provision	Participation trends	Environmental sustainability
• As population density rises, particularly in activity centres and infill developments, demand for accessible and high-quality open space has intensified. Smaller private open spaces (e.g., courtyards or balconies) place greater reliance on public open space to meet residents' recreation, wellbeing, and social needs. • Increased development funds which allow the creation of new or upgraded open spaces that cater to a wider demographic enhances community cohesion and supports health and wellbeing across all ages and backgrounds	• In many parts of the city, acquiring new land for parks is prohibitively expensive or physically unfeasible due to built form and private ownership; some neighbourhoods are underserved, with limited open space within safe walking distance, while others enjoy better access and larger reserves • Repurposing underutilised road reserves, drainage corridors, or railway easements into pocket parks or linear greenways can improve access.	• The traditional park user has changed — people increasingly engage in informal recreation such as yoga, dog walking, or group fitness rather than structured sports, placing new types of demands on space • Designing parks with adaptable zones (e.g., moveable furniture, open lawns, shaded courts) accommodates a broader range of activities. • Demand for more inclusive, accessible, gender-responsive, and culturally appropriate spaces. Requiring GIAs, DDA compliance to meet diversity needs.	• Enhancing tree canopy cover, integrating raingardens and wetlands, and promoting native planting improves microclimate, reduces heat, and supports biodiversity. • Implementing environmentally sensitive maintenance regimes (e.g., reducing mowing frequency, using recycled water) can lower costs and environmental impact. • Community expectations for environmentally sustainable spaces (e.g. zero waste events, composting toilets).

Upcoming major projects for Recreation & Open Space are available for viewing in Council's Annual Budget document.



10. Monitoring and Improvement Plan

Asset planning is not a set and forget process. It needs to be flexible to ensure our assets and levels of service are responsive to changes in population and demographics and the ongoing challenge of climate change, can capitalise on emerging trends and opportunities, and continue to meet agreed requirements as priorities change over time.

Asset Plan reviews and updates

This Asset Plan will be formally reviewed and updated every four years in line with the new Council term to provide opportunities for the new Council to make any required changes.

Intermediary reviews may be undertaken to provide the opportunity to reflect improvements achieved, major financial decisions made, the consideration of any relevant external factors, or changes to long-term capital works programs to ensure it is responsive to our available financial resources over time.

Reporting

Our Asset Management Plans have a life of four years in line with the council election cycle. They are fully reviewed and updated within two years of each council election. They are also reviewed during the annual budget planning process and updated to recognise any material changes in service levels or resources available to provide those services as a result of budget decisions.

Reporting on service levels and other performance measures is undertaken as part of our Annual Report.

Continuous Improvement

We acknowledge that significant annual expenditure is required to manage and maintain our existing infrastructure. This highlights the importance of maintaining high-level skills and practices to ensure services are delivered economically and sustainably and Council is committed to continuously working to improve our knowledge, skills and operational practices in line with sector-wide best practice.

The financial analysis and projections in this Asset Plan are based on existing data, processes, systems, and standards. Council is committed to identifying ways to achieve a more robust evidence base and analysis and to improving our practices to achieve this. One of the keys to this will be engaging with our community to establish optimised service levels that are affordable over the long term.

APPENDIX 1: LONG TERM INVESTMENT PLAN

Renewal Expenditure based on Proposed LTFP										
Projected Renewal Expenditure ($,000)										
Asset Class	**2025-26**	**2026-27**	**2027-28**	**2028-29**	**2029-30**	**2030-31**	**2031-32**	**2032-33**	**2033-34**	**2034-35**
Transport Infrastructure	23,405	14,462	15,666	17,224	17,369	16,464	16,560	16,656	16,752	16,849
Building & Facilities	4,886	7,389	11,675	31,765	26,920	17,337	19,524	17,194	15,802	16,118
Stormwater Infrastructure	3,138	2,200	1,911	2,412	2,822	2,116	2,180	2,245	2,312	2,382
Parks & Recreation	6,350	4,057	7,974	4,667	2,670	4,583	4,555	6,305	4,327	4,327
Total	**37,779**	**28,108**	**37,226**	**56,068**	**49,781**	**40,500**	**42,819**	**42,400**	**39,193**	**39,676**

Upgrade & New Expenditure based on Proposed LTFP										
Projected Renewal Expenditure ($,000)										
Asset Class	**2025-26**	**2026-27**	**2027-28**	**2028-29**	**2029-30**	**2030-31**	**2031-32**	**2032-33**	**2033-34**	**2034-35**
Transport Infrastructure	5,610	3,230	3,080	5,041	2,871	2,905	2,922	2,939	2,956	2,973
Building & Facilities	3,430	4,505	10,686	12,089	7,895	11,558	13,016	11,463	10,535	10,746
Stormwater Drainage	8,471	8,300	6,577	10,415	3,698	4,938	3,973	3,979	3,984	3,988
Parks & Recreation	7,674	7,770	8,042	7,510	3,610	5,601	5,568	7,707	5,289	5,289
Total	**25,185**	**23,805**	**28,385**	**35,055**	**18,074**	**25,002**	**25,479**	**26,088**	**22,764**	**22,996**

Maintenance Expenditure based on Proposed LTFP										
Projected Renewal Expenditure ($,000)										
Asset Class	**2025-26**	**2026-27**	**2027-28**	**2028-29**	**2029-30**	**2030-31**	**2031-32**	**2032-33**	**2033-34**	**2034-35**
Transport Infrastructure	5,419	5,536	5,656	5,780	5,907	6,038	6,172	6,310	6,452	6,598
Building & Facilities	3,793	3,852	3,913	3,975	4,038	4,103	4,169	4,236	4,305	4,376
Stormwater Drainage	354	360	367	372	378	384	390	396	402	408
Parks & Recreation	8,706	8,880	9,123	9,365	9,620	9,883	10,154	10,433	10,721	11,017
Total	**18,272**	**18,628**	**19,059**	**19,492**	**19,943**	**20,408**	**20,885**	**21,375**	**21,880**	**22,399**

Addressing Climate Change through Upgrade and New Expenditure

A significant portion of Council's annual upgrade and new asset expenditure is dedicated to addressing the impacts of climate change. This investment focuses on building resilience and reducing emissions across several key areas:

- **Drainage infrastructure**: Upgrades include increasing pipe sizes and expanding the underground drainage network to manage higher flood levels associated with more intense and frequent rainfall events.
- **Aquatic centre efficiency**: Works are being undertaken to reduce Council's reliance on gas heating at aquatic centres, transitioning to more sustainable energy solutions.
- **Sustainable building design**: New buildings and major upgrades incorporate climate-resilient design features such as solar panels, thermal insulation, passive heating/cooling, and environmentally responsible materials.

The table below outlines the amount of the annual upgrade and new asset expenditure that is directly attributed to climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives.

	Expenditure on Climate Change Initiatives Included in Long Term Investment Plan ($,000)									
	2025-2026	**2026-2027**	**2027-2028**	**2028-2029**	**2029-2030**	**2030-2031**	**2031-2032**	**2032-2033**	**2033-2034**	**2034-2035**
Climate Change Initiatives	6,879	5,836	6,308	9,104	4,494	5,739	5,653	5,354	5,179	5,231

APPENDIX 2: KEY TERMS & DEFINITIONS

Terminology	Description
Infrastructure Assets	Stationary systems forming a network and serving whole communities where the system as a whole is intended to be maintained indefinitely by continuing replacement and refurbishment of its components, e.g. roads, facilities, footpaths, drains, parks.
Capital Expenditure	Expenditure for new infrastructure and for the renewal or upgrade of existing assets that enhances the service potential of the assets.
Maintenance	Expenditure that is incurred to ensure that the asset continues to provide its pre-determined service capacity and quality and achieves its expected useful life. Maintenance expenditure is of a regular and ongoing nature.
Long Term Financial Plan	A Financial Plan based on a Service Level Target that produces a year-by-year forecast of the investment needed in capital renewals, capital upgrades, new infrastructure and ongoing maintenance.
Lifecycle Indicator	Planned 10-year LTFP / Desired 10-year LTFP costs (maintenance, renewal, upgrade and new expenditure for desired service level). Recommended target = 85-115%.
Asset Health	Asset Health refers to the remaining life expectancy and serviceability of the asset portfolio
Intervention Level	A physical state of an asset defined by its condition, capacity or functionality at which Council will determine a treatment action.
Gender Impact Assessment (GIA)	A requirement under Victoria's Gender Equality Act 2020, a GIA assesses how a policy, program or service may affect people of different genders to ensure equitable, inclusive outcomes in public decision-making.

7.4 CIRCULAR ECONOMY STRATEGY AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN 2025 - 2030 - FINAL FOR ADOPTION

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade

Sustainability and Climate

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Adopts the Circular Economy Strategy (Attachment 1).
2. Adopts the Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 - 2030 (Attachment 2).
3. Notes the summary feedback from community and stakeholder engagement on the draft documents, including broad community feedback and targeted contributions from the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, members of Council's Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee, and sustainability-focused community groups and businesses.
4. Authorises the Director Place and Environment to make minor amendments to the Circular Economy Strategy and/or Climate Emergency Action Plan prior to publication, where such changes do not alter their intent or strategic direction.

REPORT

Executive Summary

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

The report presents Council's proposed *Circular Economy Strategy: Towards a zero waste Merri-bek* (Attachment 1) for adoption. The draft strategy provides direction for Council's role in accelerating the transition towards a circular economy. It reflects the need to move beyond managing waste towards avoiding waste and pollution and regenerating nature.

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

Following endorsement at the 11 June Council Meeting, the draft documents were subject of public consultation between Monday 23 June and Sunday 20 July 2025.

Overall, community feedback reflected strong support for the strategic directions, goals and actions set out in the consultation drafts. Feedback during the consultation period has resulted in several refinements to the Climate Emergency Action Plan, including:

- A broadening of language and activities around climate and social justice to better reflect Council's obligation to act in solidarity with First Nations, regional and global communities being hardest hit by climate impacts, and elevate their voices.
- A more ambitious goal for local energy storage by 2030, anticipating the positive impact of the federal government's Cheaper Home Batteries Program.
- Adding an action to investigate the potential to establish or partner to establish a library of things, to foster equipment re-use in Merri-bek.
- Some restructuring of content, including introducing a graphic visualisation of the plan on a page, to help communicate the high-level scope to a broader audience.

Previous Council decisions

Circular Economy Strategy and Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 – 2030 – drafts for endorsement to consult – 11 June 2025

That Council:

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

1. Policy context

Council's efforts to address the climate emergency are reflected in the new Council Plan 2026-2030 through:

- *Theme 1: Care for nature and climate resilience and associated strategic objective*

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

In the outgoing Council Plan 2021 – 2025 this work was reflected through:

- 'Theme 1: *An environmentally proactive Merri-bek*, and associated strategic objective:

  To strive for maximum protection of people's health, plants, and animals through leading an urgent response to the climate emergency and a regeneration of our natural environment

- *Theme 3: A healthy and caring Merri-bek,* and associated strategic objective*:*

  To support Moreland to become a more inclusive, connected, healthy, and caring community through providing equitable access to community facilities and services, facilitating local partnerships and programs, mitigating the effects of climate change, and supporting the community to adapt and build climate resilience.

Development of the Circular Economy Strategy and new Climate Emergency Action Plan fulfils three actions outlined in the Council Action Plan 2024-25:

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

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

- Moving Around Merri-bek Strategy and Streets for People Plan
- Urban Forest Strategy

- Nature Plan
- Integrated Water Management Strategy
- Sustainable Buildings (Council) Policy
- Food Systems Strategy
- Procurement Policy.

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

2. Background

The draft Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 – 2030 integrates priority actions for 3 related strategies:

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

The draft Climate Emergency Action Plan supersedes, and expands on, Council's first Climate Emergency Action Plan 2020 – 2025.

The draft Circular Economy Strategy supersedes Council's expired Waste and Litter Strategy (2018).

Strategic directions for action across 2025-2030

Implementation actions in in the action plan are structured around 5 strategic directions:

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

   This new direction focuses on actions to ensure our diverse community is well informed about the changing local climate and the effective actions they can take. It aligns with the aspiration of Council's newly adopted Council Plan 2025-29. It includes programs such as our solar thermal subsidy program which reaches out to at-risk residents to support them to stay healthy in the heat and manage their energy bills. Nature-based solutions include trialling approaches to increase shade trees and cooling on private land, with a potential focus on schools and retirement villages.

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

   The dominant sources of direct greenhouse emissions in Merri-bek are electricity use (36 per cent) and fossil gas use (26 per cent). Residential energy use accounts for the majority. Grid electricity is forecast to be 65 per cent renewably powered by 2030, and 95 per cent renewable by 2035, so residential gas use will become the dominant source of energy-related emissions.

   Priority actions are focused on enabling households to benefit from health and financial savings possible through transitioning to efficient and all-electric homes.

3. Sustainable transport: active or zero emissions transport

   As emissions from electricity use decrease, transport emissions – from the combustion of diesel and petrol by cars, vans, and trucks – will account for a growing proportion of community (and Council) climate pollution. Actions under this strategic direction focus on creating a more pedestrian and bike-friendly city, with better public transport. This could enable many more local trips to be safer, healthier, cheaper and pollution-free. Council will also continue promoting the shift to zero emissions vehicles by fostering affordable access to public EV charging, powered by renewables.

4. Waste and consumption: circular economy with zero waste

   This theme relates closely to Council's Circular Economy Strategy, and reflects four of the five focus areas. The shift to a circular economy requires extensive cultural and economic change, which Councils can influence but not control. Advocacy for system change is a priority focus, calling on all governments to incentivise innovation and robustly regulate economy-wide elements of design, manufacturing, distribution and disposal that are causing social and environmental harm. Locally, engagement with community and businesses will encourage waste avoidance and circular economy participation, with potential cost-of-living and health co-benefits. We will continue to evolve our kerbside waste services to deliver the best possible waste and recycling outcomes and community value.

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

   This new strategic direction is about Council walking the talk by holding ourselves accountable to embed responsive climate action and circularity principles across our own activities. These include high-impact functions of city planning, our building and infrastructure projects, our fleet, services, operations, and climate governance. Council will continue to green our supply chains, and deliver infrastructure climate-ready projects and services with a light ecological footprint. It also includes actions (focused on building and fleet electrification) required to achieve Council's corporate 2030 emissions reduction goal.

Action plan goals for 2030

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

- A total of 14 Community 2030 goals, which we invite everyone (community and other levels of government) to adopt and help achieve.
- A total of 15 Council 2030 goals which Council should achieve, based on the proposed actions.

Advocacy for climate and nature

We cannot achieve our goals and outcomes in isolation. Effective collaboration and mobilisation of civil society and businesses in campaigning for urgent and effective action by state and federal governments is critical. Some policy and regulatory progress has been made over the past five years, and so the action plan reflects an updated suite of priority 'advocacy asks' across each of the strategic directions.

3. Issues

Key updates to the Action Plan based on community feedback

Careful consideration of consultation feedback from community and stakeholders has resulted in several refinements to the final draft Action Plan.

Notably:

- The introduction section and Action 1.1 have been updated to better reflect Council's intention to act in solidarity with First Nations, regional and global communities being hardest hit by climate impacts, and to elevate their voices to inspire urgent climate action by others.
- Since the draft Action Plan was endorsed for consultation, Council has been advised that we were unsuccessful in securing grant funding through the Disaster Ready Fund (Round 3) to fully enact *Action 1.9 Explore and 'Resilient Neighbourhood Hub' model in an at-risk neighbourhood.* The action has been updated to reflect Council continuing to seek external grant funding and what can be progressed in the meantime.
- Raising the ambition of the goal for local energy storage by 2030, to effectively triple local storage (to 9.3MWh) rather than double it (to 6.2MWh) compared with the 2024 baseline (3.1MWh). This anticipates encouraging local households and businesses to take advantage of subsidies through the recently announced federal Cheaper Home Batteries Program.
- Addition of an activity under Action 4.2 to investigate potential for establishment of a library of things, to foster resource re-use in Merri-bek.
- Some restructuring of content, including visual plan on a page, to help communicate the high-level scope to a broader audience. The full vision has been moved to Appendix 1, with key advocacy asks becoming Appendix 2.

Priority funding gaps – current actions/programs with lapsing funding

The action tables in the Action Plan 2025 – 2030 note actions that can be delivered within existing operating and capital budgets, and those that are subject to funding through annual budget processes or other sources (e.g. external grant funding).

Notably, two actions resourced and being implemented in 2025/26 do not have funding and will be evaluated and subject to annual budget processes to continue in 2026-27 or beyond:

Action 1.5 – Undertake place-based community outreach and engagement to meet community interest and needs.

Merri-bek has a culturally and linguistically diverse community and many people are not reached through our regular digital or printed communications. This action includes a pilot project being delivered in Fawkner by the Sustainable Communities Outreach Officer (focusing on energy, waste, transport (cycling), and heat health/climate resilience.

Action 4.2 – Circular economy programs and support for community (education and behaviour change for waste avoidance)

This action reflects a range of existing Council services and programs to support our community to reduce waste and participate in the circular economy. For example subsidies for reusable nappies and period products, Sustainability incursions in schools and early learning centres, home composting subsidies program and delivery of zero waste workshops and events for community. Current pilots run until June 2026.

Economic sustainability implications

Merri-bek has a rapidly growing and diverse population experiencing housing and cost of living pressures. At the household level, more thoughtful consumer behaviours can offer ways to reduce household costs.

Our local economy provides employment, goods and services to the community. Merri-bek is experiencing a shift from its historical reliance on manufacturing to a focus on service-oriented sectors.

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

Legal and risk considerations

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

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

Human Rights consideration

A Gender and Equity Impact Assessment guided the development of the Circular Economy Strategy and Climate Emergency Action Plan. The following improvements on the plan and its delivery have been identified in the assessment and community consultation stages: consideration of co-design approaches with priority groups in designing and developing specific programs, addressing barriers to participation in programs including through outreach, and revising the strategy and action plan to capture community feedback, particularly from priority groups.

The development of the Strategy and Action Plan are consistent with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006. The actions are not expected to interfere with or limit human rights. The Circular Economy Strategy and Climate Emergency Action Plan aim to have a broadly positive impact on human rights as defined in the Charter such as the 'right to life' (e.g. through advocating and acting to improve the thermal performance of homes and Council facilities), the 'right to protection of families and children' (e.g. through action and advocacy to minimise the extent of climate impacts on current and future generations) and 'cultural rights' (e.g. through engaging with Traditional Owners and other First Nations people on climate and care for country).

4. Community consultation and engagement

Following endorsement of draft documents at the 11 June 2025 Council Meeting, community consultation was undertaken on the draft Circular Economy Strategy and Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025-2030 from 23 June to 20 July 2025.

Community consultation was undertaken to receive feedback on:

- The vision, directions and objectives of the draft Circular Economy Strategy
- Support for the five strategic directions (including two new) in the draft Climate Emergency Action Plan
- Any high-priority gaps in programs/actions for the next 5 years
- The extent and ambition of the 2030 goals for community and Council.

A total of 127 people provided feedback on the action plan through:

- Conversations Merri-bek online surveys (61 participants)
- Community pop-ups x 4 (53 participants)
- A stakeholders and residents' workshop (18 participants)

The face-to-face engagement activities were spread across Merri-bek. While demographic information was not collected at the face-to-face events, feedback was received from children, young people, members of culturally diverse groups and older residents.

Overall, there was positive feedback about the strategy and action plan, with many participants reflecting that they were on the right track. Some tweaks to the action plan were proposed to elevate some community expectations.

Key areas of feedback for the action plan included:

- Make clear that a "Just and equitable transition" is a principle applied across the whole plan (not only the "Socially just and climate resilient transition" strategic direction).
- That Council's climate change mitigation and adaptation goals need to be ambitious or transformative enough and that we should act in solidarity with regional and global communities facing the worst impacts of climate change.
- Broad support for energy transition activities including Council's low-income support programs and ensuring Council programs reach all types of households (e.g. rentals, low income, culturally diverse and apartments), not just homeowners in houses.
- Strong support for sustainable transport. This includes Council's programs to create a safe, walking and cycling-friendly city through policies such as Moving Around Merri-bek and Streets for People, programs such as Ride and Stride, and advocacy to improve public transport.
- Interest in more zero waste community education opportunities, new re-use hubs that could enable borrowing, reuse, repair, and recycling for both residential and commercial items, and for a transfer station/recycling depot (this last item is a very costly option).
- Broad support for current goals and actions under Council as Role Model.

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

Communications

Following the adoption of the Circular Economy Strategy and Climate Emergency Action Plan, key messages and documents will be shared through Council channels including updates to relevant webpages (Conversations Merri-bek, MCC and Zero Carbon Merri-bek websites).

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

Implementation of the Climate Emergency Action Plan from 2025-26 to 2029-30 can largely occur within existing base, operating and capital funding. Some actions are investigations into opportunities that are not currently funded (refer Actions 1.5, 1.7, 1.8, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 4.2, 4.4, 5.6, 5.10). Pending the outcome of investigation work, funding would be considered through options including reprioritisation, grant funding, and / or budget bids.

7. Implementation

Following adoption of the Strategy and Action Plan:

- Conversation Merri-bek project pages will be updated, with notification to project followers.
- The endorsed documents will be uploaded to Council's website and news items posted in relevant e-newsletter/channels.
- Actions will be loaded into Council's corporate reporting system and delegated as appropriate, for progress tracking and periodic reporting.
- Refreshed governance structures will be confirmed and established to oversee implementation.

Attachment/s

1⇩	Circular Economy Strategy 2025 - FINAL DRAFT August 2025	D25/441852
2⇩	Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 - 2030 - FINAL DRAFT	D25/448565

Merri-bek City Council

Circular Economy Strategy

Towards a Zero Waste Merri-bek

September 2025



Mayor's Foreword

Merri-bek's *Circular Economy Strategy* sets out a fresh direction for how we think about and handle waste in our community. Rather than focusing only on managing waste after it's created, this plan shows how we can avoid creating waste in the first place.

A circular economy is about using resources wisely. It means keeping products in use for as long as possible through repairing, sharing, reusing, and recycling. This helps reduce pollution and conserves valuable resources.

Our community is already doing great things to reduce waste, and this strategy builds on that momentum. It identifies five key areas where Council will take action and support changes locally in Merri-bek.

We'll also advocate for stronger action from other levels of government, such as better support for repair, reuse, and rules that hold producers more accountable for the waste they create.

Locally, we'll support households, community groups and businesses to take part, by fostering sharing networks, improving recycling services, and encouraging local businesses to reduce waste and save money.

We're working to lead by example, using circular economy principles when we design build, operate and deliver services.

This strategy, together with our Climate Emergency Action Plan, moves us toward a zero-waste future and a cleaner, healthier environment for all.



Cr Helen Davidson

Mayor of Merri-bek

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Acknowledgment of Country

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

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

Statement from Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation

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

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

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

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

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

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

Credits

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

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Executive Summary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. What are the challenges?

2.1 Global context

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

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



Figure 1: The Linear Economy

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

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

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

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

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

[1] Ellen MacArthur Foundation, The circular economy: a missing piece in city climate action plans? September, 2023
[2] Earth Overshoot Day, overfootprintnetwork.org, website accessed December 2024
[3] The Lancet Planetary Health, 2022 Pollution and health: a progress update - The Lancet Planetary Health
[4] UN Biodiversity - our strongest natural defense against climate change | United Nations

2.2 Our local context

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

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

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

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

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

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

Priority materials identified through the Material Flow Analysis research were:

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

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

[5] *MFA and opportunities assessment*, Blue Environment, 2023, Conversations Merri-bek – Developing our Circular Economy Strategy

[6] *MFA and opportunities assessment*, Blue Environment, 2023, Conversations Merri-bek – Developing our Circular Economy Strategy

[7] *MFA and opportunities assessment*, Blue Environment, 2023, Conversations Merri-bek – Developing our Circular Economy Strategy

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

Common challenges for businesses:

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

Potential opportunities for Council:

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

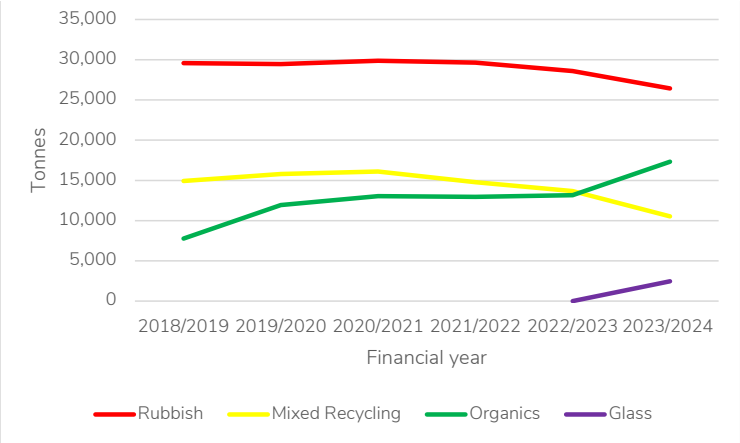
The circular economy presents many opportunities for local businesses to improve resource efficiency, lower costs, mitigate risks, and explore new revenue streams. Emerging business models can redefine product-consumer relationships and foster markets for services like sharing, leasing, repairing, reusing,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

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

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

[8] *MFA and opportunities assessment*, Blue Environment, 2023, Conversations Merri-bek – Developing our Circular Economy Strategy

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



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

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

What's in our kerbside bins?



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

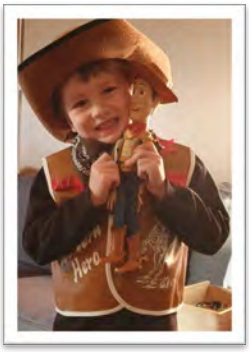
[9] *Waste Options Development Report*, Ricardo, 2022 Conversations Merri-bek Circular Economy Strategy page

[10] *Waste Options Development Report*, Ricardo, 2022 Conversations Merri-bek Circular Economy Strategy page

3. Our emerging circular economy

3.1 Local community champions

Merri-bek Toy Library



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

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

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

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

UpShop Industries



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

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

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

Pascoe Vale Repair Cafe



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

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

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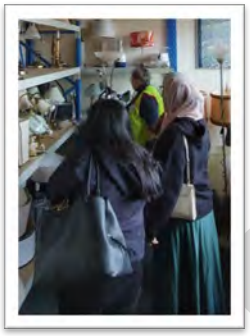
Fawkner Food Bowls



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

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

RIMERN



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

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

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

Brunswick Tool Library



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

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

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

ReWine



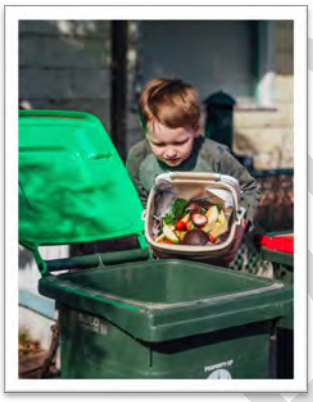
ReWine is a bottle shop on Lygon Street with a difference, providing quality wine in refillable bottles. They have designed a unique, ground-up zero-waste supply chain. From winery to wine glass, they provide sustainable wines that are locally made and waste-free.

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

3.2 Council initiatives supporting a circular economy

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

Kerbside collection of food and garden organics (FOGO)

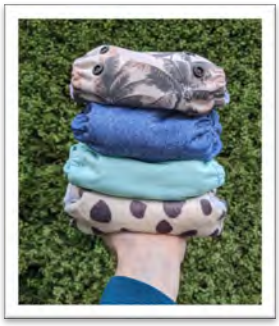


In 2019 Council began collecting food waste through the opt-in garden organics bin. In 2023 the FOGO service was rolled out to all households using Council's waste service, and collection frequency switched from fortnightly to weekly.

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

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

Reusable cloth nappy and period product subsidy



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

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

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

Annual Garage Sale Trail



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

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

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

Reuse of materials in the public realm



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

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

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

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

3.3 Built environment projects are a key opportunity

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

Analysis by PwC has shown that incorporating circular economy principles into Australia's built environment projects could reduce emissions by 3.6 million tonnes of CO2e per year by 2040. It could also deliver $773 billion in direct economic benefits over 20 years[11]. This highlights that embedding circularity into capital works projects is a key opportunity for Council to reduce embodied carbon emissions and the overall environmental impacts of municipal buildings and infrastructure.

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

Opportunities to increase circularity in built environment projects include:

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

Useful tools to assist with incorporating these design elements into built environment projects are:

Circular Buildings Toolkit, Ellen MacArthur Foundation / ARUP

Circular design guidelines for the built environment, NSW Government

4. Strategic framework

4.1 Vision

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

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

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

4.2 Circular economy principles

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

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

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

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

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

Some examples of this principle include:

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

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

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

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

Some examples of this principle include:

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

[12] Source: Ellen MacArthur Foundation, An introduction to circular design, June 2022

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

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

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

Some examples of this principle include:

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

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



Figure 4: The Circular Economy

4.3 Implementation approach

Our approach to strategy implementation will strive to:

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

4.4 Strategic directions

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

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

1. Advocating for system change

Our objective is to:

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

Our priorities are to:

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

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

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

2. Community education and behaviour change

Our objective is to:

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

Our priorities are to:

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

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

3. Optimised kerbside waste and recycling services

Our objective is to:

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

Our priorities are to:

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

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

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

4. Fostering circularity in our local economy

Our objective is to:

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

Our priorities are to:

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

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

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

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

Our objective is to:

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

Our priorities are to:

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

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

5. Policy and regulatory context

Local strategic context

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

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

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

Victorian policy context

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

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

State Policy / Initiative	Overview
Circular Economy (Waste reduction and Recycling) Act 2021 (CE Act)	The CE Act provides for the establishment of Recycling Victoria as the regulator of the Victorian waste and resource recovery sector and outlines the activities to be regulated by Recycling Victoria including waste, recycling and resource recovery services, the Container Deposit Scheme and the Waste to Energy Scheme.
Recycling Victoria: a new economy (Victorian Government 2020)	Outlines changes to the waste and resource recovery sector to enable Victoria's transition to a circular economy. Includes 4 targets: - Divert 80% of waste from landfill by 2030, with an interim target of 72% by 2025. - Cut total waste generation by 15% per capita by 2030.

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

National policy context

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

National Policy / Initiative	Overview
Australia's Circular Economy Framework (Australian Government 2024)	Australian government's first circular economy framework, which represents the commitment to a national circular economy transition. The framework includes the goal of doubling Australia's circularity by 2035. The framework aims to transform how we use, reuse, and regenerate resources across the economy. It also recognises that as we work to decarbonise our economy, circularity is an essential tool in reducing our carbon footprint while simultaneously restoring ecosystems and natural capital.
Environmentally Sustainable Procurement Policy (Australian Government 2024)	Australian government's first national procurement policy focused on climate, the environment and circularity. It reflects the commitment to reduce national GHG emissions to net zero by 2050 and enable the transition to a circular economy. It aims to ensure the Government uses its purchasing power to reduce emissions and waste to landfill by increasing local demand for recycled materials.
Recycling and Waste Reduction Act 2020 (replaces the Product Stewardship Act 2011)	The *Recycling and Waste Reduction Act 2020* establishes a legislative framework to better manage the environmental and social impacts of products and materials. This includes regulating exports and expanding product stewardship, as well as assisting businesses to adopt more resource efficient practices, better product design and repairability.
National Waste Policy Action Plan (Australian Government 2019)	Guides Australia's investment and national efforts to deliver against targets to better manage waste and resource recovery nationally, including to: • Regulate waste exports • Reduce total waste generated by 10% per person by 2030 • Recover 80% of all waste by 2030 • Significantly increase the use of recycled content by governments and industry • Phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics by 2025 • Halve the amount of organic waste sent to landfill by 2030
National Packaging Targets (Australian Government 2018)	In 2018 Australia established the ambitious National Packaging Targets. The 4 targets to be achieved by 2025 were:

	• 100% of packaging being reusable, recyclable or compostable • 70% of plastic packaging being recycled or composted • 50% average recycled content included in packaging • The phase out of problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic packaging. **Note: These targets have not been achieved.**
National Food Waste Strategy (DEE 2017)	The *National Food Waste Strategy* provides a framework to support collective action towards halving Australia's food waste by 2030.

Product Stewardship Schemes

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

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

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

6. Monitoring and evaluation

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

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

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

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

Indicator	Measure	Source
Material circularity	Increase proportion of recycled content products/materials in capital projects Increase reuse of products/materials in major capital works/building projects Number of buildings renewed vs demolished	Capital works project-based reporting
Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions	Reduction in direct GHG emissions from landfill Low embodied carbon materials used in capital works/building projects	Municipal solid waste data Capital works project reporting
Waste diversion	Divert 80% of waste from landfill by 2030	Municipal solid waste data
Total waste per capita	Cut total waste generation (across all 4 bins) by 15% per capita by 2030	Municipal solid waste data
Contamination and resource loss in kerbside bins	Reduce contamination in: - mixed recycling by 10% - FOGO and glass recycling by 2% and Reduce occurrence of resource loss in general rubbish stream by: - 10% for food and garden waste - 5% for mixed recycling and glass (from 2021 baseline)	Municipal solid waste data Kerbside audit data Recycle Right bin inspection data
Community awareness	Increase in community participation in circular behaviours (repairing, repurposing etc) from 2025 baseline (TBD) Increase in community awareness of the term 'circular economy' from 2025 baseline (TBD)	Sustainability Victoria, Annual State of Sustainability Report
Access to local circular services / opportunities	Increase or expansion of services / programs in Merri-bek that enable circular behaviours (e.g. tool libraries, repair cafes, food swaps)	Council monitoring
Advocacy outcomes	State or federal policy change that fully (or partially) delivers on advocacy priorities	Council monitoring

7. Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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8. Appendix

Current waste reduction programs

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

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

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

Circular economy advocacy asks

Of the 80,0000 households in Merri-bek, 72,000 receive the kerbside waste service from Council. Merri-bek has the ambitious goal of Zero Waste to Landfill by 2030.

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

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

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

Our specific advocacy asks include:

That the Australian Government:

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

That the Victorian Government:

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

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

Circular economy frameworks

The Butterfly Diagram by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation

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

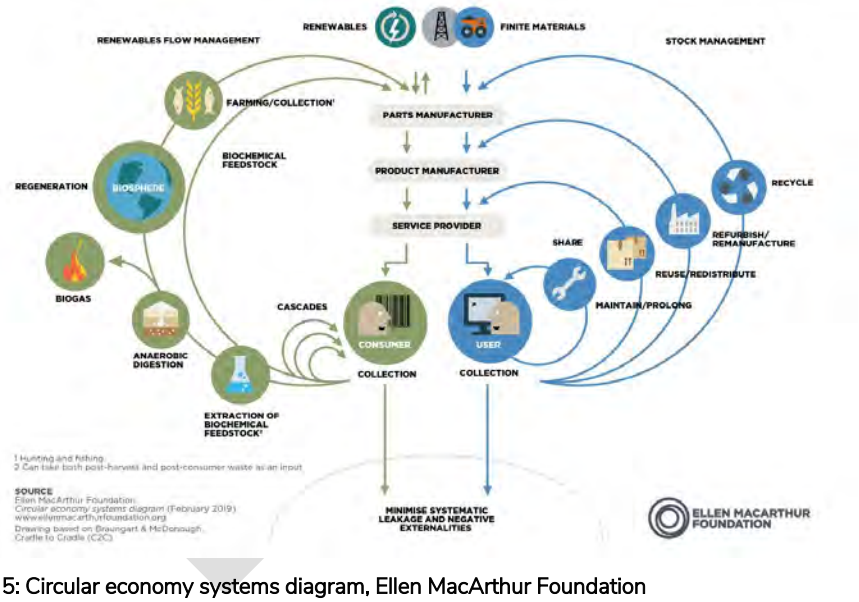


Figure 5: Circular economy systems diagram, Ellen MacArthur Foundation

Levels of Circularity by Prof. Dr. Jacqueline Cramer

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



Figure 6: Levels of circularity by Prof. Dr. Jacqueline Cramer[13]

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[13] Source: Prof. Dr. Jacqueline Cramer, 2015, Levels of Circularity: 10 R's, The Netherlands

Merri-bek City Council

Climate Emergency Action Plan

Towards a zero carbon, zero waste and climate resilient Merri-bek 2025 – 2030

FINAL DRAFT FOR ADOPTION (V3.0)



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Acknowledgements:

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

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

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

Our shared Vision is for a Merri-bek that is Zero Carbon – Circular (Zero Waste) – Climate Resilient. Refer to Appendix 1 for vision statements that draw on our Zero Carbon Merri-bek – 2040 Framework, our subsequent Climate Risk Strategy and our new Circular Economy Strategy. These statements express what a socially just, zero carbon, circular and climate resilient Merri-bek might look like.

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

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

In Merri-bek, we have both the opportunity and the responsibility to lead in climate action. Meanwhile, communities such as those in the Torres Strait Islands, regional First Nations areas, and regional farming regions are experiencing severe climate impacts and often have fewer resources to respond. It is essential that those with greater capacity do more—not only for their own resilience but in solidarity with those facing greater vulnerability.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 - 2030
For a zero carbon, circular (zero waste) and climate resilient Merri-bek
Socially just & resilient
No one left behind
Low-income and at-risk residents are not left behind
Communicate, engage, and collaborate with our diverse community
More shade trees in backyards, schools, retirement villages
Progress 'resilience hubs' model in at-risk neighbourhood(s)
Foster a heat aware community
Help 1000 house holds with energy bills / home thermal comfort
Energy Transition
Efficient and 100% renewable
Promote and facilitate household energy transition
Energy innovation and partnerships
Initiatives to foster energy transition by businesses
Triple local energy storage (batteries)
Sustainable transport
Active or zero emissions
School active travel
Increased adoption of low and zero emissions travel by our diverse community
Facilitating EV charging network
Creating a more walking and cycling friendly city
Upgrades to support walking and riding at Ride & Stride schools
Waste & consumption
Circular economy
Education and behaviour change
Efficient and high-performance kerbside services
Reduce food and packaging waste from businesses and multi-unit developments
Circular economy opportunities and outcomes for and by businesses, social enterprises and community
Halve food and garden waste sent to landfill
Council as a role model – leading by example for
City planning
Council buildings & infrastucture
LIBRARY
Fleet
Services & Operations
Advocacy
Community Centre
Complemented by strategies for
Urban Forest
Transport
Nature
Water Management

About our goals for 2030

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Supporting a socially just and climate resilient transition

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

- Our community is informed and resilient – Our diverse residents are more informed about local environment and climate issues. Our community is supported to share their knowledge and expertise to take climate action and build their resilience to climate impacts.
- An inclusive energy transition - All residents benefit from the energy transition with comfortable and resilient homes and can pay their energy bills. We act in solidarity with regional and global communities facing the worst impacts of climate change.

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

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

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
1.1	Explore opportunities for partnership on climate and circular economy as part of Merri-bek's Statement of Commitment with the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC) and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Organisations and Communities in Merri-bek.	Our vision as a Council for reconciliation is respectful and inclusive recognition of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Merri-bek. To build stronger relationships we will: • Investigate with other councils a coordinated approach and support for WWCHAC to work with councils on climate. • Engage with WWCHAC and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Merri-bek on climate and circular economy. • Support Ballerrt Mooroop's potential as a showcase of climate resilience. • Amplify the voices and lived experiences of First Nations and Torres Strait Islander communities in Merri-bek and beyond, highlighting their leadership, knowledge, and the disproportionate impacts they face, to inspire and catalyse urgent climate action.	Lead: Sustainability & Climate Branch WWCHAC Other councils on Wurundjeri Country	Engagement within existing operating budgets.

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
1.2	Advocate for systemic changes to enable a socially just and climate resilient Merri-bek	Strategic and collaborative campaigns and partnerships to influence all levels of government. Key advocacy asks include: • Invest in place-based programs and infrastructure upgrades to increase local community resilience to climate impacts. • Support and fund energy upgrades programs and subsidies for at-risk households and businesses, and partner with local government to deliver targeted local outreach. Refer to Appendix 2 for high priority 'advocacy asks' of State and Federal Governments.	Lead: Sustainability and Climate Branch M9, NAGA, Victorian Greenhouse Alliances, CASBE, MAV, Climate Emergency Australia, VCOSS, ACOSS, Renew Australia for All, 1 Million Homes Alliance.	Within existing operating budgets.
1.3	Communicate and engage with our diverse community on the climate emergency and circular economy	Continue with inclusive and accessible communications on the climate emergency and circular economy for residents, businesses and community organisations, including: • Providing engaging information, showcasing community action and ensuring information reaches at-risk members of the community. • Activities such as the Zero Carbon Merri-bek website, monthly e-newsletters, webinars, videos and events and Council communications channels. • Profiling and promoting diverse leaders in the community to inspire and influence. • Working with community groups and service providers to engage with residents	Lead: Sustainable Communities Unit Community Connectors Community Groups Service Providers	Within existing operating budget.

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Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
1.4	Evolve and expand responsive and evidence-based programs and initiatives to ensure disadvantaged and/or at-risk residents are not left behind.	Higher energy prices and poor performing homes are creating energy bill stress and exacerbating risks from extreme weather, particularly for at-risk or disadvantaged households. Many at-risk households do not have the capacity or the funds to support upgrades to their homes. In response, Council will: • Continue to deliver and evolve a program of subsidised energy and solar upgrades for low-income households, including potential for other upgrades like external shading. • Work with potential collaborators on key aspects such as program review, refinement, joint procurement and cross promotion. • Explore ways to secure long-term funding for supporting at-risk households in the energy transition.	Lead: Sustainable Communities Unit Other Local Governments/ Greenhouse Alliances State and/or federal government and associated agencies	Within operating project budget .
1.5	Undertake place-based community outreach and engagement to meet community interest and needs	Building on the success of the pilot project undertaken in Fawkner, continue with place-based activities and expand to other areas in Merri-bek's north. Activities include: • Co-design engagement with diverse local groups and residents to meet community interest and needs. • Visit active community groups to share Council sustainability programs and services. • Recruit and support volunteer working group of local leaders to provide guidance. • Collaborate with other Council services, such as home support programs and libraries, to reach different cohorts. • Conduct events and programs identified through the co-design process.	Lead: Sustainable Communities Unit	Within existing operating budget to June 2026. Subject to business case / grant funding from July 2026.

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Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
1.6	**Build the capacity of residents and community groups to take action**	Build community capacity and resilience of residents and community groups to act in the community and to inspire and support others. To be achieved through: • further roll-out of engaging programs such as The Adaptation Game, skills workshops, scholarships and community grants • exploring partnerships with community groups on local climate and circular economy. • developing solutions together with people who are already disproportionately affected by climate change impacts and/or who may have local expertise and networks to respond	Lead: Sustainable Communities Unit Community groups	Within existing operating budget.
1.7	**Investigate and (where viable) implement, methods for creating sustainable funding to build and strengthen the Merri-bek community's energy and climate resilience, and address energy inequity.**	Reduce barriers to participation in the journey to 100% renewable energy and support community members to improve their climate resilience, with a focus on disadvantaged and at-risk residents. Council will investigate sustainable forms of funding streams (both internally and externally) such as: • Long term Council funding; • Community funds; • Revenue making activities; • State and federal funding mechanisms; and • Green bonds and/or private investment/ philanthropy.	Lead: Sustainable Communities Unit	Investigations within existing operating budget.
1.8	**Reduce impacts of urban heat and increasing heatwaves by collaborating to get more shade trees in places like schools, retirement villages, and backyards.**	Planting trees is an effective way to combat urban heat. We will focus on places used by groups that are at risk from extreme heat such as older people and young children. To do this, the Urban Forest and Sustainability teams will work together to: • Co-design the program and identify required resources.	Lead: Sustainability and Climate on program design and community engagement	Design within existing operating budgets. Implementation subject to

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Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
		Raise awareness of suitable trees for each location and that risks from trees can be reduced by thoughtful tree selection. • Promote custodianship and maintenance of trees for the future. • Trial a partnership with a school or a retirement village to plant trees and vegetation for cooling, then expand if successful. • Explore local partnerships to support shade tree planting in household gardens.		business case / grant funding.
1.9	Explore and progress 'Resilient Neighbourhood Hub' model in an at-risk neighbourhood	Support community resilience through strengths-based and place-based approaches, we will seek funding to design and deliver a Resilient Neighbourhood Hub model in Fawkner. In the delivery, we will seek to: • Work with our Community Development and Social Policy team and others to establish a partnership model with social services providers and community groups in the area. • Continue to identify priority buildings for upgrading or retrofitting to be more climate resilient and implement works in partnership with our Capital Works Planning and Delivery teams. • Investigate opportunities for flexibility in service delivery during extreme weather events, to support the community. • Support and fund climate resilience programs led by community partners. • Collaborate with universities and use the research outcomes to inform service delivery and approaches to community resilience.	Lead: Sustainability and Climate Branch	Subject to grant funding

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Energy Transition: Towards efficient and 100% renewably powered energy

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

- Community solar capacity - Combined solar capacity across Merri-bek's residents and businesses has increased to 250MW from 77.8MW (2024 baseline)
- Community solar penetration – At least 25% of Merri-bek households (up from 13.5%) and 20% of businesses (up from 11%) have rooftop solar PV (2024 baselines).
- Energy storage – the amount of energy storage (in batteries) within Merri-bek has risen from 3.1MWh capacity (2024) to at least 9.3MWh by 2030, helping to maximise the usage of local rooftop solar.
- Decreased gas use – With new rules preventing gas connections into new homes, combined with the growing understanding of the benefits of electrification, the Merri-bek community's fossil gas consumption has reduced by 25% from its 2022-23 level (5.3 mil GJ).

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

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

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
2.1	Advocate for systemic changes to accelerate the energy transition	Strategic and collaborative campaigns and partnerships to influence all levels of government. Key advocacy asks include: • Phasing out of gas appliances from new and existing homes for residents to benefit from the health, safety and bills savings benefits of all electric homes. • Mandatory disclosure of energy performance of residential properties at point of sale and lease. Refer to Appendix 2 for high priority 'advocacy asks' of State and Federal Governments.	Lead: Sustainability and Climate Branch. M9, NAGA, Victorian Greenhouse Alliances, CASBE, MAV, ALGA, Climate Emergency Australia, VCOSS, ACOSS, Renew Australia for All, 1 Million Homes Alliance.	Within existing operating budgets.

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Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
2.2	**Promote and support household 'energy transition' (efficient, all electric, renewable, thermally comfortable and healthy) with targeted programs.**	• Provide residents with information, tools and clear pathways to make their homes energy efficient, electric and powered by renewables. Connect residents with rebates and programs delivered by state and federal governments. Where required, tailor promotions and support for different community cohorts, such as renters and landlords. • Continue to conduct the evidence-based electrification communications campaigns to support households to transition off gas for heating, cooking and hot water. • Encourage households to shift their energy use (such as appliances) to during the day when energy tariffs are lower and for solar households to maximise energy savings by using their own clean energy.	Lead: Sustainable Communities Unit SECV, Solar Savers/ other local governments, service providers, Research Institutions.	Within existing operating budgets.
2.3	**Investigate and implement innovative approaches that can deliver energy solutions at the community-scale.**	With increasing local solar energy generation and battery storage, as well as changes to how electricity is used, there may be significant opportunities to maximise benefits for the broader community, as well as solar and battery owners. Council will investigate and, where viable, enable opportunities that might work for our community, such as: • Promoting and/or piloting viable consumer energy resource interventions (e.g. virtual power plants and electric vehicles as storage solutions) so individuals and groups can actively participate in energy systems and markets. • Residential or commercial demand response programs to incentivise shifts in energy usage patterns. • Distributed energy storage via grant funded community and/or neighbourhood batteries (e.g. Brunswick Community Battery) and projects delivered by partners like electricity distributors.	Lead: Sustainable Communities Unit Electricity distributors, local service providers, energy businesses and community groups, other local governments and Victorian Greenhouse Alliances	Investigations within existing operating / capital budgets. Implementation may be subject to business case / grant funding.

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
2.4	**Continue collaboration to support residents / owners of existing apartments to transition to be energy efficient, electric, powered by renewables and resilient**	The 2021 Census reflects half of Merri-bek householders living in medium and high-density housing. Building on Council's Unlocking Sustainable Strata project, we'll continue partnering with others to help overcome the barriers to energy transition within existing apartments. Activities likely to include: • Host or support events with information and peer-to-peer sharing by apartment residents, owners and managers to make their buildings more sustainable. • Collaborate and seek funding to enable apartment energy upgrade research. Case study strata building communities receive end-to-end support through the full upgrade cycle over multiple years. Experiences generate insights, case studies, support materials, and events which enable other buildings to follow in their footsteps and improve legislation. • Advocate for enabling legislation including changes to the Victorian Owners Corporation Act to make it easier for energy upgrades to occur.	Lead: Sustainable Communities, in collaboration with other Local Governments with substantial Strata populations, research institutions, state and federal governments, and relevant strata associations	Ad-hoc opportunities within existing operating budgets. Substantive new initiatives would require grant funding.
2.5	**Provide information and support to Merri-bek businesses to be energy efficient and renewably powered**	Council will provide access to the Greening My Business assessment tool designed to recognise and guide businesses on their sustainability journey. Merri-bek's commercial and industrial businesses may require specific responses to assist them in being part of the energy transition. Potential new responses could include: • Energy upgrade advice, programs or incentives in existing commercial buildings and businesses. • Capacity building to evolve their services to align with the energy transition (e.g. plumbers, electricians etc).	Lead: Economic Development in collaboration with Sustainability & Climate State / Federal Government Industry associations	Ad-hoc opportunities within existing operating budgets. New support programs/ initiatives subject to business case / grant funding.

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
2.6	Work with strategic partners that can assist in delivering outcomes of emissions reductions and community benefits as part of the energy transition	Recognising that Council cannot deliver on its ambitious goals by itself, Merri-bek will continue to work with existing stakeholders and create new relationships to meaningfully impact Merri-bek's transition to 100% renewable energy. Such opportunities include: • Promotion of existing program/s - both Council initiated and those conducted by external partners, to extend reach and effectiveness of programs. • Collaborating on new initiatives and innovations/ opportunities. • Representing the Merri-bek community on key stakeholder and reference groups. • Investigating and exploring ways that external funding (state, federal or private sector) can be unlocked.	Lead: Sustainability & Climate Branch Electricity distributors, Local, State and federal governments, government agencies, Not for Profits, solution providers and suppliers, local businesses	Within existing operating budget.

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Sustainable Transport: Towards active or zero emissions transport

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

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

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

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

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
3.1	Advocate for systemic changes to support active and zero emissions travel.	Strategic and collaborative campaigns and partnerships to influence all levels of government. Key advocacy asks include: • Duplication and extension of the Upfield train line to Wallan • Accelerated roll-out of accessible tram stops, with a priority on Sydney Road. Refer to Appendix 2 for high priority 'advocacy asks' of State and Federal Governments.	Lead: Transport Branch Northern Councils Alliance Community advocates	Withing existing operating budgets.
3.2	Implement Moving Around Merri-bek Strategy and Action Plan	The Moving around Merri-bek Strategy outlines Council's approach to deliver a transport system in Merri-bek that is Safe, Accessible, Sustainable, Healthy, Liveable and Inclusive.	Lead: Transport Branch	Within existing operating and capital budgets.

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Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
		Strategic activities required to support achievement of this plan's 2030 goals for sustainable transport include: • Delivery of Streets for People corridors • Delivery of infrastructure to support active travel to schools • Investing in strategic improvements to the Pedestrian Network • Expanding and improving our Cycling Network • Delivering more bike parking & bike behaviour change programs • Supporting shared and micro-mobility • Rolling out safer speed limits • Supporting expansion of car share services.		
3.3	**Deliver the Ride & Stride behaviour change program together with priority infrastructure upgrades around schools, to foster safe and active travel to and from school**	Build on the Ride & Stride behaviour change program by integrating dedicated funding for capital infrastructure in Merri-bek school zones. Continue to scale our innovative, holistic and collaborative interventions with engaged Ride & Stride primary schools. Behaviour change offerings to schools include: • Assistance with trialling or establishing Open Streets • Education / skills training in bike riding, road safety and bike maintenance • Subsidies or other supports encouraging parents to switch to active transport for school commutes Priority infrastructure improvements within selected school precincts will be delivered, and could include: • Safer school crossings • Designated school zone asphalt treatments • Lower speed limits • Modal filters • Tactical urbanism treatments – e.g. asphalt art, planter boxes, street furniture	Lead: Sustainability & Climate Branch with Transport Branch Local Primary and High Schools Local community bike shops, organisations and advocacy groups Relevant State departments/ agencies	Within existing operating (Sustainable Communities) and capital (Transport) budgets.

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Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
		Also investigate opportunities to integrate the Ride & Stride program with high schools, kindergartens and childcare centres as the program continues to scale.		
3.4	Design and deliver innovative programs and initiatives to support active travel by people with additional barriers (e.g. low-income, CALD, women/gender diverse).	To foster transport equity, continue to design and deliver active travel initiatives for residents facing additional or intersectional transport barriers, including by: • Wheel Sisters - providing tailored bike skills capacity building for women (especially culturally and linguistically diverse women) in Merri-bek's north. • Expanding free community e-bike libraries with local community centres. • Exploring / trialling subsidies for purchase or loan of e-bikes to overcome upfront cost as barrier to active travel, particularly for those on lower incomes. • Building on the success of bike maintenance classes for women and non-binary folks, with further initiatives to encourage more women in our community to feel safe and confident to ride. • Exploring opportunities to support older people, people with disabilities, or other mobility impaired residents to participate safely in active travel.	Lead: Sustainability and Climate Branch Local community centres, such as Neighbourhood Houses, Libraries, Leisure centres, etc Local advocacy groups, such as Merri-bek BUG, Walk on Merri-bek, CERES Bike Shed.	Within existing operating budgets.
3.5	Support the expansion of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging network across Merri-bek and beyond to help address this barrier to EV purchase.	Council will support the expansion of a renewably-powered Electric Vehicle (EV) charging network across Merri-bek, through a combination of Council-installed charging stations and licencing parking bays to charging operators. Council will also: • Help facilitate the roll out of on-street EV charging options (e.g. pole-mounted chargers) in denser neighbourhoods, to serve EV owners without off-street parking. • Promote EV charging infrastructure within or adjacent to new private developments through the planning process and advocacy. • Collaborate with 'car share' businesses to accelerate their transition to electric vehicles.	Lead: Sustainability and Climate Branch Department of Transport, VicRoads, Electricity distributors Car share operators Other councils	Within existing capital and operating budgets.

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Waste and Consumption: Towards a circular economy with zero waste

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

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

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

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

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
4.1	Advocating for system changes needed for a circular economy (Circular Economy Strategy Focus Area 1)	Transition to a circular economy requires system-wide change to address the economic, environmental and social costs of the linear system of production and consumption. To reflect the principles of a circular economy, these system changes must: design out waste and pollution; keep products and materials circulating at their highest value; and regenerate nature. Council's advocacy to state and federal governments will push for high priority reforms including: • Robust and mandatory whole-of-life product stewardship schemes for more products, including soft plastics. • Mandatory national minimum product design and import standards to ensure goods are durable, reusable and recyclable at end-of-life. Refer to Appendix 2 for high priority 'advocacy asks' of State and Federal Governments.	Lead: Sustainable Communities Unit M9 Waste Management & Resource Recovery Association Australia (WMRR)	Within existing operating budgets.

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Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
4.2	Circular economy programs and support for community (education and behaviour change for waste avoidance) (Circular Economy Strategy Focus Area 2)	Deliver community engagement and behaviour change initiatives to promote and incentivise community adoption of circular economy practices. Priority activities include: • Continuing provision of recycling stations at Customer Service Centres for hard to recycle and/or hazardous waste. • Continuing to provide subsidies for purchase of home composting equipment, reusable cloth nappies and period products, and consider program expansion to include incontinence products and/or buy-back for second-hand nappies. • Continuing to support sustainability/waste education within schools and early learning centres. • Delivering targeted educational workshops, programs and events on key topics/behaviours e.g. cloth nappies (promoted through Maternal and Child Health), zero waste cooking with cultural groups, home composting, clothes mending/repurposing, food waste avoidance. • Promoting, supporting and normalising available platforms, programs and initiatives that increase participation in the circular economy e.g. repair cafes, garage sales / second-hand markets or shops, swap events. • Investigating the establishment of a 'library of things' or similar, to foster community reuse in Merri-bek. • Developing a directory, map or guide to zero-waste living in Merri-bek with information on where to find circular products and services.	Lead: Sustainable Communities Unit CERES Sustainability Victoria Recycling Victoria Community organisations and social enterprises	Within existing operating project budget for 2025/26. Subject to business case / funding from 2026/27 onwards.

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Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
4.3	Optimised kerbside waste and recycling services, and community education (Circular Economy Strategy Focus Area 3)	Continue to reform our kerbside waste collection services to maximise recycling and reuse, and to equitably and cost effectively meet the needs of residents and businesses. Priority activities include: • Trailing fortnightly rubbish collection during 2025/26 and, pending outcomes of trial and Council decision, roll out municipal-wide as the final stage of Kerbside Waste Reform program. • Communications and education to support waste service users (residents and businesses) to 'Recycle Right', to minimise contamination (and associated service costs) and keep recycling and FOGO out of landfill. • Conducting regular audits of kerbside bins (annually or biannually) to monitor composition and contamination levels. • Developing a contamination management plan that establishes an escalation process for compliance /enforcement action in cases of repeated/ongoing bin misuse. • Investigating tailored kerbside services for businesses and multi-unit developments (i.e. review of Commercial Plus service model): o Potential for tailored (e.g. increased frequency) FOGO collection service for food businesses/manufacturers and other medium-scale organic waste generators o Investigate potential to scale 'best practice kerbside in retail precincts' method or alternative (e.g. Foleys Mall) • Exploring opportunities to increase resource recovery through the hard waste service, including potential partnership with a nearby transfer station. • Investigating a partnership arrangement with a nearby public access transfer station to provide additional recycling drop-off options for residents. • Potential drop-off days for priority materials and/or hard to access recycling services e.g. e-waste, textiles, household chemicals.	Lead: Waste Services Unit (with Sustainable Communities support) Recycling/Glass/FOGO receival and collection contractors Sustainability Victoria M9 Collaborate with Economic Development Unit on tailored waste services for business	Within existing budgets (waste charge funded) Implementation of significant service changes requires cost recovery through the waste charge.

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Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
4.4	Promote and foster waste minimisation and 'circular economy' principles within businesses (including social enterprises) (Circular Economy Strategy Focus Area 4)	Consistent with our Economic Development Action Plan, Council will: • Showcase circular businesses and/or speakers at Council's business learning and networking events to increase awareness of circular economy business models and opportunities. • Promote local circular businesses through stories, case studies etc to consumers and other businesses. • Deliver at least one workshop per year on circular economy and/or environmental sustainability within Council's annual program of business knowledge and skill development seminars and workshops.	Lead: Economic Development Unit	Within existing operating budgets.
		Council will investigate collaborative opportunities to help local business take up of circular economy practices and opportunities. Pending resourcing, priority activities would include: • Working regionally with stakeholder groups, including Circular Economy Officers in neighbouring councils, to identify, showcase and where possible support local and emerging circular economy initiatives across Melbourne's North region and beyond. • Trialing delivery of a training program that assists businesses, social enterprises and charities to develop a circular business strategy or roadmap for adopting circular economy principles and practices. • Promoting opportunities and/or existing platforms that can enable business-to-business resource reuse, exchange and sharing. • Exploring opportunities, identified through the Material Flow Analysis, to increase the diversion of priority materials in the Construction & Demolition (C&D) and Commercial & Industrial (C&I) waste stream i.e. food organics, plastics and cardboard.	Lead: Economic Development Unit and Sustainability & Climate Branch NAGA Melbourne's North Food Group CEBIC ACE Hub Sustainability Victoria (Buy Circular Service) Universities Social enterprises Exchange platforms	Investigations within existing operating budgets. New programs/initiatives subject to business case / grant funding.

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

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

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

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
5.1	Advocate for systemic changes to enable a zero carbon, circular	Merri-bek will enhance its influence across all levels of government through strategic and collaborative advocacy campaigns and partnerships by:	Lead: Sustainability and Climate Branch	Within existing operating budgets.

Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
	and climate resilient city.	• ensuring climate and circular economy in all Council's advocacy • supporting a stronger local government voice and effective advocacy • supporting our community and community organisations to be advocates. Refer to Appendix 2 for high priority 'advocacy asks' of State and Federal Governments.		
5.2	Planning and compliance to achieve zero carbon, climate resilience and circularity in new homes, commercial and industrial developments	Continue to play a leading role in Victorian local government efforts towards planning and compliance for sustainable development. Leadership and priority activities will include: • promoting the significance of embodied carbon impact and the use of recycled content in private development • promoting smarter, and more affordable housing, with size-efficient design, through engaging and educating industry • supporting planners and planning permit applicants to assess the climate resilience of developments • continuing advocacy for strengthened Environmentally Sustainable Design outcomes in the Planning Scheme to state government. • continuing proactive compliance and enforcement programs.	Lead: Planning & Environment Directorate Council Alliance for the Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE), state government	Within existing operating budgets.
5.3	Evolve policy and practice to ensure prioritised Council buildings are planned, designed and constructed to be 100% renewably powered, low embodied carbon,	Council will continuously improve its approach to delivering building projects, progressively ensuring facilities are zero carbon, low embodied carbon, and more climate resilient throughout their lifecycle. Continuous improvement activities will include: • Apply a climate vulnerability assessment framework to prioritise facilities serving at-risk communities and integrate resilience ratings into capital works decisions	Lead: Capital Works Planning and Delivery Branch (in collaboration with Sustainable Built Environment Unit and other teams	Within project capital budgets

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Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
	reflect circular economy principles and are climate resilient	• Deliver climate vulnerability improvements to 5-10 existing community buildings, prioritising buildings used by at-risk groups (e.g. older people, infants and young children), • Implement circular economy practices, including consideration of whole-of-life impacts, preferencing reuse and refurbishment over rebuilding where feasible, efficiency of material use and specification of products and materials that are low embodied carbon, high recycled content and durable. • Enhance building thermal performance and outdoor environments using tools like the Green Factor Tool to improve comfort while reducing energy demand. • Aim for Australian excellence sustainability standards for the new Coburg Library. • Electrify Oak Park Sports & Aquatic Centre as well as 30 of Council's remaining small sites that currently use gas. • Seek grant funding to enable electrification of Brunswick Baths	delivering building projects.	
5.4	Ensure Council infrastructure (being streetscapes, public realm, roads, playgrounds, bridges etc) is designed and constructed to be low carbon, circular and climate resilient	Council will plan, design, deliver, maintain and upgrade over time to create efficient and low embodied carbon infrastructure that is safe and more resilient in extreme weather conditions. Activities to achieve this include: • Assess climate risk for existing and proposed Council owned infrastructure and prioritise improvements to our assets accordingly • Develop and deliver a new Sustainable Infrastructure Policy which supports: o increased use of recycled content, low carbon, or 'carbon positive' materials in construction projects (e.g. high recycled content asphalt, use of cross-laminated timber to replace steel etc)	Cross-Council teams delivering infrastructure projects IPWEA Sustainability Victoria's Buy Circular Service	Within project capital budgets

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Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
		○ the use of durable products with a focus on repairable end-of-life solutions ○ complementary greening and cooling through trees, vegetation, and shade structures • Develop and maintain sustainable infrastructure guidelines to define minimum standards and design principles for common public realm projects such as carparks, and to better articulate the provision of shade or irrigation in public gathering spaces. • Establishment of an embodied carbon baseline to inform, to track and reduce embodied carbon emissions across construction projects. • Update technical notes for all Council work areas to reflect requirements around climate resilience and use of recycled content, to provide clear standards and expectations for all, and make these documents available to the public for use in complementary projects.		
5.5	Sustainable Procurement	Council will continue to evolve our procurement policy and guideline documents, processes and assessment criteria to use our purchasing power to foster sustainable practice. We will aim to stimulate innovation and demand for circular products and services. We will also: • Explore 'goods as services' contracts for relevant products (e.g., lighting, heating, ICT hardware) • Adapt tender specifications to increase the use of low embodied carbon and recycled content materials; and products that are durable, repairable, reusable and recyclable (ref with Actions 5.3 and 5.4)	Lead: Finance Northern Councils Alliance Sustainability Victoria Buy Circular Service	Within existing operating and capital budgets
5.6	Continue addressing Council's transport emissions – operational fleet,	Significant reduction in Council's transport emissions is critical to meet our corporate emissions reduction target. Activities include:	Lead: City Services Branch	Progress within existing

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Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
	contractor diesel, staff travel	• Complete the transition of Council's light passenger vehicle fleet to zero emissions vehicles • Reduce emissions from Council's heavy and light commercial fleets through application of Council's Fleet Selection Policy (2024), which mandates the switch to zero emissions vehicles where these meet our operational needs • Increase electrical capacity at Hadfield Operations Centre to support the necessary charging infrastructure • Encourage Council's waste collection service providers to move to zero emissions vehicles, in accordance with Council's Fleet Selection Policy • Explore deployment of green hydrogen waste vehicles in Council and waste collection service provider fleets • Progressively optimise the size of Council's fleet • Continue to promote and incentivise sustainable travel and commuting by Council staff.	State Government Zero Emission Vehicles manufacturers and importers Heavy vehicle manufactures	operating and capital budgets. Any unfunded opportunities subject to business case / grant funding.
5.7	Buy 100% renewable energy	Continue to purchase only electricity backed by renewable energy certificates from the Crowlands Wind Farm to supply Council sites and infrastructure (including leisure centres and public electric vehicle chargers) Encourage and support Council tenants to switch to zero-emissions electricity	Lead: Finance	Within existing operating budgets.
5.8	Continue to upgrade public lighting to be energy efficient and renewably powered	Consistent with our Public Lighting Policy, we will progressively deliver/upgrade public lighting (e.g. sportsfields, public carparks, shared paths, public space etc) to be highly efficient and renewably powered whilst avoiding inadvertent light pollution or negative impacts to wildlife.	Lead: City Infrastructure Directorate Sports clubs	Within existing capital budgets.

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Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
5.9	Sustainable operations of Council facilities	Progressively reduce the environmental impacts of Council facilities, staff events, meetings and activities, including actions such as: • Reduce single use packaging, improve bin use compliance and continue roll out of 4-bin system across Council facilities and venues • Establish 'sustainability protocols' for corporate gifts, giveaways and rewards • Provide guidance (e.g. on order form) to reduce food waste caused by over catering and increase plant-based / healthy food options in Council catering. • Develop and implement zero-waste guidelines for staff events (e.g. eliminating single use coffee cups) • Increase access to and take-up of reusable crockery at town halls and community venues • Mandate use of 100% recycled paper for all out-sourced print jobs • Explore recycling and reuse options for ICT hardware	Lead: Business Transformation, with support from Sustainability and Climate	Within existing operating budgets.
5.10	Evolve our festivals and cultural events towards zero carbon, circular and climate resilient	Through program design and delivery, act to progressively reduce the environmental impacts of Council festivals and cultural events across energy/emissions, waste management, water use, food and beverage, and transport. Priority activities include: • Evolve Council's festivals program to consider and reduce the risk (and associated cost and environmental impacts) of event cancellation due to extreme weather (e.g. avoid summertime, hold multiple smaller events rather than one major summer festival/event etc). • Trial alternatives to reliance on diesel generators at outdoor events and if feasible, invest in roll-out. • Trial and implement feasible approaches to reduce waste generation (e.g. reusable crockery for food and beverages) and	Lead: Arts & Culture Unit with support from Sustainability and Climate	Within existing operating budgets. Switch from diesel generators to batteries subject to business case / grant funding.

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Ref #	Actions / programs	Description / activities	Lead and potential collaborators	Resources
		enhanced waste segregation (e.g. recycling and FOGO waste stations) at festivals and cultural events. • Support vendor compliance with Plastic Wise Policy to minimise single use plastics.		
5.11	Integrate climate risk into Council processes and systems	Embed climate risk assessment and resilience considerations into all relevant Council strategies, policies, planning instruments, asset management, and operational decision-making, with attention to: • Risk management framework to ensure climate-related risks are identified, assessed, reviewed, and appropriately managed • Governance and decision-making processes, particularly for relevant projects and major programs, policies, and strategies • Financial planning, budgeting, and investment decision-making and continue aligning financial disclosures with climate reporting frameworks. This may include estimations of costs of climate change impacts to Council and costs of adaptation. • Asset management processes and life cycle planning and management • Service delivery and planning to maintain continuity and equity in service delivery under changing climate conditions	Lead: Sustainability & Climate Branch	Within existing operating budgets

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Complementary strategies and plans

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

Strategy / Plan / Policy	Strategic links (in brief)
Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan and 4-year Council Plan (in preparation)	The MHWP is integrated into the four-year Council Plan and is in the process of being developed for 2025 – 2029. One of the key priorities is tackling climate change and its impacts on health.
Municipal Emergency Management Plan	The MEMP guides our work in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies, include those that result from extreme weather such as extreme heat, floods and storms. Actions to build community climate resilience directly contribute to emergency preparedness.
Risk Management Framework	One of Merri-bek's strategic risks is "The impacts of climate change, including physical and transition risks, are not appropriately planned for or responded to". Climate risks are also integrated in operational risks and their management across Council.
Nature Plan (update in preparation)	A theme in the Nature Plan is to protect and enhance natural assets to build biodiversity value and to strengthen resilience to climate change. The Nature Plan's objective to connect people with nature is aligned with the work with the Merri-bek community on climate action.
Integrated Water Management Strategy and Action Plan	The Strategy and action plan outline how to transition to a Water Sensitive City which is crucial to becoming a resilient, climate adapted city. Sensitively managing water in the landscape can help absorb peak flows (reducing floods), recharge groundwater (combatting drought), sequester carbon (in wetlands), increase plant evapotranspiration (cooling the environment), improve local water quality and support local biodiversity.
Open Space Strategy and Action Plan	The Open Space Strategy recognises the potential impacts of climate change on open space and aims to ensure our open space network is adaptive, biodiverse, cooling, healthy, and resilient.
Urban Forest Strategy	The strategy aims to increase vegetation throughout Merri-bek to cool and green the urban environment. This includes planting of 5,000 street and park trees across the municipality each year, providing carbon 'drawdown' (sequestration) of an estimated 984 tonnes CO2-e each year and partner to plant trees in private property. This links to Action 1.8.
Food Systems Strategy	The Food Systems Strategy fosters a sustainable, just and vibrant food system within Merri-bek. There are strong links

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

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Monitoring and reporting our progress to 2030

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

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

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

Monitoring & evaluation question	Key indicators / issues to consider	Data sources/ method
How are we tracking to our community carbon reduction goal?	Total municipal emissions in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_2-e) per annum • Takes a production/sector-based approach to emissions, consistent with Global Protocol for Community-Scale Greenhouse Gas Inventories (GPC) • Published annually with up to a 2-year lag. • Largely excludes embedded carbon, such as in food, consumer goods and building materials.	Snapshot Climate snapshotclimate.com.au/locality/municipality/australia/victoria/merri-bek/ See Snapshot website for methodology report
How are we tracking to our Council (operational) carbon reduction target range?	Total gross corporate emissions in tonnes of CO_2-e per annum • Consistent with the principals of the greenhouse gas protocol – corporate standard • Reflects emissions prior to any purchase of offsets (note: Council continues to explore options to invest in Australian-based offset schemes) • Focuses on direct (scope 1 and 2) emissions from use of fossil gas and petrol/diesel with some indirect (scope 3) emissions.	Annual greenhouse gas emissions inventory prepared by Council, with external review/ verification.
What impact is our advocacy for system change having?	• Policy /program change at state or federal level • # / topic of written advocacy submissions • # / topic of collaborative advocacy campaigns (leading / active contributor)	Council data Government announcements Political party policy announcements
How are we tracking to our goals for comms, resilience, and climate justice?	• Reach of communications such as eco e-news, visits and engagement on Zero Carbon Merri-bek website, attendance at events, Council communications channels. • Individuals and households participating in resilience programs • Number of trees planted in private property	Council data Tracking of outreach and engagement Program-level monitoring of outputs and outcomes
How are we tracking to our	• Solar capacity installed across Merri-bek (MW) • Energy storage (MWh)	Combining AEMO DER Register, Electricity distributors/ Snapshot tool

Monitoring & evaluation question	Key indicators / issues to consider	Data sources/ method
community energy transition goals?	• Fossil gas consumption p.a. (% change over time) • Number of households and businesses supported	data and ProfileID or equivalent, STC/VEEC etc Program-level monitoring of outputs and outcomes
How are we tracking to our community sustainable transport goals?	• Mode share • EV charging ratios	VISTA Travel Survey EV charging point counts and Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Research Economics datasets
How are we tracking to our community waste and consumption goals?	• Amount of total waste generated (across all 4 bins) per capita • Amount of organics (food and garden waste) in general rubbish stream • Amount of waste diverted from landfill (through mixed recycling, glass recycling and FOGO streams) • Number of groups / people participating in circular activities and/or circular programs and services available in Merri-bek	Kerbside audit data Waste Services data (New) Social research every 4 – 5 years into home composting and circular economy participation)
How are we tracking to our Council as role model goals?	New metric/s required for tracking embodied carbon in buildings / infrastructure projects, with a focus on carbon intensive materials	Council and supplier data

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Appendix 1 – Our shared vision for a climate ready Merri-bek

Zero Carbon – Circular (Zero Waste) – Climate Resilient

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

Energy Transition - Efficient and 100% renewably powered energy:

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

Sustainable Transport - Active and zero emissions transport:

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

Waste and consumption - Circular economy with zero waste:

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

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

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

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

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

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Appendix 2 - Priority 'advocacy asks' across energy transition, sustainable transport, waste /circular economy and climate resilience

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

Energy Transition

That the Australian Government:

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

That the Victorian Government:

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

Sustainable Transport

That the Australian Government:

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

That the Victorian Government:

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

Waste and Circular Economy

That the Australian Government:

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

That the Victorian Government:

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

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Climate Resilience

That the Australian Government:

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

That the Victorian Government:

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

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7.5 MOVING AROUND MERRI-BEK ACTION PLAN: DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade

City Design and Economy

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Adopts the draft Moving Around Merri-bek Action Plan 2025–2029 at Attachment 1 for community consultation, to be undertaken from Friday 24 October to Sunday 23 November 2025.
2. Notes that community engagement will include the publication of the draft Action Plan on Council's Conversations Merri-bek website, as well as in-person engagement via pop-up sessions hosted across Merri-bek.
3. Receives a further report in early 2026 detailing the outcomes of consultation and seeking adoption of the final Moving Around Merri-bek Action Plan 2025-2029.

REPORT

Executive summary

This report seeks Council's endorsement to release the draft Moving Around Merri-bek Action Plan 2025–2029 at Attachment 1 for public consultation.

The draft Action Plan sets out Council's proposed transport delivery program over the next four years. It includes strategic actions grouped into three key categories - Infrastructure, Plans and Programs, and Policy and Advocacy. The actions within these categories are focused across priority areas of Streets for People, Access to Schools, Road Safety, and Transport Advocacy.

Community and stakeholder feedback on the draft plan will feed into a finalised plan for adoption. This approach ensures the Action Plan reflects community priorities, supports long-term strategic outcomes, and aligns with Council's adopted Transport Strategy and the Council Plan 2025–2029.

There are no new budget impacts arising from this report. Costs associated with consultation are covered within existing operational budgets. Funding for the delivery of individual actions will be subject to future budget processes and external funding opportunities.

Previous Council Decisions

Moving Around Merri-bek – Final Transport Strategy for Adoption – 13 March 2024

That Council:

1. *Endorses as final the Transport Strategy Moving Around Merri-bek (Attachment 1) and associated Action Plan (Attachment 2) with the following changes:*
    a) *Attachment 1 on page 5 delete the following sentence "We will continue to make sure those who need to drive are able to reach their destinations" and replace it with "We will make sure that trips not suited to walking, riding or public transport can still be made."*
    b) *Attachment 1 on page 39, amend "It is a key local door to door transport service that support people who are unable to drive or use public transport." To read "It is a key local door to door transport service that support people who are unable to travel to local destinations independently."*

c) Attachment 1 on page 40 truncate the sentence "We need to make sure our driving network is safe for all road users and ensure that those who need to use a car, for personal use or freight delivery, are able to." So that it reads "We need to make sure our driving network is safe and accessible for all road users."

d) Attachment 1 on page 42, delete the dot point "People who need to use their car are supported" and replace with "The transport needs of businesses for freight consignment and deliveries are met" and add a new point "The access needs of people who experience transport disadvantage are met."

e) Attachment 1 on page 39, add to "Improve bus services in Fawkner" the extra words "and the Newlands area of Coburg North"

2. Refers to the 2024/25 Budget Process funding requests for the following two Action Plan items:

a) $50,000 for expert advice to prepare a business case for pedestrian operated signals;

b) $130,000 for development of a Streets for People plan.

…

1. Policy Context

Council Plan 2025-2029

The Council Plan 2025–2029 sets out Council's strategic direction for delivering on the Community Vision: "*Merri-bek leads, and leaves no one behind"*. Transport is addressed under the Beautiful and Liveable City theme, which aims to ensure streets and public spaces are safe, pleasant, and easy to use so everyone can enjoy and be proud of where they live.

Key actions that align with this report include:

- Keeping public places and streets well-maintained, safe, and inviting for community use.
- Fixing and improving streets and footpaths to make them more friendly for walking and riding.
- Encouraging walking, cycling, and scooting – especially for getting to school.
- Making it easier and safer to use public transport to move around.

The Moving Around Merri-bek Action Plan is a key mechanism to deliver on these outcomes and ensure that transport investments reflect the priorities of the Merri-bek community.

Moving Around Merri-bek Transport Strategy

Moving Around Merri-bek is Council's long-term Transport Strategy, adopted in 2024. It sets the vision for a safe, accessible, sustainable, healthy, liveable, and inclusive transport system across the city.

The Strategy responds to local and global challenges including climate change, cost of living, public health, and population growth. It emphasises the need to shift away from car dependency and create a more balanced, people-focused transport system that works for everyone.

The Strategy introduces new tools and frameworks to guide Council's work, including the Streets for People approach and the use of Movement and Place and Healthy Streets assessments to guide future investment.

The 2025–2029 Action Plan sits alongside the Strategy and outlines the specific infrastructure programs, projects, and advocacy efforts that Council will deliver to achieve its vision for transport.

Moving Around Merri-bek Action Plan 2024-2025

The Moving Around Merri-bek Action Plan 2024-2025 was the first implementation plan developed under Council's refreshed Transport Strategy. It provided a 12-month roadmap for delivering early actions aligned to the Strategy's six values: Safe, Accessible, Sustainable, Healthy, Liveable, and Inclusive.

The 2024–2025 Action Plan focused on foundational projects and initiatives, including:

- Embedding the Streets for People approach into transport project planning and delivery
- Progressing advocacy work on road safety issues and public transport improvements
- Strengthening walking and cycling infrastructure delivery
- Introducing Healthy Streets assessments to inform streetscape upgrades
- Supporting behaviour change through Ride & Stride, Biketober, and community education initiatives

The 2025-2029 Action Plan builds on this foundation, taking a more strategic and long-term approach.

Zero Carbon Merri-bek

Council's Zero Carbon Merri-bek 2040 Framework outlines the community vision and strategic directions for the transition to zero carbon in Merri-bek by 2040. In 2019-20, transport was recorded to contribute 17 per cent of all carbon emissions in the Merri-bek local government area and 13 per cent were from private motor vehicles. The 2040 vision for Sustainable Transport includes:

- Most people choose to walk or cycle to get around locally because its healthy, free, safe and convenient.
- Merri-bek is known for its pedestrian and cycle-friendly streetscapes.

This overarching Framework informed 5-yearly action plans to drive the transition to zero emissions including:

- Investing in infrastructure to support active travel and public transport.
- Reallocate space used for private vehicle travel and parking to support sustainable transport use and other purposes.

In addition, Council resolved in December 2021 to adopt an interim target towards the Zero Carbon by 2040 goal of a reduction of emissions by 75 per cent by 2030.

Community Engagement Policy (2020)

The engagement approach follows Council's Community Engagement Policy (2020).

2. Background

The Moving Around Merri-bek Transport Strategy was adopted by Council in March 2024. It sets a long-term vision for a safe, accessible, sustainable, healthy, liveable, and inclusive transport system across the municipality. It sets a framework for a series of multi-year Action Plans with specific transport programs, projects and advocacy efforts. The first of these was the 2024–2025 Action Plan, which focused on short-term foundational activities.

The draft 2025–2029 Action Plan is Council's first full-term implementation plan under the Strategy. It takes a strategic and outcome-focused approach. It groups actions into three categories – Infrastructure, Plans and Programs, and Policy and Advocacy – and aligns them across four focus areas: Streets for People, Access to Schools, Road Safety, and Transport Advocacy.

This approach ensures Council's work is clearly linked to desired outcomes for the community and can respond flexibly to emerging needs, funding opportunities, and cross-departmental collaboration.

This report seeks Council's endorsement to undertake community consultation on the draft Action Plan before bringing a final version to Council for adoption in early 2026.

3. Issues

Community impact

The draft Action Plan directly responds to the priorities raised by the community during consultation on the Transport Strategy and through ongoing engagement, including:

- Safer streets and crossings
- Improved access to schools
- Infrastructure to support walking, cycling, and public transport
- More equitable access to the transport system

By focusing on more strategic, holistic actions, the plan ensures Council's work remains impactful, coordinated, and responsive to emerging needs.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

Transport accounts for a significant portion of carbon emissions in Merri-bek. The draft Action Plan includes actions that directly support the goals of Council's Zero Carbon Merri-bek Framework, including mode shift to active transport, infrastructure that supports sustainable mobility, and advocacy for State and Federal Government policy reform that supports climate-aligned investment decisions.

Economic sustainability implications

The Action Plan promotes more efficient, healthy, and accessible transport options that can reduce household transport costs and support local business access and vitality. Several actions support movement in activity centres and around employment hubs.

Legal and risk considerations

There are no direct legal risks associated with endorsing the draft Action Plan for consultation. Any legal or regulatory requirements arising from specific projects will be addressed through project planning and implementation.

Human Rights Consideration

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. The development and implementation of the Action Plan promotes equitable access to transport and inclusive use of public space and infrastructure, thereby supporting the rights to freedom of movement, equality, and participation in public life.

4. Community consultation and engagement

Community consultation on the draft Action Plan is proposed to occur over a four-week period between October and November 2025.

Engagement will include:

- A dedicated page on Conversations Merri-bek with the draft Action Plan, explainer content, and a feedback survey
- Four in-person pop-up sessions at locations in Fawkner, Glenroy, Coburg and Brunswick.
- Targeted outreach to stakeholder groups, including Ride & Stride schools and other community organisations

- Promotion through Council's communication channels including social media, newsletters, and civic signage

Affected persons rights and interests

The draft Action Plan may affect the interests of people who live, travel through, or operate a business in Merri-bek. The draft plan has been structured to ensure that affected groups are consulted in a transparent, inclusive, and accessible manner. The public consultation period provides the opportunity for all community members to have their say before a final version is presented to Council.

Communications

A communications plan is in development to ensure wide reach and clarity of messaging. Key messages include:

- The Action Plan is Council's roadmap for improving people's ability to move around and experience life in Merri-bek.
- It responds to the priorities shared by the community in recent years.
- Council is seeking feedback to ensure the final plan reflects what matters most to the people of our community.

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 costs associated with community consultation, including event delivery and associated materials, are accounted for within the Transport Planning unit's current operational budget.

Delivery of the finalised Action Plan will rely on funding through Council's annual Capital Works Program and operational budgets, as well as external funding sources where available. No new funding is being sought through this report. Actions identified in the plan will be staged over the 2025–2029 period based on available resources and Council prioritisation.

7. Implementation

If the recommendation is adopted, Council Officers will:

- Launch the public consultation on Friday 24 October 2025
- Deliver the community engagement activities as outlined
- Analyse community feedback and incorporate changes where appropriate
- Present the revised final Action Plan for adoption in February 2026

Attachment/s

1⇩ Moving Around Merri-bek Action Plan 2025-29 - Draft for engagement D25/520658

Merri-bek City Council

Moving Around Merri-bek

Action Plan 2025-2029



Introduction

Purpose of this document

The Moving Around Merri-bek Action Plan 2025-2029 is an accompanying document to *Moving Around Merri-bek*, Council's Transport Strategy adopted in 2024. It is also a successor document to 2024-2025 Action Plan.

This new Action Plan sets out how Merri-bek will deliver on the Strategy's vision over the next four years. It moves us from piloting new approaches to scaling up delivery – embedding fairness, sustainability, and sense of place in how we move around and experience life in our city.

The actions in this plan are grouped into three key focus areas:

- Infrastructure – designing and delivering transformative streetscape projects
- Plans & Programs – building evidence, shaping behaviours, and planning for long-term change
- Policy & Advocacy – setting the standards locally and pressing for change from the State and Federal Governments

Each of these three focus areas include actions that deliver on the six values which guide Council's approach to mobility: Safe, Accessible, Sustainable, Healthy, Liveable and Inclusive.

How this document works

This document follows a similar structure as the Moving Around Merri-bek Transport Strategy. This allows the reader to compare between each of the sections in the Strategy and this Action Plan, clearly showing how we are working to achieve the community's transport vision.

The Action Plan begins with a summary of what was achieved in the first year of implementation (2024/25) and then sets out the forward program for 2025–2029. Each action area is introduced with context and rationale, followed by tables detailing the specific actions, the values they deliver, the parts of the transport network they affect, and when and how they will be delivered.

The Action Plan concludes with an overview of how progress will be evaluated and reported, and how the Streets for People approach – introduced in the Transport Strategy – will continue to guide the design and delivery of infrastructure projects across Merri-bek.

Community Vision 2025-2035

This Action Plan is shaped by the community's aspirations for the future of Merri-bek. In 2025, the Council Plan 2025-2029 was adopted. It formalised a new 10-year Community Vision:

"Merri-bek leads, and leaves no one behind."

This vision guides how we plan, deliver, and advocate for improvements across our community – including improvements to how we move around and experience life in Merri-bek.

As part of defining this vision, community members laid out the following aspirations to describe the Merri-bek they want to see in 2035:

- We are a welcoming, safe and thriving community
- We are sustainable and our environment is respected
- Our community is engaged and informed
- Our streets are full of life
- One community, proudly diverse

Transport and the Council Plan

Transport plays a vital role in achieving the Community Vision. It sits within the 'Beautiful and Liveable City' theme of the Council Plan, which focuses on:

- Keeping public spaces safe, clean and inviting
- Fixing and improving streets and footpaths
- Encouraging walking, bike riding and scooting – especially for school trips
- Supporting safer and more accessible public transport use

This Action Plan helps deliver on that goal – making Merri-bek's streets safer, more inclusive, and easier to use, no matter how you get around.



What We Achieved in 2024-2025

The 2024-2025 financial year marked the first year of delivering the *Moving Around Merri-bek Transport Strategy*, adopted by Council in March 2024. Alongside adoption of the *Streets for People Plan*, Council delivered several major street transformation projects, behaviour change programs, and transport advocacy wins – laying solid foundations for the 2025-2029 Action Plan.

Highlights of Achievements

Streets for People

- Finalised development of the Streets for People Plan, translating high-level transport strategy into practical street-level delivery frameworks and project prioritisation.
- Delivered shared zones on Albert and Victoria Streets, Brunswick – creating safer, more accessible public spaces with widened footpaths, landscaping, seating, and lighting.

Public Realm Improvements

- Completed permanent streetscape upgrades on Carlisle Street, Coburg, including tree planting, traffic calming, shared zones, improved footpaths and drainage. The corridor now supports vibrant walking and cycling connections and contributes to local greening.



Concept Design and Community Consultation

- Co-designed concept plans for Harding-Munro Street, Coburg with the community, improving accessibility, safety and greening for walking, cycling and public transport.
- Advanced design of bike lane extension and crossings on O'Hea Street, which will strengthen a key east-west active transport link in Coburg.

Roll out of Safer Speed Zones

- Council completed the roll-out of 40 km/h safer speed limits on all local roads across Merri-bek, reducing crash risk and making streets safer for walking and cycling.
- Approval was secured for 30 km/h speed limit trials in parts of Brunswick and Coburg, to test even safer conditions in busy local centres and work to make them more vibrant places.

Sustainable Transport

- Launched the Merri-bek E-Bike Library – giving residents the chance to borrow e-bikes and e-cargo bikes free for two weeks. The program makes sustainable transport more affordable and accessible, helping people try e-biking for commuting, shopping, and family trips while building confidence to adopt low-carbon travel.

- Continued roll-out of publicly accessible EV charging infrastructure, aligned with Council's climate targets and zero-carbon ambitions.

Strengthening Local Community Programs

- Scaled up the Ride & Stride program with local schools, delivering innovative behaviour-change activities to support walking and riding for children and their families.

- Expanded the Wheel Sisters program from Fawkner to Glenroy, enabling women – particularly from culturally diverse backgrounds – to gain cycling confidence, independence and new social connections.



Advocacy and Collaboration

- Council partnered with the Northern Councils Alliance to launch the Connect Melbourne's North campaign – a united call for better transport investment across Melbourne's north.

- The campaign highlights urgent needs such as more frequent and reliable public transport, safer walking and cycling links, and improved connections between jobs, education and homes.

- By working together with neighbouring councils, Merri-bek amplified its voice and pushed for the State Government to prioritise transport equity and investment in Melbourne's fastest-growing region.

A New Structure for 2025-2029

The 2024-2025 Action Plan grouped actions under twelve categories drawn from our values, network layers and the Streets for People program. While comprehensive, this approach proved difficult to track and sometimes duplicated work across categories. It also listed more actions than could reasonably be delivered in a single year, which made it harder for the community to see where Council's biggest moves were being made.

For 2025-29, we are taking a future-focused, strategic approach. Actions are now grouped by what they deliver:

1. Infrastructure
2. Plans & Programs
3. Policy & Advocacy

Within each category, actions are organised as either

- Flagship Actions – strategic, high-level initiatives that set direction and drive major change
- Supporting Actions – targeted initiatives that underpin and enable the flagship work

This sharper structure is designed to make it easier for the average community member to understand where we are focusing effort, while leaving space for new opportunities over the next four years. It also makes accountability clearer, as progress can be reported meaningfully and publicly, beyond simply counting numbers of projects or kilometres of upgrades delivered.

Importantly, if a specific project or program isn't explicitly listed in an action, it does not mean Council isn't doing it. Many ongoing priorities – such as routine road safety upgrades, footpath improvements, and other smaller-scale works – continue to be delivered through Council's Capital Works Program, Customer Request System and other business-as-usual programs, each with their own governance and reporting processes. This Action Plan is deliberately high-level and strategic: it sets our direction for the future while ensuring that our current commitments remain firmly on track.

Overall, the new structure in this Action Plan provides:

- Clarity – the community can see and easily understand the big moves Council is making
- Transparency – reporting that focuses on meaningful outcomes, not just lists of projects
- Flexibility – space to add new priorities as they emerge across the plan's four-year horizon
- Impact – resources targeted to initiatives that truly change how people move around and experience life in Merri-bek

By reshaping how we define and group actions, this Action Plan sets Merri-bek up for the years ahead – delivering streets and surrounding spaces that are easier to move through, more inviting to spend time in, and central to the vibrancy and fairness of everyday life.

Actions for 2025-2029

Infrastructure

We will transform our streets and surrounding spaces into places that are safe, green, and enjoyable. Infrastructure actions are about delivering physical improvements to the spaces our community sees and uses every day.

	Action Number	Action Description	Values	Network Focus	Timeframe	Commencing Year	Capital Cost	Operational Cost
Flagship Actions	1.1	Design and deliver Streets for People high priority corridors, as outlined in Council's Streets for People Plan.	• Safe • Accessible • Healthy • Liveable • Sustainable • Inclusive	• Pedestrian • Cycle • Land Use	Core Program - Continuous	25/26	High	High
	1.2	Deliver safer school zone infrastructure through a new school precincts program, in collaboration with Ride & Stride schools and their school communities. This will include interventions around schools and along routes to school such as: • Improved and/or increased pedestrian crossings • Safer speeds in school zones • Traffic calming and placemaking infrastructure • School zone asphalt treatments • Modal filters • Tree planting to create cool routes	• Safe • Accessible • Healthy • Liveable • Sustainable • Inclusive	• Pedestrian • Cycle • Land Use • Driving	Core Program - Continuous	25/26	Medium	High
	1.3	Deliver road safety infrastructure improvements alongside safer speed limits on local streets, guided by Council's forthcoming Road Safety Plan. This will include: • Rolling out 30 km/h speed limits in priority areas such as on or around school	• Safe • Liveable	• Pedestrian • Cycle • Land Use • Driving	Core Program - Continuous	25/26	Medium	High

		and childcare precincts, Streets for People corridors, aged care facilities, local shopping strips, and community venues • Progressively introducing safer speed limits and supporting traffic calming infrastructure on all council-managed roads • Continue delivering road safety infrastructure such as new pedestrian crossings, improved street lighting, improved visibility at junctions, slip lane closures, and more in priority areas • Continue to prioritise road safety infrastructure in areas of high need						
Supporting Actions	1.4	Improve walking facilities and amenity through infrastructure upgrades, such as pram ramps and new or improved crossings, focused on or around: • Streets for People corridors • Principle Pedestrian Network corridors • Streets that carry higher numbers of vulnerable road users, such as those near childcare centres, schools, or aged care facilities • Activity centres, neighbourhood centres and local shopping strips • Train stations and public transport stops • Parks, leisure centres, and other key destinations	• Safe • Accessible • Healthy • Liveable • Sustainable • Inclusive	• Pedestrian • Land Use	Core Program - Continuous	25/26	Medium	Medium
	1.5	Improve cycling facilities and amenity through small scale infrastructure upgrades, focused on or around: • Streets for People corridors • The State Government's Strategic Cycling Corridors network • Streets that carry higher numbers of vulnerable road users, such as those near childcare centres, schools, or aged care facilities	• Safe • Accessible • Healthy • Liveable • Sustainable • Inclusive	• Cycle • Land Use	Core Program - Continuous	25/26	Medium	Medium

		• Activity centres, neighbourhood centres and local shopping strips • Train stations and public transport stops • Parks, leisure centres, and other key destinations						
	1.6	Deliver improvements to existing shared paths across Merri-bek, addressing issues with surface quality, safety, and accessibility gaps.	• Safe • Accessible • Healthy • Liveable • Sustainable • Inclusive	• Cycle • Pedestrian	Core Program - Continuous	25/26	Medium	Medium
	1.7	Trial and evaluate on-street secure bike parking in select locations, with a focus on areas with: • High density • High mix of apartments • Council owned community facilities • Limited access to secure off-street parking	• Healthy • Liveable • Sustainable	• Cycle • Land Use	Short Term: 1-2 Years	25/26	Low	High

Plans & Programs

We will shape long-term outcomes through evidence, partnerships and behaviour change. These initiatives build the knowledge, habits and planning frameworks for the future.

	Action Number	Action Description	Values	Network Focus	Timeframe	Commencing Year	Capital Cost	Operational Cost
Flagship Actions	2.1	Develop a Road Safety Plan that outlines Council's priorities for addressing road safety across the municipality and informs future capital works planning. The Plan will identify priority locations for interventions such as: • Safer speed limits • Traffic calming infrastructure • Traffic management measures • Safer crossings • Safer intersections	• Safe • Liveable	• Driving • Pedestrian • Cycle • Land Use	Short Term: 1-2 Years	25/26	Low	Medium
	2.2	Deliver annual community campaigns and/or outreach programs to encourage active and sustainable travel, prioritising initiatives that target: • Short, local trips • Areas with existing or planned walking or riding infrastructure • Demographic groups with low levels of active travel equity or uptake • Schools, kindergartens, and childcare centres not involved in Ride & Stride	• Safe • Healthy • Sustainable • Inclusive	• Pedestrian • Cycle • Public Transport	Core Program - Continuous	25/26	Low	Medium
	2.3	Expand and strengthen Council's flagship Ride & Stride program, focusing on increasing the number of schools participating. Continue to scale our innovative, holistic and collaborative interventions with engaged Ride & Stride primary schools.	• Safe • Healthy • Sustainable • Inclusive	• Pedestrian • Cycle	Core Program - Continuous	25/26	Low	Low

Supporting Actions	2.4	Review how Council manages kerbside space and develop a strategic planning approach to kerbside allocation and management that balances access, movement, and place priorities.	• Accessible • Liveable • Sustainable • Inclusive	• Pedestrian • Cycle • Public Transport • Driving • Land Use	Medium Term: 2-4 Years	27/28	Low	High
	2.5	Embed the Healthy Streets Framework across relevant Council works, including: • Using Healthy Streets Design Checks for identification and delivery of all street related projects - including road reconstruction and streetscape improvement programs • Upskilling Council staff in application of Healthy Streets through Healthy Streets training and refreshers • Embed Healthy Streets Principles in relevant strategic documents and plans related to streets and public spaces	• Safe • Accessible • Healthy • Liveable • Sustainable • Inclusive	• Pedestrian • Cycle • Public Transport • Land Use	Core Program - Continuous	25/26	Low	Medium
	2.6	Deliver and evaluate a program for shared e-bikes with a designated parking zone approach.	• Healthy • Liveable • Sustainable	• Cycle • Land Use	Short Term: 1-2 Years	25/26	Low	Medium
	2.7	Support the expansion of a renewably-powered Electric Vehicle (EV) charging network across Merri-bek by: • Helping to facilitate the roll out of on-street EV charging options • Promoting EV charging infrastructure within or adjacent to new private developments through the planning process and advocacy. • Collaborating with 'car share' businesses to accelerate their transition to electric vehicles.	• Sustainable	• Driving • Land Use	Core Program - Continuous	25/26	Medium	High

Policy & Advocacy

We will set stronger local policy and advocate to higher levels of government for the changes Merri-bek can't achieve alone.

	Action Number	Action Description	Values	Network Focus	Timeframe	Commencing Year	Capital Cost	Operational Cost
Flagship Actions	3.1	Develop a Transport Advocacy Strategy to formalise Council's continued advocacy to the State Government for the advancement of key transport priorities, including: • Improved safety on state-managed roads • More frequent and accessible public transport • Increased investment in active transport, including shared use paths that travel between council areas	• Safe • Accessible • Healthy • Liveable • Sustainable • Inclusive	• Pedestrian • Cycle • Land Use	Core Program - Continuous	25/26	Low	High
	3.2	Work with the State Government to deliver well-designed, place-based transport planning for the Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres that supports high-quality housing, sustainable mobility, and public realm outcomes. Advocate for improvements in Glenroy – Merri-bek's other designated Activity Centre that was not included in the State Government's current program – that achieve similar outcomes.	• Safe • Accessible • Healthy • Liveable • Sustainable • Inclusive	• Pedestrian • Cycle • Public Transport • Land Use	Core Program - Continuous	25/26	Low	Low
	3.3	Develop a clear and shared community vision for the revitalisation of Sydney Road and other key tram activity corridors across Merri-bek, and advocate to the State Government to fund and deliver that vision.	• Safe • Accessible • Healthy • Liveable • Sustainable • Inclusive	• Pedestrian • Cycle • Public Transport • Land Use	Core Program - Continuous	25/26	Low	High

Supporting Actions	3.4	Advocate to the State Government to update legislation relating to Council authority to deliver changes supporting safe and sustainable transport outcomes on Council-managed streets, with a focus on regulatory processes related to: • Traffic management on local roads • Traffic filtering on local roads • Safer speed limit mandates on local roads, particularly in priority areas such as school zones	• Safe • Healthy • Liveable	• Pedestrian • Cycle • Driving • Land Use	Medium Term: 2-4 Years	25/26	Low	Medium
	3.5	Update Merri-bek's Public Lighting Policy	• Safe • Accessible • Inclusive	• Cycle • Pedestrian • Land Use	Short Term: 1-2 Years	25/26	Low	Low
	3.6	Prepare a report on the future of bus stop asset ownership and advertising, and implement Council's decision on the bus shelter contract and long-term ownership model.	• Accessible	• Public Transport	Short Term: 1-2 Years	26/27	Low	Low
	3.7	Develop a Streetscape & Public Realm Design Manual to guide design policy for all street improvement projects in Merri-bek, and serve as a companion document to technical notes. Design guidance provided within the manual will be linked to Movement & Place street types, Healthy Streets principles, and support other Council policies.	• Safe • Accessible • Healthy • Liveable • Sustainable • Inclusive	• Pedestrian • Cycle • Public Transport • Land Use • Driving	Medium Term: 2-4 Years	27/28	Low	High

Monitoring Progress and Building on the Momentum

This Action Plan is not a "set and forget" document. We are committed to annual public reporting throughout 2025-2029.

But reporting won't only be about kilometres of bike lanes or numbers of crossings delivered. Instead, we will measure and communicate outcomes that matter to people, structured around the six values of the Moving Around Merri-bek Transport Strategy:

- **Safe –** are crashes, emissions and noise reducing, and do people feel secure, comfortable and confident when moving around?
- **Accessible –** can everyone in Merri-bek participate fully in public life – reaching the places they need, connecting with others, and enjoying themselves without barriers?
- **Healthy –** are our streets supporting more physical activity, cleaner air, and better mental and social wellbeing?
- **Liveable –** are neighbourhoods becoming more vibrant, green and welcoming, with streets and surrounding spaces that people love to spend time in?
- **Sustainable –** are we rapidly cutting transport emissions and making our streets climate-resilient for the future?
- **Inclusive –** are barriers being dismantled for people with disability, older and younger residents, people on low incomes, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities?

To do this, Council will develop a Measurement and Evaluation Framework that draws on datasets (e.g. VISTA, Census, CrashStats), community surveys, and new tools like equity mapping and the Healthy Streets framework.

By reporting directly against these six values, the community will be able to see not just what has been built, but how our collective efforts are transforming Merri-bek into a safer, healthier, more sustainable and more inclusive city. Each year we will publish a Progress Report that the community can read, use and challenge us on – closing the loop, holding ourselves accountable, and ensuring that the voices of Merri-bek continue to guide our journey.

This approach means the Action Plan will keep evolving with our community, demonstrating year by year how our choices are shaping fairer access, more vibrant streets and surrounding spaces, and healthier, more connected daily lives for everyone.

At its heart, the Moving Around Merri-bek Action Plan 2025–2029 brings the Community Vision to life: Merri-bek leads – and leaves no one behind. Over the next four years, it will help ensure our streets are full of life, and welcome people to move, connect, and thrive.



7.6 568 SYDNEY ROAD PARK CLOSE TO HOME - PRELIMINARY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade

City Design and Economy

Officer recommendation

That Council:

1. Endorses community engagement on options for the new park at 568 Sydney Road, Brunswick.
2. Receives a future report on the results of community engagement, with a recommended site extent and draft concept plan for the new park.

REPORT

Executive summary

The purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement to commence preliminary community engagement on site options for the new Park Close to Home at 568 Sydney Road, Brunswick.

Council purchased the site at 568 Sydney Road in January 2025 to provide a new park in a high priority open space gap area. The new park will provide valuable green space for nearby residents, workers, and visitors, and a cool respite along the busy Sydney Road corridor. The site also supports an improved active transport link in the east-west Hope Street – Stewart Street route.

Council also owns the carpark immediately to the east of the site, fronting Staley Street. There may be the potential to incorporate some of the adjacent carpark site into the open space area. There may also the possibility of providing some traffic calming, street narrowing and/or closure on Staley Street to further extend the green space and address rat running.

Several site options have been prepared to seek preliminary community feedback on these options and what they would like to see in the new park. The options offer different levels of open space, car parking impacts, and potential configurations of Staley Street.

A two stage engagement process is proposed for the project, to allow the community to have meaningful input in shaping the new park. Subject to Council's endorsement, the Phase 1 preliminary engagement will occur during October and November 2025. A further Council report in early 2026 will present the findings of the engagement and recommend a preferred site extent and concept plan for Phase 2 engagement.

The project is funded through the Open Space Reserve. The construction cost of the project will depend on the extent of the new park. An initial budget allocation has been set aside in the forward Capital Works Program, but additional funding may be referred to the capital works program if the preferred site option increases the park coverage.

Previous Council Decisions

Proposed Acquisition 568-574 Sydney Road, Brunswick – 16 September 2024

This was a confidential in camera item, where Council resolved to seek to purchase the site for a Park Close to Home.

1. Policy Context

Council Plan 2025-29

Community Vision and Council Plan

Merri-bek 2025-29 Community Vision

The long-term Community Vision is that *Merri-bek leads and leaves no one behind.*

Merri-bek 2025-29 Council Plan

Within the Council Plan there are several key strategies relevant to the project at 568 Sydney Road. These strategies include;

- Cool urban environments and beautify public spaces with nature, including seeking opportunities to reduce hard surfaces to increase permeability.
- Maintain our streets, laneways and public places so they are adaptive to community needs; places we are proud of and feel safe in.
- Improve parks and facilities to make them welcoming places to share and to enjoy activities.
- Make it easy and safe for people to move around Merri-bek, especially using public and active transport and zero emissions vehicles.
- Places for People plans that support development and greening of Merri-bek's activity centres as vibrant attractive hubs.

A Park Close to Home Framework

The framework adopted by Council on 6 December 2017, is a strategy to fill gaps in the open space network in Merri-bek. The strategy is intended to create and improve access to open space in the areas that need it most, by identifying gap areas in the community where residents are not within walking distance to their closest park. The development of land for a park at 568 Sydney Road, Brunswick will help to address one of the high priority gaps outlined in the framework.

A Park Close to Home delivers on the Merri-bek Open Space Strategy which seeks to provide quality open space within 500m of all residential properties, and 300m to all activity centre properties.

2. Background

In January 2025 Council purchased the site at 568 Sydney Road, Brunswick utilising the Open Space Reserve, to address a high priority open space gap area.

The new park will provide informal community use and passive recreation. It will provide a green respite on Sydney Road, support cooling through tree canopy and planting, and sustainable stormwater management.

The site also provides for a safe active transport link between Hope Street and Stewart Street, supporting a strategic east-west link between the Moonee Ponds and Merri Creeks which directly serves significant retail precincts, churches, open space, CERES and a school.

The site is currently vacant and environmental site investigations prior to acquisition found that the site is suitable for use as open space. An underground storage tank associated with the past use of the site as a dry cleaner has been removed.

3. Issues

Site options

The site is 946m^2 with one street frontage on Sydney Road. Council also owns the site immediately to the east, a 1,037m^2 carpark with frontage to Staley Street. The carpark contains 36 carparks; half free (with a 2P limit) and half paid (unlimited time). It is not a separate rates carpark but is subject to the State Congestion Levy.

In considering ways to plan for the new Park Close to Home, there is the potential to incorporate some of the adjacent carpark site to increase the open space for community use, and maximise the environmental benefits of the new park.

There is also the possibility of providing some traffic calming, street narrowing and/or closure on Staley Street to further extend the green space and address traffic "rat running" on this street.

Preliminary community engagement is proposed to gather feedback from stakeholders on their views on three site options, and what they would like to see in the new park.

The options are summarised in the table below.

They vary in term of:

- size of open space
- whether and how much of the council carpark site could potentially be converted into open space (and number of carparks impacted),
- whether reconfigured and additional on-street parking could be accommodated in Staley Street
- whether and to what extent street closure at Staley Street is suitable.

Option	Open Space area provided	Total reduction carparks in area	Staley Street	Comments
Option A	1,000m^2	Zero spaces are likely to be removed – however some reconfiguration of parking spaces may be required to enable a better path through the carpark area.	Park on new site, with all existing car parking retained.	Develop only the new site with some improvements to the existing Staley Street carpark to facilitate an improved walking and cycling link.
Option B	1,600m^2	9 spaces removed	Narrowed lanes and angled parking	Retain half of existing council carpark (18 spaces). Staley St is open.
Option C	2,000m^2	20 spaces removed	Closure of Staley St, narrowed lanes and angled parking	Retain half of existing council carpark (18 spaces). Staley St is closed.

Community impact

The project will have a highly positive impact on the surrounding residents, businesses and community, by providing a new park in an area lacking in existing open space. The park will allow for more frequent and convenient time for outdoor physical activity, social interaction, and connection to nature.

The different options have varying impacts on parking, cycling / pedestrian access, and traffic in the area, which will impact community stakeholders differently.

There are several Council off-street car parks in the vicinity of the site, some of which have no restrictions of paid parking components. As part of this project it is proposed to look at parking provision on and off-street in the area, to ensure parking demand is understood and appropriately managed.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

The project presents numerous opportunities to improve the environmental sustainability of the area through its design, which will include:

- Urban heat mitigation through planting and integrated stormwater management
- Increased biodiversity through increased and varied vegetation
- Increased tree canopy and shade
- Supporting active transport choices through the provision of safe walking and cycling links

Economic sustainability implications

The project is expected to make the area more attractive to visit, and therefore to bring more economic activity to nearby businesses.

By providing an attractive, vibrant and welcoming space on Sydney Road, visitors and workers will have an additional place to meet, stop and rest, thereby increasing their dwell time in the activity centre.

The new park will also provide important green space for workers in the area, improving their wellbeing and satisfaction at work.

Legal and risk considerations

If a road closure is recommended as a result of the community engagement, a further future statutory engagement and hearings process will be required to formalise this change.

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

A phased community engagement process is proposed for the project, to allow all stakeholders to have meaningful input in shaping the new park. The proposed phases are summarised in the table below.

Phase	Indicative timing	Purpose	Community opportunity
Preliminary Phase 1	October – November 2025	Present site options for community comment. Gather ideas and input to shape Draft Concept Plan.	Provide feedback on site extent options. Provide input to what they would like in the new park
Draft Concept Phase 2	February - March 2026	Present the findings of Phase 1. Gather feedback on Draft to help finalise Concept Plan.	Learn about how Phase 1 has shaped Draft. Provide feedback on Draft.

Affected persons rights and interests

The key stakeholders whose rights and interests may be affected and who will be contacted directly in advance of the broader community engagement include:

- Residents and property owners of Staley Street
- Saint Visilios Greek Orthodox Church
- Businesses on Sydney Road between Stewart and Blythe Street
- Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation

Communications

A detailed communications plan has been prepared to best promote the engagement to the community, which will include:

- Direct approach and letter to nearby residents and businesses
- Letterbox drop to properties within 300m catchment
- Broad social media promotion
- Information on Conversations Merri-bek and Council website
- Signs on site and at nearby destinations

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 improvement of the site for use as open space will be funded through the Open Space Reserve.

Costs associated with the planning and design of the new park have been allocated in the current capital works budget, and indicative construction costs have been foreshadowed in the forward capital works budget.

The actual construction cost of the project will depend on the extents of the new park. If the scope increases, a budget allocation will be referred to the Capital Works Program and budget process for the 2026-27 financial year.

It is anticipated a concept design for the park will be finalised over the next twelve months, aiming for project delivery in calendar year 2027.

7. Implementation

Subject to Council's endorsement, the Phase 1 Preliminary Engagement will occur during October and November 2025. A further Council report in early 2026 will present the findings of the engagement and recommend a preferred site extent.

Attachment/s

There are no attachments for this report.

7.7 LIVING AND AGEING WELL ACTION PLAN 2024-2025

Director Community, Eamonn Fennessy

Aged and Community Support

Officer Recommendation

That Council notes the Living and Ageing Well Action Plan Report 2024-2025.

REPORT

Executive Summary

Council's Living and Ageing Well Framework establishes age-friendly principles and practices to support healthy ageing of residents in Merri-bek. It was endorsed by Council in 2019, in recognition of population ageing and the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2020 to 2030)[1].

The Aged and Community Support Branch lead the implementation, with cross-Council and community collaboration being key to creating an age friendly city where residents thrive in older age.

The Framework is delivered through an Implementation Plan with yearly achievements and learnings reported yearly to Council. This report outlines key achievements and learnings from 1 July 2024 to 31 June 2025, with an allocated yearly budget of $50,000 for implementation of the Framework.

Council progressed actions under the Physical, Social and Municipal Environments of the Framework, and developed the next 4-year Implementation Plan (2025 to 2029). There was a focus on incorporating learnings from community engagement into the implementation plan. Council heard from the community about the impacts of rising cost of living on older communities, particularly those already experiencing financial and social vulnerability.

The Living and Ageing Well Framework plays a crucial role in guiding Council's work, responding to Aged Care reforms, increasing vulnerabilities of older communities, and the growing ageing population.

Previous Council Decisions

Living and Ageing Well Year 4 Report and Evaluation - 14 August 2024

That Council notes the Living and Ageing Well Year 4 Report and Evaluation.

1. Policy Context

Council Plan 2021-2025

Implementation of the Framework is a Council Action Plan item. Council Action Plan 2020/21 includes the deliverable of Improved Health and Wellbeing Outcomes for older people, through the implementation of the agreed Year One actions of the Framework at item 11.

Council Plan 2025-2029

The Framework also aligns with Council Plan Initiative and Priority 2.4: 'Support older adults by providing accessible spaces, programs and services that encourage independent living, promote health and activity and encourage connections across generations to enrich their lives and wellbeing'.

Human Rights Policy 2016-2026

Council's Human Rights Policy acknowledges specific vulnerabilities associated with ageing as an emerging priority and identifies an age and life span approach towards human rights.

2. Background

The Living and Ageing Well in Merri-bek: An Age Friendly Framework (the Framework) has a community focus and is targeted at the emerging and existing cohort of older residents to support their wellbeing. It encourages active ageing by optimising opportunities for health, social connection and security.

The Framework has been structured based on the World Health Organisation's Age Friendly Environments of Physical Environment, Social Environment and Municipal Services. The Framework was developed in consultation with older people and Council staff. It identifies actions which align with existing Council programs and services, as well as new, emerging areas. Across the last year, there has been a focus on creating opportunities for older people to increase social connection and well-being through key projects, and collating research to inform future planning for older people. Collaboration across Council and with community partners was key in achieving these outcomes.

Refer to:

- **Attachment 1** Infographic of 2024-2025 Living and Ageing Well actions
- **Attachment 2** Living and Ageing Well Framework, Evaluation and Action Summary

3. Issues

Community impact

Living and Ageing Well progressed the objectives of the Living and Ageing Well Framework towards positive community impact.

1. Implementation Plan 2025- 2029

   Based on evaluation findings presented at August 2024 meeting, Council officers developed a 4-year implementation plan. This is an internal plan with cross-Council actions, with a focus on increasing opportunities for social connection and increasing the visibility and voice of older people in the community.

2. Older Persons Reference Group

   The Older Persons Reference Group was a highly regarded reference group of 10 residents meeting with Council officers. This group provided valuable lived experience knowledge and advice to Council on policy, programs and planning. Their lived experience perspective helped to ensure that Council's planning and programs continue to meet the needs and aspirations of older people, and the community as we grow older. Feedback from this group has informed Council communication improvements, Open Space and Transport priorities, and exercise initiatives. The group facilitated promotion of Council information and services through members' community networks.

3. Active Seniors Clubs

   Council, in partnership with Active Merri-bek YMCA, provided outreach exercise classes at senior's clubs venues, promoting safe and engaging exercise. From 31st March to 30th June, there were 39 sessions held across 4 groups, with an estimated total attendance of 1,092 participants. This outreach allowed older people to participate in safe and engaging exercise, bringing opportunities for physical activity to them directly.

4. Social connection programs

   Over 500 people enjoyed Seniors Festival events in 2024. Events included guided walks, workshops, engaging performances by older people from our multicultural community, and social events.

   Council continued to deliver opportunities for learning and connection across generations, engaging over 335 participants. These intergenerational programs included an LGBTIQA+ event at libraries, individual social programs through the home support 'Lively' program, Early Years and School Holiday projects.

   Council also continued to provide support for over 70 seniors clubs, and new and emerging groups, reaching over 1,200 people. This included network meetings for leaders of groups (in Italian and English) to deliver information and promote social connections.

5. Information and services

   Council continued to deliver the Age Well Program, helping individuals, families and carers set goals and navigate available care, support and activity options that older people need to age well. This includes offering support in-person, over the phone and in the homes of community members, as well as community outreach through pop-up information sessions across the municipality. Where possible this program provided support in-language as required, delivering confidential advice based on individual needs at a time of much change during the Aged Care reforms. This program supported 266 people over the past year.

   Council continued to grow its Outdoor Help Garden Program, supporting 255 older residents to improve their outdoor spaces through garden maintenance projects. The program continues to thrive with a 109% increase over the past year.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

Council is aware of the vulnerabilities of older people to the impacts of climate change and their role in creating positive change. Council currently supports older people through initiatives such as the Solar Thermal Subsidy Program and will prioritise actions which address climate change, resilience and older people in the next Implementation Plan.

Human Rights Consideration

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

The Framework holds the human rights of our citizens as a key principle in ensuring that all older people can participate in and benefit from health and wellbeing outcomes and is aligned with the Human Rights Policy. A Gender Impact and Equity Assessment was undertaken during finalisation of the new Implementation Plan.

Risk of social exclusion and discrimination of older people increases based on intersecting factors such as gender, cultural background and disability. Actions in the Implementation Plan prioritise those which work towards reducing age-based discrimination, and we will prioritise actions to address intersectionality.

4. Community consultation and engagement

Actions delivered were developed in response to community engagement throughout the duration of the previous implementation plan, as well as the 2024 evaluation. Feedback is a regular practice through formal structures such as the reference group, and informally from community members through evaluation of events, client feedback from direct service delivery, and seniors clubs.

In 2024 Council heard from our Aged and Community Support clients through our Client Feedback Survey and engaged with older multicultural community members in-person with the Community Engagement Policy Amendment consultation.

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

Implementation of the Living and Ageing Well Framework is contained within existing operational budgets.

7. Implementation

Officers will provide a report of Year One actions of the Implementation Plan and Council Reports will be shared on the website following the Council Meeting.

Attachment/s

1⇩	Infographic of 2024-2025 Living and Ageing Well Actions	D25/478793
2⇩	Living and Ageing Well Framework, Evaluation and Action Summary 2025	D25/478788

Living and Ageing Well Actions 2024 to 2025

Merri-bek City Council

Implementation Plan 2025-2029

Council Officers developed a 4-year plan based on previous evaluations.

It aims to increase opportunities for social connection, increase visibility and voice of older people in the community.



Older Persons Reference Group

The group of 10 residents provided lived experience advice on policy and planning. Their feedback improved communication, open space, transport and exercise initiatives for older people.



Seniors' clubs and new groups

70
Clubs and groups supported

1,200+
People supported

Active Seniors Clubs

Council and Active Merri-bek YMCA partnered to offer outreach exercise classes at seniors clubs venues, promoting safe and engaging exercise.

1092 Participants
39 Sessions
4 Groups



Age Well Program

Supporting older people to navigate services and programs to maintain health and wellbeing.

266
People supported



Outdoor Help Garden Program

109% Growth
255 Participants

Intergenerational programs

- Lee's Café intergenerational LGBTQIA+ social event
- Lively In-Home Support Program
- Early Years and School Holiday intergenerational projects

335+
Participants



Social Connection Programs

Seniors Festival events

500+

People attended walks, performances, and social events.



Living and Ageing Well in Merri-bek

What is an age friendly city?

An age friendly city is a place where everyone, as we age, can live, work and enjoy life. This can look different to each individual, and an age-friendly city supports this diversity. It helps people stay active, healthy, and connected as they age. This is done by creating an environment that supports older people's needs and abilities.

What is the Living and Ageing Well Framework?

Merri-bek has a Living and Ageing Well Framework that focuses on three main areas to achieve an age friendly city:

1. **Physical Environment:** Safe and accessible streets, footpaths, buildings, parks and public transport which allows people of all ages, including those with mobility challenges, to get around easily.
2. **Social Environment:** This fosters a community where older people feel included, safe and valued. It offers chances to engage in social, cultural, and community activities. It also fights ageism and elder abuse while tackling other forms of discrimination.
3. **Council Services:** This ensures that services and information are easy for older people to access and understand. It makes sure that services are inclusive for everyone, no matter their age or ability.

What we aim for

- Improve walkability and accessibility
- Ensure older people can use active transport safely
- Housing must meet older people's current and future needs



- Provide information and support to live well in older age (like service navigation)
- Provide information in different formats for all older people (like translations, videos, paper)
- Provide services which cater to the needs of people as we age

- Ensure access to physical activity opportunities
- Provide social, learning, and decision-making opportunities
- Celebrate older people
- Prevent and address discrimination

Summary of Evaluation Findings from Engagement in 2024

We heard from community members, staff & organisations through:

- 31 Engagement activities (pop-ups, interviews, groups, meetings and submissions)
- 389 survey responses (in multiple languages)

Older people in Merri-bek

- In 2021, 13.3% of Merri-bek's population were aged 65 years or older.
- Merri-bek is projected to see a 107% increase in people with dementia by 2054.

What you said

Physical Environment

- **Public accessibility and safety:** poor quality footpaths, and other hazards pose risks. There is a lack of lighting, appropriate seating and toilets in public areas.
- **Transport and parking:** Merri-bek has good public transport coverage, but needs safer, more accessible, and more frequent services, better community transport and improved parking options.
- **Housing and Services:** timely access to in-home care is essential for independent living. Rising cost of living, and a shortage of affordable housing are pressing issues.

Social Environment

- **Social participation and connection:** Merri-bek is a vibrant, welcoming & diverse community but some residents experience isolation. More culturally appropriate programs, community gathering places, & inclusive movement activities are needed.

Council Services

- **Invisibility, stigma and discrimination:** older people's needs are often overlooked, and ageism limits their community participation. Experiences of those who speak a language other than English often differs.

What we will do: Action Plan 2025-2029

Physical Environment

- Apply age friendly design principles to public infrastructure, improve cross-Council coordination.
- Prioritise older people's needs in street and transport planning and advocate to the State Government to improve public transport and housing.
- Deliver falls prevention initiatives.
- Evaluate older people's exercise park.

Social Environment

- Create more opportunities for older people to be active and socially connected.
- Build on successful intergenerational projects.
- Expand volunteering opportunities and succession planning.
- Challenge ageism and promote older people's strengths.
- Deliver activities which support the needs of older people from Council's Human Rights Priority Groups.
- Create opportunities for older people to have a voice in decision making.

Council Services

- Deliver inclusive, age friendly Council services and programs.
- Ensure older people can access the information they need to stay connected.
- Connect people to relevant community and health services.

7.8 FREE THIRD SPACES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Director Community, Eamonn Fennessy

Early Years and Youth

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Increases the programming at the Fawkner Sports Hall for youth from one, to three afternoons per week on a pilot basis, initially for six months with a view to maintaining or increasing the frequency depending on utilisation.
2. Pilot a family engagement program including free access to Council spaces in various locations for three sessions per week, initially for six months, with a focus on play-based learning through a community development approach to foster community connection, increasing parenting skills and confidence.
3. Undertakes a feasibility study and provide a further report to Council by October 2026 regarding needs, opportunities, and resourcing requirements to create and where necessary staff additional free third spaces in priority locations in the longer term.
4. Refers the resourcing requirements of $319,445 for the points 1 - 3 to the 2026-2030 budget process for consideration.
5. Collaborates with the Fawkner's Future group to identify a suitable space for young people, (noting the particular needs of young women) in Fawkner in the short term, while longer term options are identified and assessed.
6. Strengthens engagement with children (aged 8-12) to increase their voice in Council decision making and ensure community spaces meet their needs.
7. Incorporates and strengthens youth consultation into capital works and library redevelopment projects to ensure spaces are designed to meet young people's needs.

REPORT

Executive Summary

This report provides an initial response to a March 2025 Council resolution to pilot new third space initiatives and assess long-term needs. Third spaces for children and teenagers - public spaces outside of home and school - are essential in fostering healthy development. These spaces provide critical benefits for young people's mental health and well-being, contribute to building stronger communities, help alleviate pressures from the cost of living, and reduce risk factors associated with antisocial behaviour and crime. As pressures on young people and families increase, including the cost of living crisis, free third spaces are more important than ever. Access to welcoming and accessible spaces can provide a point of access to support and services for families, particularly those with young children.

The report highlights the growing demand for accessible, free or low-cost spaces, particularly for families with young children, and young people in Merri-bek. Existing facilities such as libraries and Maternal and Child Health Centres along with other Council owned facilities are identified as venues that could be further activated to meet community need.

The report also emphasises the role of third spaces in early intervention and mental health, especially for vulnerable groups. It notes that socially connected families experience better wellbeing outcomes, and that targeted outreach and culturally appropriate programming are essential to ensure equitable access. Indoor third spaces are identified as a priority, complementing the opportunities provided in outdoor spaces through the Merri-bek Open Space Strategy.

There are unmet needs for access to free and accessible third spaces and Council is uniquely positioned to respond by creatively expanding what is available for a range of age groups. Through relatively low cost investment Council can increase the utilisation of existing spaces in the short term, while identifying strategic opportunities to add additional third spaces to planned infrastructure developments, or modifications to existing facilities in the longer term, ensuing the availability of community spaces increases in line with population growth.

Previous Council Decisions

Free Third Spaces For Young People - 12 March 2025

That Council:

1. *Acknowledges the need for accessible and affordable recreational space for young people, particularly during the current cost of living crisis.*
2. *Acknowledges that recreational spaces like Don Bosco youth centre in Brunswick that provide young people with opportunities to access mentoring and other supports help young people to build strong relationships, supports mental health and can prevent isolation.*
3. *Notes the important and impactful work Council is doing to support young people in our community, including: Oxygen Youth Hub in Coburg, library programs, like take over nights at Glenroy and Brunswick Libraries, music and sports programs at Council facilities*
4. *Acknowledges that there may be gaps in geographical access or service availability for low cost meaningful activities for young people across the municipality.*
5. *Receives a report outlining how Council could create free third spaces for young people throughout the municipality. In considering how Council will create more free third spaces for young people, the report should:*
    a) *Begin* with a recommended pilot location, with a view to expansion to multiple sites across the municipality within easy access of all young residents. Consist of a variety of indoor and outdoor spaces, staffed by youth workers where appropriate.
    b) *Create different spaces to cater to the unique needs of different age groups including younger children (0-5), primary aged children, and teenagers. Include the opportunity for young people to use as a 'hang out' space, where young people will be able to attend during operating hours without always needing to book or attend a specific structured program.*
    c) *Recommend a community engagement approach, including consultation with young people and families, to assist in the selection of locations and designs. Draw from and work with neighbouring Councils and local community groups with similar initiatives (e.g., Don Bosco Youth Centre).*
    d) *Consider how these could be delivered in new developments through negotiation with planning officers through the planning application process. Explore funding partnerships with state and federal governments to make these much needed spaces a reality.*
    e) *Consider how existing non council services such as Don Bosco can be better supported by Council to continue and expand their work with young people.*

1. Policy Context

This report aligns with the Children, Young People and Families Plan 2021-2025, which has the vision of a community where children, young people, and families are healthy, resilient, empowered, safe, and belong with specific outcome areas under Inclusive City and Community, and Health and Wellbeing aligned.

It is also in alignment with the following:

- Merri-bek Council Plan (2025 – 2029) theme Healthy and Inclusive Community:
    - 2.2 Create supportive, accessible spaces and programs that promote youth wellbeing and social connection, empowering young people to thrive and feel connected to the community.
    - 2.3 Offer a range of services for all ages and stages to support children and families, encourage participation in programs that strengthen community ties, and highlight the importance of early childhood education and health.
- Merri-bek Community Infrastructure Plan 2022-2032
- Merri-bek Open Space Strategy (2023)
- Victorian Child Safe Standards
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 12, Article 31)
- Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter

2. Background

Council seeks to increase the number of third spaces in the municipality to support the well-being, mental health, community connection, and the positive development of children and young people. Third spaces for children and young people are safe, welcoming environments where they can freely interact, explore interests, build relationships, and engage in informal learning and development outside of structured home or school settings.

Third spaces in the community can take various forms and can be free community spaces or commercial venues and include both indoor and outdoor spaces, active and passive and supervised or unsupervised settings, they promote social connection and strengthen communities.

At the March 2025 meeting Council resolved to increase access to third spaces for young people through the introduction of a pilot program in at least one location and to identify options to create different spaces to cater to the unique needs of different age groups, including younger children (0-5), primary aged children, and teenagers.

This report provides details of how these short term options can be implemented, along with a plan to undertake a comprehensive assessment in the coming months of the need for and options to create additional third spaces in the longer term.

The Merri-bek Community Infrastructure Plan 2022–2032 identified a clear need for more youth spaces, particularly in Fawkner and Brunswick. The need for additional spaces to cater to the needs of families with younger children was also identified - safe, accessible venues for peer support groups and community activities.

While Merri-bek currently provides youth-specific and youth-accessible third spaces including the Oxygen Youth Space and the Glenroy Library Youth Lounge there are opportunities to expand the options available and to increase the activation of existing spaces. The rising cost of living is placing pressure on many families, and some children are currently missing out on opportunities for social and recreational programs due to financial hardship. Through the activation of existing third spaces in the short term and through the creation of additional third spaces in the longer-term Council can continue to provide free or low-cost activities for children and young people and provide opportunities for families to access support.

3. Issues

The need for and benefits of third spaces

There is a growing demand for free welcoming and accessible community spaces for different age groups, including parents. Council aims to enhance community infrastructure, ensuring that all residents, regardless of age or background, have access to safe, inclusive, and purpose-built and/or programmed spaces that meet their needs. There is an opportunity to increase access to third spaces and programs for families with younger children (0-5 years) including informal use of spaces by families. For first time parents having access to a space following the conclusion of the scheduled first-time parent groups provided by the Maternal and Child Health Service would allow families to connect at the same time and day in a familiar environment and has the potential to extend the life and associated peer support these groups provide. Families could then transition into playgroups as established social networks, further strengthening community cohesion and well-being.

In addition to identifying the need for more youth spaces the Merri-bek Community Infrastructure Plan 2022–2032 identified the need for 364 new playgroup places by 2036, reflecting the growing demand for early years services due to anticipated population growth. Space to operate playgroups has been included in the design for the Brunswick Early Years Hub and will also be a feature of the planned Hadfield Early Years Centre, however other options are needed across the municipality.

There is a particular need for increased access to and the creation of additional spaces to meet the needs of young people in Fawkner. Young people in Fawkner have formed a group named “Fawkner’s Future” and have advocated to Council for the creation of a youth space to meet the needs of young people, noting that a lack of public transport in Fawkner creates a barrier for young people to access the Oxygen Youth Space in Coburg. Youth Services staff operate a supervised drop-in program once a week at the Fawkner Community Sports Hall attracting up to 20 - 30 young people at each session. The current uptake is predominantly young men. There are limited opportunities for young women in the area.

Opportunity for increased activation of existing spaces

Council investment in programs that support families, children, and young people can deliver long-term benefits to the community by improving access to services and offering responsive programs that enhance health, wellbeing, and developmental outcomes. Families, including first-time parents and fathers, need more opportunities to connect, share experiences, and access support. While the Maternal and Child Health Service provides valuable support, it has limitations in meeting both individual and community needs. By increasing access to free third spaces, Council can provide the community with activities such as drop-in opportunities for parents and caregivers to access peer support, culturally appropriate programs for diverse communities, and coordinated use of third spaces for both structured and unstructured family events.

Third spaces which have professional staffing or programming can provide a gateway to accessing services, early intervention and support for children at all ages and stages which reduces long-term costs in health, education and the need for intensive support, contributing to the building of resilience in individuals and stronger more cohesive communities.

There is an opportunity to provide additional programs and events for families with children in the early and middle years age groups that are innovative and responsive to community needs. Council libraries provide an ideal venue for such programs. Examples would include parenting information and support, extension of the first time parent group, support for families with twins and triplets and Dads Group activities.

Council has 15 Maternal and Child Health Centres across the municipality. A feature of these centres is the co-location with other services including schools, neighbourhood houses, early learning centres and at Balam Balam Place. Some centres are not utilised at capacity every day or at all on weekends, and there is scope to make them available, with appropriate resourcing, as free third spaces.

While there is a need to ensure access to outdoor spaces that promote play, connection, and wellbeing, outdoor third spaces are addressed through the Merri-bek Open Space Strategy (MOSS) which guides how Council creates and improves outdoor areas involved extensive consultation with children and young people. This Strategy has a number of actions that relate to children and young people and therefore it is proposed that the creation of additional free third indoor spaces is the main focus, as this is where the gaps and opportunities are greatest.

The role of third spaces in prevention and early intervention

There is increasing recognition of the importance of early intervention in mental health, particularly for infants, children, and young people. Free and accessible third spaces help build peer support networks and social capital early in family life. Parents who feel socially supported tend to experience less stress and better wellbeing, which positively affects family relationships and, in turn, benefits children's mental health. Council can support this by providing safe, supervised spaces for children and youth to engage in programs, build relationships, and access services and referrals. Targeted outreach and engagement is essential to ensure equitable access to services and programs for vulnerable groups, including CALD families, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and children with disabilities or experiencing disadvantage. Maximising the benefits that third spaces can provide will require some level of investment, not only in the spaces but also staffing to ensure children, families and young people are engaged through targeted outreach, coordination of programs and events and management of facilities.

There is an opportunity to pilot a play-based family engagement program utilising existing spaces as part of Councils Maternal and Child Health Service. The primary target group for the family engagement program would be those who have recently concluded the new parent group and families referred by MCH. The program would adopt a community development approach, engage families as participants and contributors, fostering community connection, building social capital and strengthen capacity, parenting skills and confidence. This program would play a role in ensuring that families receive timely and accurate information on a range of relevant services.

External funding opportunities

The Council resolution of 12th March 2025 includes reference to exploring opportunities to attract funding from state and federal governments and working with Councils planning Department to identify potential opportunities to have third spaces included in new developments. These possibilities will be further explored as part of the proposed audit and feasibility study to identify needs, opportunities, and resourcing requirements to create and staff free third spaces.

Community impact

Increasing access to free third spaces and the creation of additional third spaces over time will deliver multiple positive impacts for children, young people and families. With appropriate programming, promotion and coordination these spaces can provide a safe welcoming space for connection, peer support and access to services and support when needed.

Legal and risk considerations

There are no legal or risk issues arising from the recommendations of this report.

Human Rights Consideration

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

4. Community consultation and engagement

Insights gathered from the community and stakeholder engagement process that is currently occurring to inform the development of Council's next 4 year Children Young People and Families Strategy have informed the development of this report.

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

Implementing an increase in programming for young people at Fawkner from one afternoon per week to three over a six-month period requires increased staffing and some associated programming/equipment costs totalling approximately $135,000.

The timing of implementation of this option, if supported would be subject to consideration and funding being made available in the upcoming budget (2026-2030) process.

The costings are based on:

- Staffing: 2 x Band 4 staff at 0.6 FTE each: Total cost $121,000 per annum
- Program and equipment costs: $14,000 annually

Total cost approximately $135,000 per annum (or fixed cost during trial phase).

Implementing a family engagement program for young children and their families three days per week across the municipality would require increased staffing and associated program and equipment costs, totalling approximately $144,445 per annum. The timing of this option, if supported would be subject to consideration as part of upcoming budget (2026-2030) process.

The costings are based on:

- Staffing: 2 x Band 5 at 0.6 FTE each: $130,445
- Program and equipment costs: $14,000 annually

Total cost approximately $144,445 per annum (or fixed cost during trial phase).

To complete a detailed feasibility study will cost approximately **$40,000** and if supported, will be subject to consideration and funding being made available in the upcoming budget (2026-2030) process.

Undertaking the municipal wide audit of Council facilities that have the potential to meet the need for increased third spaces can be undertaken within existing resources.

7. Implementation

It is anticipated that increased programming for young people at Fawkner Sports Hall and family engagement program will occur from in second half of 2026, dependent on budget considerations.

Council officers can immediately commence working with the Fawkner’s Future group of young people to identify options for a suitable youth space in Fawkner.

Undertaking an audit of existing Council owned spaces and assessing their suitability to operate as free third spaces as discussed in this report will take a number of months and will form the basis of a further report to Council later in 2026.

Attachment/s

There are no attachments for this report.

7.9 ROAD SAFETY FORUM - POST-EVENT FINDINGS

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade

City Design and Economy

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Thanks participants who attended the Road Safety Forum event held at the Coburg Civic Centre on 13 September 2025.
2. Acknowledges that feedback from the Road Safety Forum event outlined in this report will help to inform the proposed Road Safety Plan and Transport Advocacy Strategy scheduled to be developed in 2026.
3. Notes that themes shared in the Road Safety Forum event have been incorporated into the draft Moving Around Merri-bek Action plan which is presented to Council to endorse for public consultation at the October meeting.

REPORT

Executive summary

On 13 September 2025, Council hosted a Road Safety Forum at the Coburg Civic Centre to facilitate a community discussion about road safety issues within the municipality. Over 40 local residents, five Councillors, and two local MPs participated in discussions about road safety issues, proposed solutions, and prioritised recommended measures.

Road Safety is one of Council's key values and objectives, detailed in the Moving Around Merri-bek Strategy (2024). Council is responsible for local roads and advocates for outcomes on State roads. A key objective of the September forum was to identify key problems, solutions and priorities that could help the community, council and its stakeholders to build on existing efforts to urgently address road safety in Merri-bek.

During the forum, seven key road safety issue themes were identified and discussed by community members. These themes were:

- Speeding
- School safety
- People's behaviour on roads
- People riding
- People walking
- Busy arterial roads
- Public transport

A range of treatment options were proposed and prioritised. Three key treatment options that were raised consistently are:

- Lower speed limits
- Safe street design for everyone
- Enforcement of road rules

This feedback will be incorporated in the proposed Road Safety Plan and Transport Advocacy Strategy that Council will be preparing in 2026.

Previous Council decisions

Notice of Motion - Community Safety Forum for Road Safety – *11 June 2025*

That Council:

1. *Requests Officers to host a community forum at Coburg Town Hall to discuss Road Safety matters in Merri-bek, including; Recent trends in road safety incidents throughout Merri-bek. Council efforts to address road safety, including current road safety projects and advocacy.*
2. *Requests Officers to invite relevant stakeholders such as community advocacy groups the Department of Transport and Planning, Victoria Police, the Transport Accident Commission and RACV to attend the forum.*

1. Policy context

Moving Around Merri-bek Strategy (2024)

The Moving Around Merri-bek Strategy was adopted in March 2024. The Strategy seeks to ensure all actions impacting Council's transport network contribute to the values of Safe, Accessible, Sustainable, Healthy, Liveable, and Inclusive. The Community Road Safety Forum was aligned with the goals of Moving Around Merri-bek (2024) including:

- Create streets where everyone feels safe.
- Reduce the frequency and severity of crashes on our roads.
- Create a transport system in Merri-bek that allows everyone to meet their daily needs and to fully participate in our community.
- Create streets and public spaces that encourage physical activity and socialisation amongst local communities.
- Improve access to shops, services and employment for our local community.
- Work to make our streets and public spaces are safe for all people and inclusive of all genders, backgrounds, and abilities.

Council Plan 2025-2029

The Council Plan 2025–2029 sets out Council's strategic direction for delivering on the Community Vision: "*Merri-bek leads, and leaves no one behind"*. Under the Beautiful and Liveable City theme, Council aspires to streets and public spaces are safe, pleasant, and easy to use so everyone can enjoy and be proud of where they live.

Key actions that align with this report include:

- Keeping public places and streets well-maintained, safe, and inviting for community use.
- Fixing and improving streets and footpaths to make them more friendly for walking and riding.
- Encouraging walking, cycling, and scooting – especially for getting to school.
- Making it easier and safer to use public transport to move around.

The Moving Around Merri-bek Action Plan frames how Council will deliver on these outcomes and ensure that transport investments reflect the priorities of the Merri-bek community.

2. Background

Many people across Merri-bek are actively advocating for better road safety for a wide variety of reasons. The community rightly expects a careful and thorough approach to tackling road safety issues. The urgency of these concerns has been heightened following four recent fatalities involving pedestrians and cyclists in the local area.

Road Safety is one of Council's key values and objectives detailed in the Moving Around Merri-bek Strategy (2024). Since the adoption of this strategy council has advocated proactively to address road safety issues in Merri-bek and been successful in acquiring funding and delivering a range of road safety initiatives. Recent Council road safety programs and project initiatives include:

- Completing the municipal wide roll out of 40kph speed limits on local roads across Merri-bek.
- Endorsing the trial of a 30km/h speed limit on local streets in Coburg, Brunswick and Brunswick East. The trial is proposed for 12 months, during which community feedback will be collected, followed by a comprehensive assessment of its effectiveness.
- A variety of projects aimed at enhancing access for people walking and riding, including the delivery of $7.2 million in capital works this financial year
- Acquiring $2 million in funding through the Safe Local Roads and Streets Program for capital projects to address transport infrastructure gaps.
- A variety of infrastructure improvements to address pedestrian and bicycle safety.

Council officers have developed an in-depth understanding of community road safety priorities through ongoing resident enquiries, policy development, and regular community consultation processes. Key themes consistently emerging from community feedback include requests for reduced speed limits, enhanced active transport crossing facilities, implementation of traffic calming infrastructure, and broader improvements to street safety.

The Road Safety Forum was designed to build on feedback council has received in recent years and create an opportunity for Council officers, community members and elected officials to discuss the road safety issues that matter most. The specific aims of the Road Safety Forum were to:

- Respond to recent tragic road deaths in Merri-bek.
- Listen to our community and learn from them.
- Turn ideas shared into near-term actions.
- Explore other avenues of community advocacy for a safe Merri-bek.

The forum was attended by 43 community members, five Councillors (Mayor Helen Davidson and Councillors Liz Irvin, Ella Svensson, Nat Abboud and Sue Bolton) and a number of staff. State Members of Parliament Anthony Cianflone MP and Tim Reid MP also attended the forum.

The forum was facilitated by an independent consultant, Hafez Alavi, who facilitated discussion about the problem, solution and priorities.

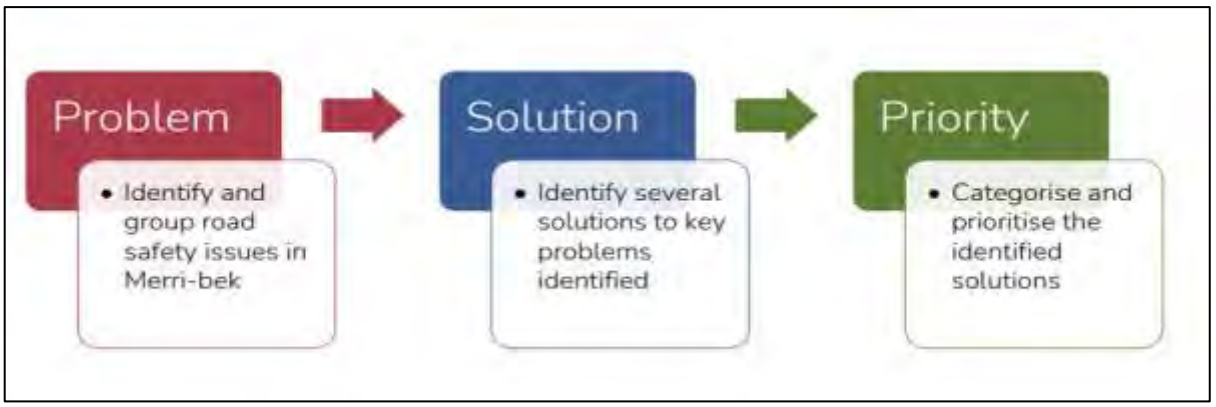


Figure 1: Road Safety Forum Activities

3. Issues

In this section of the report, detail is provided of the key issues, solutions and priorities developed by forum participants.

Key issues



Figure 2: Photo of Road Safety Forum attendees sharing their key problems on sticky notes

Road safety issues were identified by participants and grouped into seven themes. A summary of the key points raised for each of the seven themes are summarised below.

Speeding

- Inconsistent speed limits
- Speed limits are too high
- Drivers do not comply to speed limits
- Lack of effective traffic calming

School Safety

- Lack of safe crossing near schools
- Unsafe driver behaviour
- Vehicle speeding issues

People's behaviour on roads

- Distracted drivers (phone use)
- Rat running / hoon driving / road rage
- Drivers failing to follow road rules
- Conflicts between people riding and driving on the road
- Lack of compassion to other road users

People riding

- Fear of sharing road with vehicles
- Conflicts on shared paths
- Lack of separated bike paths and missing links
- Speed of ebikes and escooter
- Construction and car parking blocking bike lanes

People walking

- Construction blocking footpaths
- Not enough pedestrian crossings
- Fear of walking in the evening
- Conflict with turning vehicles at pedestrian crossings
- Too much road space allocated to vehicles

Busy arterial roads

- Inconsistent speed limits
- Not enough pedestrian crossings
- Speeding issues
- Safety for people riding
- Paths are too narrow

Public transport

- Upfield line is infrequent and unreliable
- Cost of public transport
- Lack of accessible tram stops on Sydney Road
- Safety getting on and off trams
- Lack of bus shelters

Key solutions

The forum also considered possible solutions to the key issues identified. The second workshop exercise asked the group to identify solutions for each theme, and a prioritisation process identified three top solutions for each theme.



Figure 3: Discussion on suggested treatments to identified problems

The suggested outcomes are presented below.

Speeding

- Design for lower speed (14 votes)
- Consistent lower speed limits (one vote)
- Enforcement and lights (two votes)

School safety

- Special consideration for traffic around education centres (six votes)
- Enforcing rules (fines, cameras, shaming etc) (two votes)
- Slower speeds city wide (no votes)

People's behaviour on roads

- Incentivise reduced car trips by encouraging local work opportunities, free and more frequent public transport and good design that leads to behaviour change (11 votes)
- More / easier reporting of near misses and minor crashes with the penalty of driver education (six votes)
- More / frequent education for all road users – Starting but not limited to the younger users (one vote)

People riding

- Community engagement through education for potential cyclists. Support group maps and input to identify problem routes (three votes)
- Road infrastructure for safe cycling (and other users). Protected, wide and connected cycle network with bike parking (one vote)
- Rules for toad use that reduce space for cars to allow more space for bike and pedestrian paths (multispeed) to include one-way streets for cars but bi-directional for bikes, roads for resident only vehicle access, 30km/h speed limits and enforce ebike rules (six votes)

People walking

- Timely enforcement for parking across footpaths – Request to set SLA or KPIs (nine votes)
- Street design and infrastructure – narrow footpaths and modal filters (six votes)
- Advocacy for pedestrian priority to include early start, signalised crossings and compliance cameras (13 votes)

Busy arterial roads

- Lower and consistent speed limits (six votes)
- Protected bike lanes (17 votes)
- Signalised pedestrian crossings (five votes)

Public transport

- Accessible tram stops in activity centres (nine votes)
- Better crossing points at tram and bus stops (no votes)
- Better parking management and enforcement plus more clearways (one vote)

<u>Overall reflections and priorities</u>

Many attendees observed that many of the suggested solutions addressed multiple road safety problems, demonstrating how interconnected thoughtful street design and management should be. Examples include:

- Lower speed limits
- Safe street design for everyone

- Enforcement of road rules

Council officers have documented the community key issues, solutions and priorities and will consider these as part of the development of the development of a Road Safety Plan and Transport Advocacy Strategy.

Human Rights consideration

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

4. Community consultation and engagement

The community Road Safety Forum was held between 9:30am and12:30pm on 13 September 2025 at the Coburg Civic Centre. The event was advertised on the Council website, Conversations Merri-bek website, and Facebook and Instagram. It featured in the fortnightly My Merri-bek e-newsletter, and emails were sent to all individuals who had taken part in our Moving Around Merri-bek Transport Strategy and Streets for People Plan community engagements. In addition, key stakeholders such as local MPs, community advocacy groups, the Department of Transport and Planning, Victoria Police, and the Transport Accident Commission were all invited to attend the forum.

Affected persons rights and interests

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

5. Officer declaration of Conflict of Interest

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

6. Financial and resources implications

The funds required to facilitate the Road Safety Forum were absorbed in the Transport Planning operating budget and there is no forecast cost associated with this recommendation.

7. Implementation

The feedback gathered from the Road Safety Forum will be included as part of the formation of the following key pieces of work in 2026:

- Development of a Road Safety Plan
- Transport Advocacy Strategy
- Inform Broader Council work

Themes shared in the Road Safety Forum event have been incorporated into the draft Moving Around Merri-bek Action plan for public consultation

Attachment/s

There are no attachments for this report.

7.10 SUBMISSION TO ACTIVITY CENTRES PROGRAM, PHASE 2 ENGAGEMENT

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade

City Design and Economy

Officer recommendation

That Council:

1. Endorses the draft Activity Centres Program – Phase 2 Merri-bek Submission Part A at Attachment 1 (Part A1: Position Paper) and Attachment 2 (Part A2: Technical Paper), as Council's formal submission to the State Government in relation to publicly released material.
2. Authorises the Director Place and Environment to prepare Activity Centres Program – Phase 2 Submission Part B, in relation to any additional material supplied by the State Government to Council officers. This submission will align with Council's adopted positions on building heights and core and catchment boundaries, incorporate community feedback from the Phase 1 engagement, and address key issues that arise in Council's planning permit decisions, to advocate for the best outcomes for our community.

REPORT

Executive summary

This report is one of two reports tabled at the October Council meeting, relating to State government planning reforms. This report relates to strategic planning reforms to Activity Centres; the second report relates to a statutory planning reform that will apply to mid-rise developments of up to six storeys.

To meet the needs of Merri-bek's growing population, additional housing will be required in well-serviced areas across the municipality. The State Government's Activity Centres Program (Program) seeks to support this by facilitating housing growth in the Brunswick and Coburg Train and Tram Activity Centres (Activity Centres). As a key stakeholder, Council has an important advocacy role to ensure the Program delivers not only housing, but also affordable, sustainable, and well-planned outcomes for the Merri-bek community.

The Program involves two phases of community engagement. In June 2025, Council endorsed a Phase 1 submission following the first phase of engagement. It sets out Merri-bek's strategic priorities to ensure housing growth is carefully planned and designed to deliver affordable, sustainable, and diverse high-quality housing, supported by essential infrastructure, transport, jobs and open space. These priorities remain relevant.

Phase 2 engagement is now underway. The State Government is seeking feedback on draft maps showing proposed building heights and activity centre boundaries across the approximately five-kilometre corridor from Brunswick to Coburg. These maps define the commercial "core" along Sydney Road and the surrounding residential "inner" and "outer" catchment areas. No other important supporting technical information or draft planning provisions have been released at the time of writing this report, although further technical information may be made available in the coming days. Community feedback is due by Sunday 19 October 2025, with Council feedback due by Friday 24 October 2025.

Once finalised, these maps will inform the preparation of Activity Centre Plan(s), the application of a Built Form Overlay (BFO) to the core, and the rezoning of surrounding residential land to the Housing Choice and Transport Zone (HCTZ), across the inner and outer catchments (HCTZ1 and HCTZ2, respectively). This stage of the Program is expected to conclude in early 2026, with a planning scheme amendment scheduled for approval by March/April 2026.

This Council report:

- Outlines feedback from Phase 1 community engagement.
- Summarises what is proposed in the publicly released Phase 2 engagement materials (Attachment 3).
- Recommends a Council advocacy position and submission on the Program and Phase 2 engagement materials (Attachments 1 and 2).
- Advocates for the public release of supporting technical information, and draft planning provisions, and recommends authorising officers to prepare a supplementary submission on any additional material provided to Council by the State Government.

This report seeks Council's endorsement of the draft Part A submission and authorisation for the Director Place and Environment to prepare a supplementary Part B submission should further technical material is released.

Previous Council Decisions

Activity Centres Program Merri-Bek Cluster - Phase 1 Engagement – 11 June 2025

That Council:

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

1. Policy Context

Community Vision and Council Plan

Merri-bek 2025-29 Community Vision

The long-term Community Vision is that *Merri-bek leads and leaves no one behind.*

The key priority areas for the Merri-bek Community Vision 2025-2035 are:

- We are a welcoming, safe and thriving community.
- We are sustainable and our environment is respected.
- Our community is engaged and informed.
- Our streets are full of life.
- One community, proudly diverse.

Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-29

The new *Merri-bek Council Plan 2025–2029* sets Council's priorities for the next four years, guided by the Community Vision 2025–2035 and consistent with the *Local Government Act 2020*.

The Plan is structured around five themes:

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

- Engaging and responsible council.

Under these themes, five strategic objectives will guide delivery: climate resilience, inclusive services, liveable places, a thriving economy and culture, and responsive, accountable governance.

Planning Framework

State Planning Strategies

Plan for Victoria

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

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

Merri-bek Planning Scheme

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

- 53% of future growth is expected in the Brunswick–Brunswick East–Coburg corridor.
- With no greenfield land and limited brownfield opportunities, growth must be managed through urban densification near public transport, shops, and services.
- Brunswick and Coburg Major Activity Centres are prioritised for intensification, with Brunswick forecast to absorb the greatest share of new dwellings.
- Growth is managed in line with the 20-minute neighbourhood principle, enabling residents to access daily needs within a short walk, ride, or public transport trip. This supports:
    - Sustainable and climate-resilient neighbourhoods.
    - A healthy and active community.
    - Stronger social connection.
    - A thriving local economy.

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

Current amendments to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme

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

- A strengthened Environmentally Sustainable Development policy to raise sustainability standards for new buildings and support a transition to net zero carbon development. Council resolved to seek authorisation for *Amendment C223mbek* in May 2022.

- The introduction of the Activity Centre Zone in the Brunswick Activity Centre to guide land use, encourage business investment and job creation, and support the ongoing vibrancy of the area. Council resolved to seek authorisation for *Amendment C230mbek* in May 2024.
- A new 15-year Development Contributions Plan to help fund essential infrastructure. Council resolved to seek authorisation for *Amendment C236mbek* in May 2025.
- New flood controls for properties at risk of flooding from local stormwater drains. Council adopted *Amendment C196mbek* in August 2025.

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

In addition, Council is progressing an increased public open space contribution rate to ensure new open space is provided in response to growing demand. *Amendment C235mbek* is currently on public exhibition, with submissions due by 13 October 2025.

Related strategic studies:

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

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

2. Background

State Government Activity Centres Program

The State Government's Activity Centres Program (Program) aims to deliver over 300,000 new homes by 2051 across 60 designated centres in Melbourne. The Program focuses on increasing housing in well-serviced locations with strong access to public transport, jobs, and services.

Each activity centre in the Program consists of two key components:

- **Commercial core**: the central activity area, including commercial centres, generally intended for larger apartment buildings.
- **Residential inner and outer catchment**: the surrounding residential areas, generally intended for townhouses and smaller apartment buildings.

To support implementation, two new planning tools have been introduced into the Victoria Planning Provisions (refer to **Image 1**):

- **Built Form Overlay (BFO):** applies to the core. It establishes preferred building heights and design requirements based on State Government typologies set out in *City of Centres* and introduces a streamlined process to accelerate housing delivery. The BFO applies in addition to the underlying zone.
- **Housing Choice and Transport Zone (HCTZ):** applies to residential land in the catchment, replacing existing residential zones. Building heights range from 3–6 storeys.

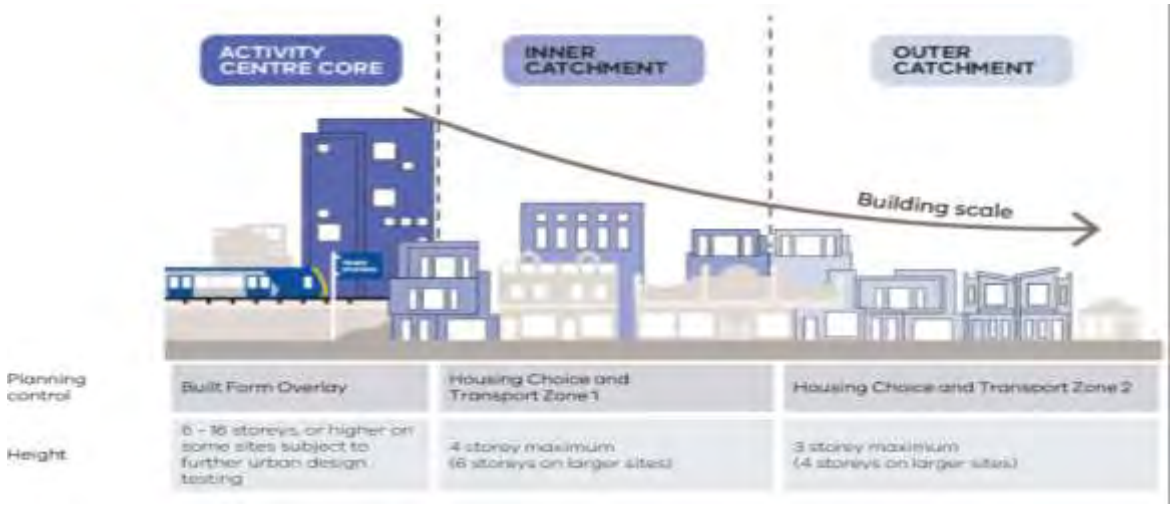


Image 1. Height transitions in scale from mid-rise in the core to the lower-rise outer catchment.

Source: Department of Transport and Planning.

Infrastructure Contribution Plans for the Activity Centres

A subsequent stage of the Program proposes introducing standardised Infrastructure Contribution Plans to help fund essential local and state infrastructure such as community facilities, schools, and cycling links as Activity Centres grow. Since November 2024, an industry working group has been testing models to better align infrastructure provision with housing growth.

Piloting of the simplified contributions system for new development in Activity Centres and their catchments is scheduled to begin in January 2027. However, the timeframe for implementing Infrastructure Contribution Plans in the Brunswick and Coburg Train and Tram Activity Centres remains uncertain. As of preparing this report, the working group has not released its findings or recommendations, and no implementation timeline has been confirmed.

Brunswick and Coburg Train and Tram Activity Centres

On 27 February 2025, the Premier announced the expansion of the Activity Centres Program to 60 centres, including Brunswick and Coburg Train and Tram Activity Centres (Activity Centres).

Covering the five-kilometre Sydney Road commercial core, the Activity Centres are anchored by Brunswick and Coburg stations and currently span six train stations (to be consolidated to five by 2030). They also encompass key open spaces and the Coburg Civic Centre and are supported by tram route 19 and an integrated transport network. The catchment extends east and west into surrounding fine-grain residential areas.

Existing planning framework

The Activity Centres are covered by a mix of zones and height controls that guide how the areas can develop.

Brunswick and Coburg Train and Tram Activity Centres

- **Commercial core**
    - Brunswick: Sydney Road is primarily Commercial 1 Zone (C1Z), supporting retail and offices with housing above. Adjoining land includes Residential Growth Zone (RGZ), Mixed Use Zone (MUZ), Industrial Zone (IN1Z and IN3Z), Public Park and Recreation Zone (PPRZ) and Public Use Zone (PUZ). A Design and Development Overlay (2016) allows 5–6 storeys along Sydney Road and 7–8 storeys between Sydney Road and the rail line (Victoria Street–Brunswick Road).

- Coburg: Sydney Road is primarily Activity Centre Zone (ACZ), with adjoining MUZ, PPRZ and PUZ. The ACZ (2015) allows 6–12 storeys in the commercial core.

- **Residential catchment**
  - Brunswick: Surrounding areas are mostly Neighbourhood Residential Zone (NRZ), limited to two storeys.
  - Coburg: Surrounding areas are a mix of General Residential Zone (GRZ) and NRZ, permitting two and three storeys.

Phase 1 community engagement

Phase 1 ran from 6 May to 15 June 2025, seeking high-level feedback with limited information available.

Council adopted and lodged its Phase 1 submission in June 2025. This submission was supportive of the State Government's objective to focus housing growth in well-serviced areas such as the Merri-bek Cluster. However, this growth must be balanced with the delivery of affordable, sustainable, and diverse high-quality housing, supported by essential infrastructure, services, transport, jobs, and open space. These priorities remain relevant.

Feedback from Council and the community in the Phase 1 engagement

The Engage Victoria Activity Centres Program – Phase 2 website includes Phase 1 Consultation Summary Report and Statements of Advice from Community Reference Groups. In summary, the community identified the following top five matters to consider with increased density:

1. Protecting parks and open space.
2. Walking and bike riding connections.
3. Building considerations, such as overshadowing, wind protections and sun access.
4. Increased tree planting.
5. Public transport infrastructure.

A summary of community feedback from the Consultation Summary Report and Statements of Advice from Community Reference Groups is at **Attachment 5**. Council has not received a specific response to the matters raised in its Phase 1 submission.

The feedback demonstrates that the Brunswick and Coburg communities understand the need for, and broadly support, housing growth. However, the community also expects growth to deliver high-quality, sustainable, diverse, and affordable housing, protect and enhance the public realm and open spaces, and be accompanied by investment in infrastructure, particularly public and active transport and parks. The feedback from the Merri-bek community closely aligns with the matters raised in Council's Phase 1 submission.

Phase 2 community engagement

Public engagement commenced on Wednesday 10 September 2025 and will close for the community on 19 October 2025, with Council submissions due by 24 October 2025.

Phase 2 public engagement material

In this phase, the State Government has released only a limited set of maps for consultation, showing:

1. The existing conditions of the area, including places identified by the community as important, capturing feedback from the Phase 1 engagement.

2. Proposed building heights and the boundaries of the activity centre core and surrounding residential catchment.

These maps are provided at **Attachment 3**. The State Government is primarily seeking feedback from the community and councils on proposed building heights and activity centre boundaries. Once finalised, the maps will inform new planning provisions in the Merri-bek Planning Scheme, replacing Council's existing controls.

No additional supporting information has been made available to the public at this stage.

What is proposed as part of Phase 2 community engagement?

Refer to **Attachment 3**.

Proposed building heights and boundary of the 'core'

For each activity centre, a draft map shows proposed building heights within the core. Heights of 8, 12 and 16 storeys are identified. Some sites are marked as 'Strategic sites' with no height specified. The proposed core boundaries broadly follow Sydney Road and the Upfield line, encompassing key commercial and mixed-use areas.

Proposed building heights and boundary of the 'catchment'

In the surrounding residential catchment, the State Government proposes building heights of up to six storeys on larger inner-catchment sites (lots over 1,000m² with a 20-metre frontage), reducing to four storeys elsewhere. In the outer catchment, heights would be limited to four storeys on larger sites and three storeys on smaller lots. The draft maps show catchment boundaries extending east and west of Sydney Road, covering established residential areas beyond the commercial core.

3. Issues

As a key stakeholder, Merri-bek City Council plays an important role in bringing local knowledge and community perspectives to the State Government's Program, advocating for integrated, place-based outcomes that reflect strategic priorities and community aspirations.

Merri-bek's population has grown significantly, from 167,870 in 2015 to 191,747 in 2025, and is projected to increase by around 40,000 people (21%) by 2040. To accommodate this growth, Council supports housing development in well serviced areas like Brunswick and Coburg. However, this growth must be carefully planned, transparent, and supported by evidence, infrastructure, and jobs.

Recommended Council advocacy position

Council officers propose the following Phase 2 advocacy position, which is structured around four key pillars:

1. **Supporting growth through better infrastructure and services.**
2. **A fair and transparent process for our community.**
3. **Ensuring economic success and job growth**
4. **Getting heights and boundaries right.**

These pillars underpin the officers' response to the Phase 2 consultation material and submission**.**

Recommended Council Phase 2 submission

The draft Phase 2 Part A submission comprises:

- **Part A1:** a high-level position paper with the four advocacy pillars and summary response to the Program and Phase 2 engagement material **(Attachment 1)**.
- **Part A2:** a detailed technical submission, drawing on local knowledge, typologies, and preferred future character **(Attachment 2)**.

If endorsed by Council, this submission will be shared with both the State Government and the Merri-bek community. The content is outlined below.

Recommended Activity Centre heights and boundaries

Refer to **Attachments 1, 2 and 4.**

In this phase of community engagement, the State Government is primarily seeking community and council feedback on building heights and activity centre boundaries. No other important supporting technical information or draft planning provisions have been publicly released at the time of writing this report.

Officers recognise these as the State Government's key issues. Despite the limited information released, officers sought to respond constructively by applying local knowledge, drawing on the typologies in the *City of Centres* document, and considering preferred future character to take a balanced approach.

Proposed building heights and boundaries of the 'core'

Building heights

Council officers generally support the overall level of growth but recommend moderation in some areas. Certain residential pockets in the proposed core are better suited to catchment-scale typologies with lower heights; if retained in the core, they should match outer catchment controls. Officers also propose moderated heights elsewhere to reflect realistic development potential when urban design principles are applied. To balance these changes, the draft submission identifies alternative sites with greater capacity for taller buildings.

For 'strategic sites' where the State Government has not nominated heights, the draft Part A submission provides recommended height limits to ensure clarity and certainty for Council and the community.

Officers have undertaken a capacity assessment of the Activity Centres core, comparing existing heights, the State Government's Phase 2 proposal, and Council's preferred heights. The results show that Council's option delivers only a 5% reduction in overall capacity compared with the Department of Transport and Planning's (DTP) proposal, while achieving a more balanced distribution of growth between Coburg (45%) and Brunswick (55%), compared with DTP's 39% and 61%. It is considered that the Core, together with the catchment areas, will comfortably meet Merri-bek's 2051 Housing Target of 69,000 dwellings.

Boundaries

The proposed core boundaries broadly align with Council's previous work for the Sydney Road corridor in Brunswick and Coburg, with variations highlighted in the draft Part A submission. Additional strategic sites have been identified for inclusion, while other areas, such as land adjoining Brunswick parklands and the heritage-listed Hoffman Brickworks, are recommended for exclusion due to existing approvals, physical separation, or heritage significance.

Proposed building heights and boundaries of the 'catchment'

Building heights

No changes are proposed to building heights in the catchment, as these are already set in the Housing Choice and Transport Zone (HCTZ) and are not open for consultation.

Boundaries

Council officers generally support the extent of the catchment but recommend that areas within Heritage Overlay precincts and where there is a high fragmentation / small lots or frontage, be included in the outer catchment, consistent with the Activity Centres Program Pilot.

Summary

To the greatest extent possible, the draft Part A submission has sought to accept the State Government's proposed heights and boundaries, while seeking to collaborate on the detailed planning scheme requirements to ensure new development delivers high quality outcomes for the Merri-bek community.

Recommended approach to unreleased technical material and draft planning Provisions

As noted above, the State Government has only publicly released existing conditions maps and building height/boundary maps. This makes it difficult for officers to understand the reasoning behind the proposals or provide meaningful comment, as achievable building heights depend on other factors such as setbacks, overshadowing, and design requirements that have not been made available.

In its Phase 1 submission, Council emphasised the need for all technical information and draft planning provisions to be released to ensure transparency and context. This is critical to help the community understand the strategic justification for State Government decision-making. Council also called for meaningful engagement, including adequate time for review, further consultation opportunities, and a clear demonstration of how community and Council feedback is considered.

The draft Phase 2 Part A submission (**Attachments 1** and **2**) continues to advocate for these principles, strongly urging the State Government to release all technical information and draft planning provisions for community consultation. The missing information is discussed below.

Supporting strategic justification and evidence-based decision-making

Council officers understand that DTP has prepared further technical material to inform planning controls and Activity Centre Plans. This includes a Vision, typologies, a draft Movement and Place Framework, Public Realm Plan, Transport Plan, Urban Design Background Report, and Activity Centre Plan(s). These documents are understood to address matters such as setbacks, deep soil, active frontages and transport, and decision guidelines, but have not been publicly released.

Draft Built Form Overlay (BFO) schedules

The State Government has also not released the draft BFO schedule(s) or associated approaches to overlays and local policy. In addition to building heights, the BFO may include requirements for building typology and future character, overshadowing of open space and pedestrian streets, landscaped setbacks, active frontages, pedestrian connections, weather protection, vehicle access, waste and loading areas, and signage. These detailed schedules would specify metrics and their application.

As they are not available, neither officers nor the community can provide meaningful feedback at this stage.

Foundation plans

In the early stages of the Program, DTP prepared 'foundation plans' identifying contextual and valued attributes of each centre, along with place-specific opportunities and constraints. Officers provided feedback on these internally, but the plans have not been publicly released. Instead, only a simplified 'existing conditions' map has been issued for Phase 2 engagement. As a result, Council officers are concerned that places not explicitly identified by the community may be undervalued in drafting the BFO schedules.

Housing capacity targets

The State Government has not released housing capacity targets for the Activity Centres as part of Phase 2. Without this information, it is unclear how many dwellings are expected in the core and catchment areas or whether the proposed planning framework can realistically deliver them.

Council has consistently called for the release of Housing Capacity Assessment Platform (HCAP) modelling to test the achievability of proposed heights and catchments. Until this information is provided, Council and the community cannot give fully informed feedback.

Next steps - Part B Submission

This report also seeks authorisation for the Director of Place and Environment to prepare a supplementary Part B submission on the unreleased material, once supplied by DTP, to ensure alignment with Council's adopted positions on building heights, boundaries, and other key planning issues.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

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

The new *Ministerial Direction 22 – Climate Change Consideration* (MD22), gazetted on 11 September 2025, outlines what planning authorities must consider meeting their legal duty under the Planning and Environment Act to address climate change when preparing or amending planning schemes. The Program is a large precinct-scale transformational program that will have considerable implications for areas of Merri-bek already experiencing climate impacts exacerbated by urban renewal and consolidation.

The submission at **Attachment 2** requests that a Climate Change Assessment be prepared in line with MD22 and supporting guidelines to identify local built form standards and supporting policy for the BFO to help mitigate climate impacts.

Economic sustainability implications

Council's Phase 1 submission to the Program outlined Merri-bek's efforts to ensure that the Program supports job growth.

Human Rights Consideration

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

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

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

The second phase of community consultation is occurring in September/October 2025. During this second phase, the State Government has shared its draft maps for the Merri-bek Cluster which include key components of the state government's draft plans for these Activity Centres. Activities being undertaken by the State Government include community drop-in sessions, walk-by activations, online Q&A session and an online survey.

The draft Part A submission at **Attachments 1** and **2**, advocates for the release of all technical information to our community to support transparency, context, and informed participation, and further engagement on the draft Activity Centre Plans and Built Form Overlay schedules.

Affected persons rights and interests

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

Communications

The State Government is leading communication with the community about this State Government led program. Information about this state-led consultation has been included on Council's website, encouraging Merri-bek residents and businesses to participate.

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

Phase 2 Part A submission - Once endorsed by Council, the Phase 2 Part A submission at **Attachments 1 and 2** will be submitted to the Victorian Government by the Director Place and Environment on Council's behalf. This submission focuses on building heights and centre boundaries and publicly released information.

Phase 2 Part B submission - Once further technical information is received, the Director Place and Environment will prepare a supplementary submission in relation to draft Activity Centre Plans and draft Built Form Overlay (BFO) Schedules. This submission will be aligned with Council's adopted position on building heights and core and catchment boundaries, community feedback from the Phase 1 engagement for this Program and key issues that arise in Council's planning permit decisions, advocating for the best outcomes for our community. This submission will focus on matters other than building heights and boundaries and be based on material which has not yet been publicly released.

Attachment/s

1⇩	Activity Centres Program Phase 2 Merri-bek Submission Part A1: Position Paper	D25/492538
2⇩	Activity Centres Program Phase 2 Merri-bek Submission Part A2: Technical Paper	D25/467811
3⇩	Activity Centres Program Phase 2 Department of Transport and Planning Engagement Maps	D25/476944
4⇩	Activity Centres Program Phase 2 Engagement Council Position Maps	D25/490021
5⇩	Activity Centres Program Merri-bek Cluster Phase 1 community feedback summary	D25/488616

Activity Centres Program Phase 2: Position paper

October 2025

Merri-bek City Council

Council's position

Merri-bek City Council acknowledges the need for more housing in well-serviced activity centres such as the Brunswick and Coburg Train and Tram Activity Centres (Activity Centres). As a key stakeholder, we welcome the State Government's ambition to meet our current and future communities' needs and the opportunity to provide further input into this phase of engagement on the Activity Centre Program (Program). However, we are concerned that the government's sole focus on housing without considering jobs, infrastructure, transport and open space puts the future liveability of these Activity Centres at risk.

Supporting growth through better infrastructure and services

The State Government must balance the need for more housing with delivery of affordable, sustainable, and diverse high-quality housing supported by essential infrastructure, transport, and open space. This remains central to our advocacy. We call on the state government to provide firm commitments to the infrastructure required to support population growth in the Activity Centres.

What we're asking for:



- **Prioritise upgrading the Upfield train line** – the poorest-performing train line in Melbourne, and critical to future growth. This is a community priority.
- **Revitalise the bus network and upgrade tram stops**, including meeting accessibility standards.
- **Deliver upgrades** to schools, including Coburg High School and John Fawkner College, to the regional drainage network and health services.
- **Ensure build-to-rent housing developments contribute fairly to the provision of new open space.**
- **Make timely decisions on current Merri-bek Planning Scheme amendments** which seek to secure essential open space and infrastructure funding and identify properties at risk of flooding from local stormwater drains.

A fair and transparent process for our community

The Program will drive significant housing growth and change. For this to succeed, it must be underpinned by transparent, inclusive engagement that values local knowledge. These are the same principles Council applies when amending its planning scheme. To date, in both Phase 1 and Phase 2, very limited information has been made public, limiting the scope for community feedback, leaving it unclear how Phase 1 feedback has been considered, what has informed decisions, and reducing opportunities for meaningful community participation.

What we're asking for:



- **Public release of all technical information and draft planning controls** for the Activity Centres, with adequate timeframes for community review. This should include basic strategic planning evidence such as the *Movement and Place Framework, Public Realm Plan, Planned Transport Plan, Urban Design Background Report,* Activity Centre Plan, and *Built Form Overlay* for each centre.
- **Provide a clear explanation of how all feedback in Phase 1 has informed Phase 2.**

Ensuring economic success and job growth

The commercial spines of the Activity Centres are thriving hubs of creativity, innovation, and economic diversity. They reflect Merri-bek's unique economic fabric and cultural identity. Good planning is essential to sustain and grow these dynamic economies—creating more local jobs and supporting inclusive, future-ready jobs for the communities living in the Activity Centres. To achieve this, it is critical to protect their mixed-use role and deliver diverse commercial spaces that meet the needs of a changing economy, ensuring the centres continue to function as key hubs for jobs, transport, infrastructure, services, as well as housing.

What we're asking for:

- **Ensure that the Activity Centre Plan include an evidence-based and economically viable plan to grow jobs and employment floorspace** with no loss of employment floorspace across the Activity Centres.
- **Authorise the Merri-bek Planning Scheme amendment** which aims to encourage business investment and jobs in the commercial and industrial areas of the Brunswick Activity Centre to ensure the vibrancy of the area does not decline.

Getting heights and boundaries right

The government has asked for the community's feedback about building heights and activity centre boundaries in this phase of consultation. Council has sought to respond constructively to this request based on the available material. Drawing on our extensive local knowledge, the government's identified typologies, and preferred future character, our feedback on the proposed heights and boundaries circulated as part of Phase 2 consultation includes:



- **On heights:** we generally support the overall level of growth but seek moderation in some locations. Some residential pockets in the proposed core would be more appropriate as a residential typology, with adjusted heights. To offset this, we have identified other sites with greater capacity and proposed clearer limits to remove uncertainty for the community.
- **On boundaries:** we have identified additional "strategic sites" that should be included in the core area. However, parkland-edge sites that are already developed or distant from transport should remain outside the core. The Hoffman Brickworks should also be excluded to protect its heritage value, and areas within residential Heritage Overlay precincts and where there is a high fragmentation / small lots or frontage should sit in the outer catchment.

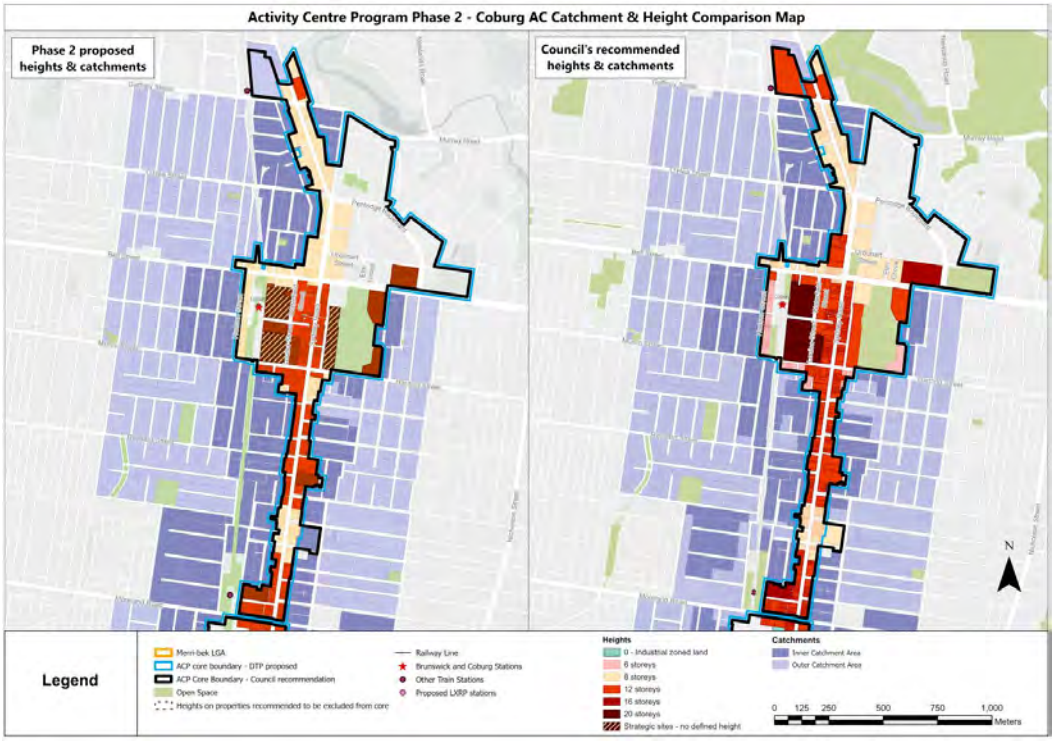
Refer to Attachment 1 for proposed changes to consultation maps, and to Council's technical submission for more detailed information.

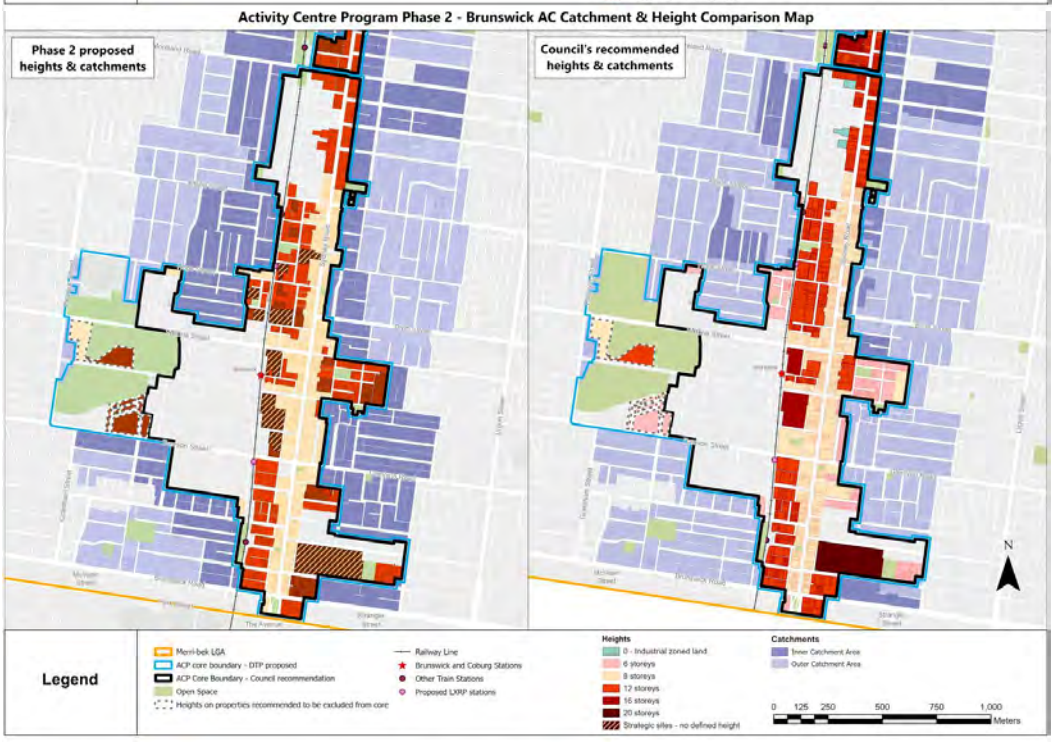
What we're asking for:

- **Respond to Council's specific suggestions** in Attachment 1 and the accompanying technical paper to Phase 2 engagement.



Attachment 1





Merri-bek City Council

Activity Centres Program Phase 2: Technical paper

October 2025



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

Introduction

Merri-bek City Council (Council) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on Phase 2 of community engagement for the Victorian Government's Activity Centres Program (Program) as a key stakeholder to the program.

To meet the needs of Merri-bek's growing population, more housing will be needed in well-serviced areas. Council supports increased housing in the Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres (ACs), provided it is carefully planned to deliver affordable, sustainable, and diverse homes, supported by essential infrastructure, transport, jobs and open space. These priorities were outlined in Council's Phase 1 submission.

In this phase of community engagement, the State Government is primarily seeking feedback on draft maps showing proposed building heights and activity centre boundaries across the approximately five-kilometre corridor from Brunswick to Coburg. This technical paper focuses on these issues.

These maps, once finalised, will guide new built form planning controls. This includes applying a Built Form Overlay (BFO) to the core (with no change to the existing zone) and rezoning surrounding residential land to the Housing Choice and Transport Zone (HCTZ) across the inner and outer catchments (HCTZ1 and HCTZ2). Strong planning controls, grounded in comprehensive analytical approach and scenario testing are essential to ensure high-quality, well-integrated outcomes to support sustainable growth.

However, the publicly available information provided in this phase of engagement however is limited. Council has not received any urban design analysis, technical or methodology reports, nor any modelling to underpin and inform the proposed heights, core and catchment boundaries. This missing information is critical to understanding whether the planning framework represented in the maps can realistically be achieved whilst still meeting key urban design principles essential for a well-designed activity centre.

This technical paper therefore provides feedback based on the limited information available at the time of writing.

Phase 1 themes

Council's feedback

As submitted during the Phase 1 engagement, Council is supportive of the State Government's objective to focus housing growth in well-serviced areas such as along the Sydney Road corridor in Brunswick and Coburg (known as the Merri-bek Cluster). This growth must be carefully planned to ensure delivery of affordable, sustainable, and diverse high-quality housing supported by essential infrastructure, transport, jobs and open space.

Council continues to have material concerns with the current approach and asks the Minister for Planning to address these to ensure the accelerated Program does not compromise the liveability of Brunswick and Coburg. Despite the significance of the Program, there is an absence of technical

data, limited community engagement, and inadequate timelines for feedback, which undermined the ability to make informed contributions.

It is critical that the Program enables the long-term success of these activity centres and addresses the issues raised in Council's submission to Phase 1 (See Appendix 2):

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

A critical community concern is transport. While Sydney Road is serviced by the Upfield train line and tram route, the Upfield train line has one of the lowest frequencies of service in metropolitan Melbourne and Sydney Road trams also lack accessibility for those with mobility disability. The activity centres serviced by this train line and tram route can accommodate significant housing growth, however the road network is already heavily congested. Addressing constraints in the public transport network is therefore an urgent priority to support the current and future community.

Community feedback

The Engage Victoria Activity Centres Program – Phase 2 website includes Phase 1 Consultation Summary Report and Statements of Advice from Community Reference Groups. The feedback from the Merri-bek community closely aligns with the transport, infrastructure, economy, climate, affordable housing and design quality matters raised in Council's Phase 1 submission. This documented feedback from the community is summarised in Table 1:

Table 1 – Summary of Community Feedback to Phase 1	
Top interests	• Urban design and built form • Access to open space • Traffic congestion and movement • Impact on local character and heritage • Housing choice and diversity
Key concerns with density	• Protect parks and open space • Improve walking and cycling connections

	• Manage building impacts (e.g. overshadowing, wind, sun access) • Increase tree planting and green infrastructure • Strengthen public transport infrastructure
Transport	• Increase frequency and reliability of train services on the Upfield line • Improve tram accessibility and stop upgrades • Address congestion on key roads • Enhance pedestrian and cycling safety, connectivity, and lighting • Support car-free movement through better bike paths and wider footpaths • Suggestions include dedicated tram lanes, removal of on-street parking, and multi-level car parks
Building	• Prioritise sunlight, sustainability, and environmentally sensitive design • Support for increased density with concerns around scale, privacy, and overshadowing • Desire for high-quality, architecturally ambitious, and inclusive housing • Emphasis on aesthetics, warmth, and liveability in new developments
Heritage	• Strong support for protecting local heritage and neighbourhood character • Desire to retain Brunswick and Coburg's eclectic, creative, and community-oriented identity • Ensure new development complements existing scale and built form
Public realm	• Increase and diversify green spaces, including pocket parks, green corridors, and tree-lined streets • Ensure sunlight access to parks and open spaces is protected in new development • Create inclusive community hubs and spaces for all life stages, with seating, play areas, and shade • Improve safety and amenity in public areas through better lighting and design • Support mixed-use spaces, activation of shopping strips, and retention of creative/community hubs • Ensure infrastructure and public realm improvements keep pace with population growth
Housing growth and diversity	• Support for more homes to welcome a growing, diverse community • Emphasis on affordable housing and options for all life stages and abilities • Recognition that population growth supports local jobs and services • Desire for well-designed, sustainable housing that reflects community values

It is clear the Brunswick and Coburg communities understand the need for and generally support housing growth. This is reflected in both the Merri-bek Community Vision and the Victorian Government's engagement through the Program. However, alongside this support, the community has expressed a strong desire for development to be of high quality, sustainable, diverse and affordable. There is a clear expectation that at the same time as delivering this growth, the public realm and open spaces will be protected and enhanced, with the growth being matched by investment in infrastructure, particularly in public and active transport, parks and community facilities.

Phase 2 engagement approach

In this second Phase, the state government has released three maps:

1. What the area currently looks like and the places the community said are important
2. Proposed building heights in the 'core' of the Merri-bek Cluster
3. Proposed 'core' and 'catchment' areas for the Merri-bek Cluster.

Council understands the State Government is primarily seeking feedback on proposed building heights and activity centre boundaries. Accordingly, this technical paper focuses on responding to the publicly available information

Once finalised, these maps will guide new built form planning controls. This includes applying a Built Form Overlay (BFO) to the core (with no change to the existing zone) and rezoning surrounding residential land to the Housing Choice and Transport Zone (HCTZ) across the inner and outer catchments (HCTZ1 and HCTZ2). These draft controls have not been released for community engagement.

It is noted that the representation of Council and community feedback from the Phase 1 engagement on Map 1 is unclear, and it is not evident how this input has informed the development of the height and catchment maps (Maps 2 and 3).

Addressing gaps in consultation

The Phase 2 engagement material includes no technical reports or explanation on the methodology used to develop heights and the catchment areas, nor any draft planning provisions to understand how they will be implemented. In particular, seeking feedback on building heights in the absence of all other metrics of the proposed BFO, Council and the community cannot be assured about what the outcomes of the program will be. This lacks transparency and is a significant concern.

In Council's Phase 1 submission, Council's key asks in respect to community engagement are still relevant and are:

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

Council considers that further community engagement is essential to allow feedback on the draft Activity Centre Plan(s) and BFO schedules (and full draft amendment package). While the state government is proposing limited officer input on draft elements, Council emphasises the importance of transparency, where any materials provided for feedback should be made publicly available, reflecting the community's right to be informed and represented.

Absence of testing

To achieve the goal of delivering over 300,000 new homes along Melbourne's train and tram corridors by 2051, the proposed planning controls must be clear, consistent, and achievable. Built form requirements, such as height, setbacks, sunlight access, and separation need to be contextually tested to ensure preferred building heights can realistically be delivered.

While the *City of Centres*[1] background report includes some modelling, it indicates that except on larger, wider, deeper sites, the maximum building heights for each typology are not achievable. This is concerning given the prevalence of small, narrow, and shallow lots in Brunswick and parts of Coburg, where site depth, laneways and residential interfaces significantly constrain development potential.

Although the BFO encourages land consolidation, this can erode the fine-grain character valued in these areas. Moreover, physical constraints like rear laneways and shallow lots limit achievable height, regardless of consolidation.

If planning scheme heights are not achievable when combined with lot sizes and other important built form requirements it undermines development viability. This will place pressure on decision-makers to compromise key public realm and amenity outcomes. Discretionary height controls need to be feasible, if they are not achievable, they undermine the certainty need to guide development.

Council is concerned that the housing capacity and height aspirations for Sydney Road in Brunswick and Coburg overstate what is realistically achievable. Council recommends that the state government undertake detailed modelling of representative sites within the Merri-bek cluster to test achievable building heights under the full set of proposed controls, along with floorplate assumptions. This will help ensure the planning framework is workable, transparent, and capable of delivering the intended outcomes.

Foundation plans

In the early stages of the Program, DTP prepared 'foundation plans' identifying contextual and valued attributes of each centre, along with place-specific opportunities and constraints. Officers provided feedback on these internally, but the plans have not been publicly released. Instead, only a simplified 'existing conditions' map has been issued for Phase 2 engagement. As a result, Council is concerned that places not explicitly identified by the community may be undervalued in drafting the BFO schedules.

Housing capacity targets

In the Pilot program of the Program, draft Activity Centre Plan(s) were released for Council and community feedback. These plans included a lower and upper range of additional dwellings for each centre. In the current tranche of the Program the number of additional dwellings that is being planned for in the core and catchment of each centre has not been disclosed to Councils or communities. This leaves Council in the dark about what proportion of its overall housing target is being planned for in these priority activity centres.

Whilst the state has revealed the overall number of dwellings it is seeking to deliver is 300,000 homes in 60 centres of which 60,000 were planned for in the 10 pilot centres, not all centres are the same size, or have the same context. This means so different centres will accommodate a different proportion of the overall number. For example, in the 10 Pilot centres, some centres

[1] City of Centres: Development of typology-based built form controls, Sheppard & Cull, 2024

planned for less than 5% of the 60,000 dwelling target, whilst others provided almost 20% of the overall number.

Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centre's (ACs) are amongst the largest and highest order centres within this Program. Council has an important role to play in partnering with the state government so that these centres can do additional heavy lifting, whist being mindful of issues that are important to the current Merri-bek community.

It is very difficult to comment on proposed building heights and catchment area extents without access to the state government's Housing Capacity Assessment Platform (HCAP) or information on the housing target capacity they create. In reviewing the draft core building height and catchment areas, Council has sought to be mindful of overall housing capacity implications. However, without access to the HCAP system, planning for growth and its distribution across centres is largely speculative.

Council requests that the state government share its housing capacity targets and housing capacity assessment modelling for the Merri-bek Cluster and work collaboratively with Council in responding to Phase 2 engagement submissions from the Merri-bek community.

Building heights and activity centre boundaries

Core Boundary

There needs to be consistency throughout the planning scheme in relation to the boundary of an activity centre. These boundaries underpin key housing and economic growth policies and are frequently contested in VCAT decisions. Clear identification of whether a site is inside or outside an activity centre is essential for effective decision-making.

To support clarity and transparency, terminology used in maps and overlay schedules must align with the Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) and the Planning Policy Framework (PPF).

Notably, the core boundaries shown in Brunswick and Coburg do not align with the proposed extent of the BFO (i.e. properties represented on the proposed height maps). For example, Pentridge and industrial land are included in the core boundary but have no proposed height controls, creating uncertainty about the application of built form guidance.

Council is unclear on the state's objective in proposing a core boundary that does not align with the proposed extent of the intended planning control. There is no value in showing an activity centre core boundary on a framework plan in the BFO that will not align with the extent of this overlay on ordinance maps or to land that will not be subject to the associated built form requirements.

This needs to be resolved so that there is clarity for decision makers about where policy and built form directions in the planning scheme apply.

Changes to activity centre core areas

The proposed core boundary in the Phase 2 engagement is an expansion on Merri-bek's current Coburg and Brunswick Activity Centre boundaries, represented by:

Brunswick	An expansion of the Brunswick AC boundary along the Sydney Road corridor as represented by Amendment C230mbek (Vibrant Brunswick) to capture a group of large parks (collectively known as the Central Brunswick Parklands) and its surrounding Mixed Use Zone land.
Coburg	A small expansion of the current Coburg AC boundary as defined by Activity Centre Zone (ACZ) to capture a group of Commercial 1 Zone

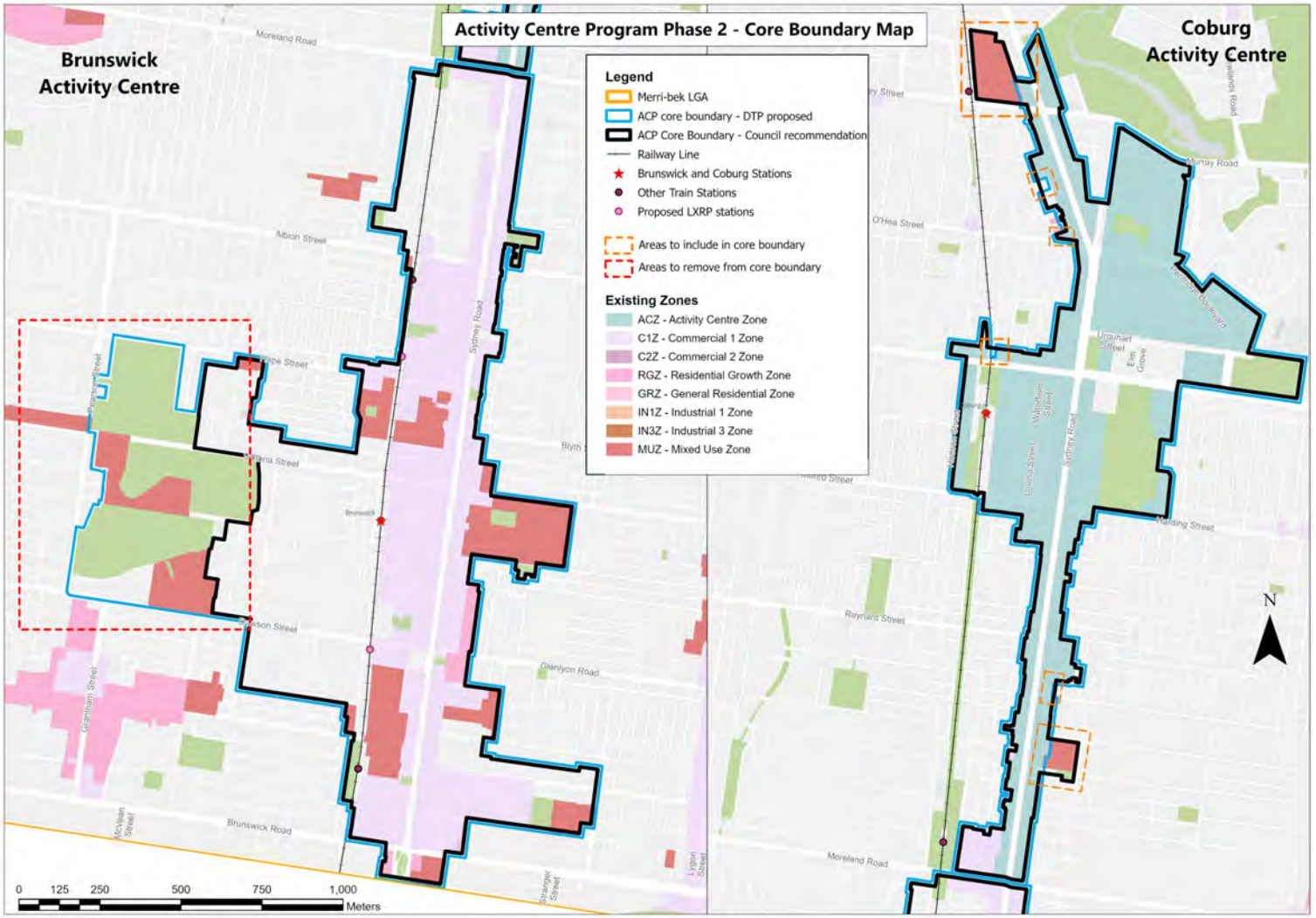
(C1Z) properties located on the northern side of Moreland Road, between the railway line and Sydney Road.

It is recommended that these core boundaries are modified as reflected in Figure 1. These changes represent both expansion and reductions in areas, as described in Table 2.

Table 2 – Recommended changes to the Brunswick and Coburg core area

Brunswick	Align the core boundary with the Brunswick AC boundary in C230mbek (Sydney Road corridor). This extent would exclude the Central Brunswick Parklands and surrounding Mixed Use Zone (MUZ) sites, sites that are largely developed (or in benefit of a planning permit), disconnected from the core commercial and civic activity along Sydney Road and located more than 600m from the rail corridor.
Coburg	Expanding the core boundary to include two large MUZ sites at 31 The Avenue and 14–22 Gaffney Street, Coburg located adjacent to the current Coburg AC extent. These sites are well-positioned for inclusion due to their strategic location, development opportunity and compatibility with the intended built form outcomes. • 31 The Avenue has an approved permit for 8-storey development, demonstrating its suitability for higher-density development. Inclusion would also resolve the current lack of built form guidance to the site and ensure consist built form guidance suitable to the scale envisaged for the site • 14-22 Gaffney Street is a large, strategically located adjacent to Batman Station and aligns with the scale and character of the core area. Including all properties within the current Coburg ACZ and the full extent of 613–625 and 653 Sydney Road Coburg to have a consistent zone application to their entire sites. Clarifying the status of the Pentridge area, as its inclusion in the core boundary without being in the BFO creates inconsistency.

Figure 1 - Map showing recommended changes to the core AC boundaries



Heights in the Activity Centre Core

There has been no urban design analysis presented in Phase 2 engagement to justify the heights beyond what is outlined in C230mbek and the Coburg ACZ. Council cannot evaluate the appropriateness of the proposed building heights in isolation without this information and other essential urban design parameters, such as:

- street wall height and upper-level setbacks
- side and rear setbacks
- setbacks to sensitive interfaces
- building separation
- sunlight to streets and parks.

These elements work together to determine the feasible built form and overall scale on a site.

The heights shown on the maps represent an aspirational vision and are unlikely to be achievable in many locations due to constraints such as heritage, limited site dimensions (width, depth, and area), the fine-grain lot pattern along narrow streets, and the need to maintain adequate sunlight to the key pedestrian network and parkland. Without consideration of these factors, there is a risk that the mapped heights may mislead the development industry about the realistic scale of development that can be supported.

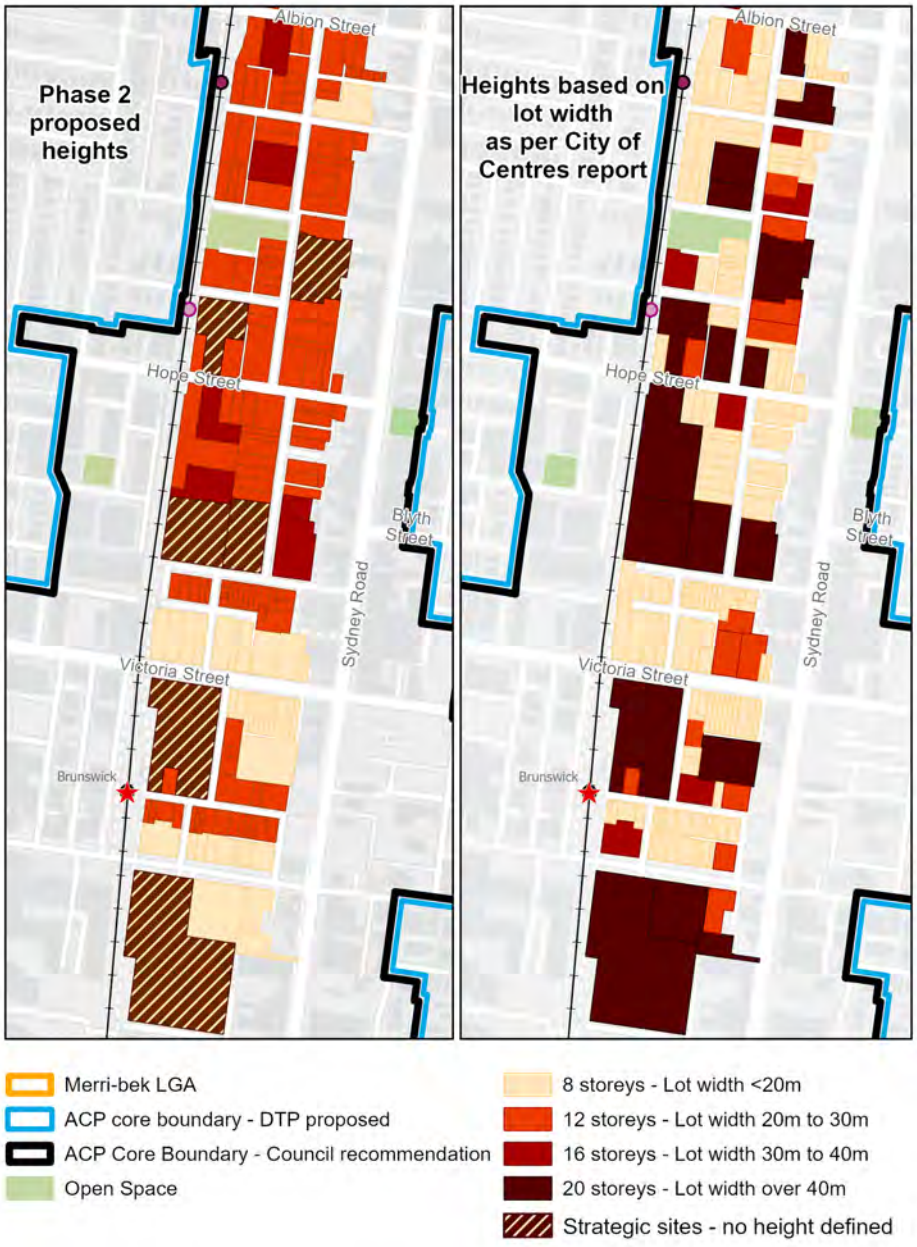
The *City of Centres* offers a methodology in Figure 2 related to maximum heights to lots in a range of 8 storeys to 20 storeys. Using this methodology for a desktop comparison with the Phase 2 proposed heights in the off-corridor section of the Brunswick AC between Albion Street and Victoria, it illustrates a substantial difference between the two (Figure 3). In particular, that there are a substantial number of narrow lots, and that even with some lot consolidation, the heights are likely unachievable given site sizes and the context.

Maximum building height

Precinct	Maximum Height (m)			
AC type	1	2	3	4
Heritage Main Street Core (H)	21m		27m	
Non-Heritage Main Street Core (N)	21m	27m	40m	
Fringe (F)	21m		27m	
Limited Sensitivities (S)	21m	27m	Frontage / Height: S3a: < 20m — 27m; S3b: between 20m and 30m — 40m; S3c: between 30m and 40m — 53m; S3d: > 40m — 66m	66m
Large Opportunity Sites (L)	21m	27m	40m	66m
Enclosed Shopping Centres (C)	21m	27m	40m	66m
Residential (R)	17m			

Figure 2 – City of Centres maximum building height matrix for each six typologies (metrics highlighted)

Figure 3 – Off-corridor area in the Brunswick AC comparing the Phase 2 proposed heights with City of Centres maximum heights based on lot width methodology to the off-corridor area in the Brunswick AC



It is therefore imperative that proposed deemed to comply heights are linked to compliance with standards on street wall height, upper-level setbacks, side and rear setbacks, setbacks to sensitive interface, building separation and sunlight protection.

Recommended changes to core heights

Figures 4 & 5 illustrate Council's recommended changes to building heights within the AC's core, with Table 3 providing additional rationale for the changes. This feedback should be considered indicative, as it has been provided without the benefit of comprehensive testing against key urban design metrics that would confirm the heights are achievable.

Council's evaluation of the heights considers the *City of Centres* report, the site contexts and philosophy of this program to recommend heights that consider:

- Contextual sensitivity and protection:
  - Sensitive interfaces to parks to ensure sunlight to parks can be maintained
  - Areas on the fringe of precincts that are within a low scale residential context
  - Supporting the retention of existing heritage streetscapes and landmarks
- Consistency and fairness in application
  - Consistent application of heights in similar contexts across the AC's, especially within same streets and blocks where possible.
  - No reduction to heights based on existing height controls
- Comprehensive coverage and accuracy
  - All developable sites to include a preferred maximum height, including those marked as strategic sites and sites shown incorrectly as parks
  - Capturing all sites within the current Brunswick and Coburg AC extents

Table 3 – Council's rationale for recommended height changes

Location Map ID	Theme	Rationale for the change
1	**Residential context and interface**	These areas sit at the edges of the Activity Centre core and are located off the main corridor. They function as transitional residential precincts between higher-density zones and surrounding lower-scale residential neighbourhoods. In some cases, they are physically separated from the key activity areas by railway lines or parkland. These precincts align with the 'residential precinct' typology in the City of Centres report, which supports a maximum building height of six storeys. If they were not already within Brunswick or Coburg Activity Centre, they would be well suited to inclusion in the inner catchment of the Housing Choice and Transport Zone (HCTZ) where moderate change is expected due to their residential character, smaller lot sizes, sensitive interfaces, and constrained street widths.

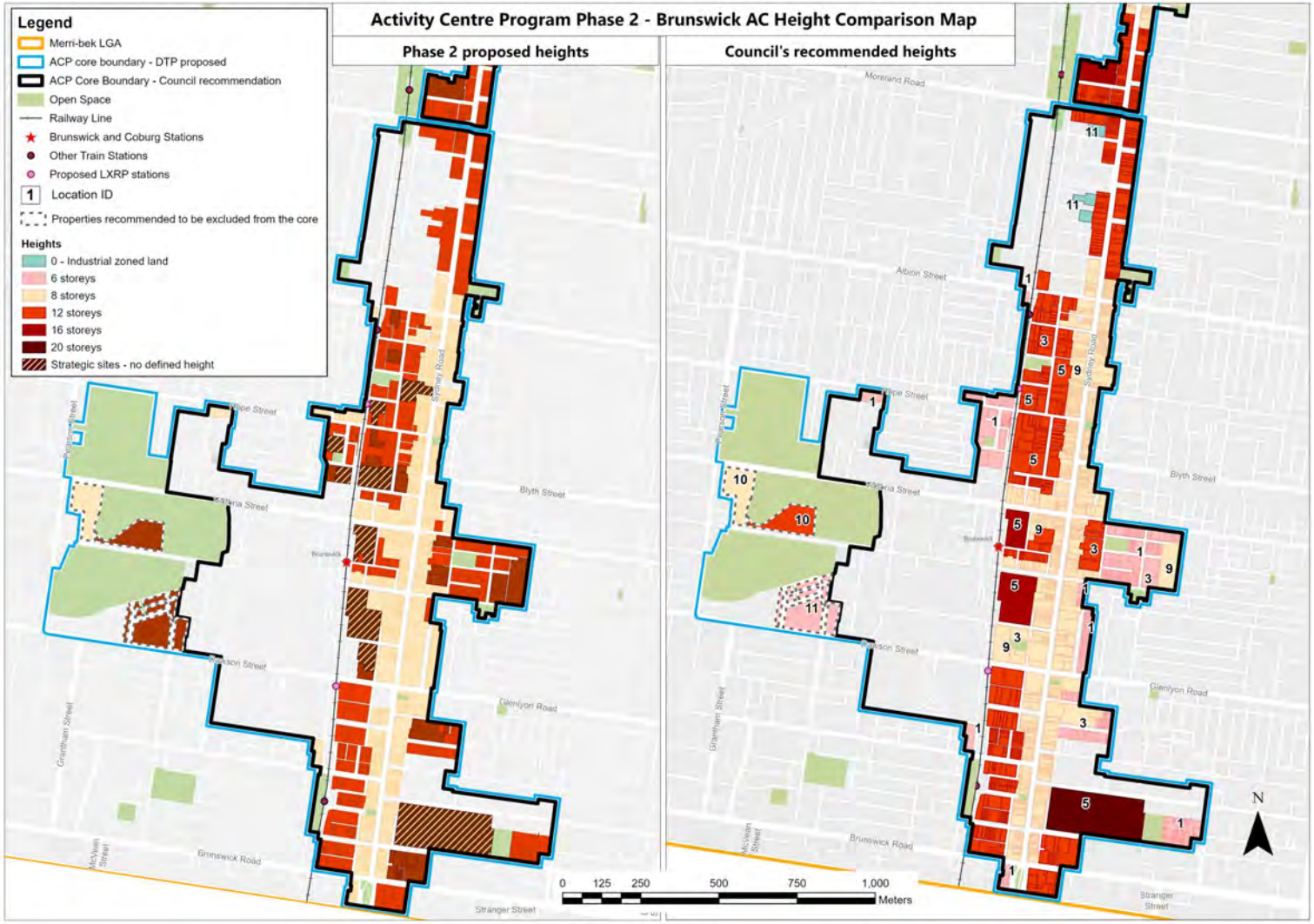
2	**Large site adjacent to train station**	14-22 Gaffney Street Coburg is suitable to be within the Coburg AC core boundary given its size and excellent access to both train and tram services. It is a large site of more than 26,000m^2 in size and is positioned next to the Batman railway station and a short distance to tram services along Sydney Road. Its orientation and location with a robust southern and western interfaces suit the scale envisaged for the Coburg AC and aligned with 664-716 Sydney Road Coburg. The proposed height in HCTZ1 is lower than the preferred height in the existing scheme.
3	**Consistent height application**	Recommending a consistent height be applied to these sites and areas as follows: • 737-757 Sydney Road Coburg should reflect the same height as 664-716 Sydney Road Coburg and 14-22 Gaffney Street Coburg given their similar contexts and limited sensitivities. • 200-216 Sydney Road Coburg should match the 12-storey height directed to this section of Sydney Road, which is consistent with the scale of the apartment building currently being constructed on that site. • The off-corridor precinct in Brunswick between Albion and Victoria Street to have a consistent height application given their similar context and for streetscape consistency. • Merri Street and Dods Streets Brunswick present with constrained urban environment characterised by narrow streets and predominantly small lots that will constrain development potential for large developments. A clear example is the 4-5 storey apartment building at 18 Merri Street. Despite being on a large site, the buildings scale was influenced by the need to manage off-site impacts, particularly on surrounding narrow streets, nearby parks and existing housing. • Properties on the west side of Frith Street to have a consistent height application across the entire street. • 201 Albert Street Brunswick has been recently developed with a 6-storey apartment building that pushes the boundary on scale to ensure the streetscape, nearby parks and surrounding dwellings amenity can be maintained.
4	**Alignment with the Coburg ACZ**	The Coburg ACZ currently directs a higher preferred height than what is proposed on the height map. The height should be increased to align with the heights in the Coburg ACZ.

5	**Strategic sites and adjoining sites with capacity for taller buildings**	A masterplan is not necessary to facilitate a suitable scale to Strategic Sites. A preferred height direction along with pedestrian connections, streetwall heights and upper-level setbacks, setbacks to sensitive interfaces, building separation and other design standards is adequate to guide a suitable development scale. The height recommended aligns with the context and/or heights recommended on adjacent properties.
6	**Missing height direction**	These sites have no height direction. The heights suggested on the map match that of adjacent sites.
7	**Sensitive interfaces and alignment with recent approvals**	Recent approvals demonstrate that a 12 storeys building strikes the right balance between a scale that can facilitate housing at moderate scale whilst protecting sunlight to important adjacent parkland.
8	**Large site adjacent to AC core**	31 The Avenue Coburg is suitable to be pulled into the Coburg AC core boundary given its size, location adjacent to the Coburg ACZ and proximity to train and tram services. It has a recent 8 storey apartment approved on the site that is more consistent with the aspirations of the core of the Coburg AC than for catchment areas. The proposed height in HCTZ1 is lower than the height of the recent approval.
9	**Heritage limitations**	These are heritage streetscapes and very small lots where scale of future buildings will be constrained to respect important heritage fabric.
9	**Large sites within residential contexts**	11 Thomas Street Brunswick is a large site in a constrained residential context. Protecting the streetscape amenity and that of existing dwellings constrains development, in potential and the heights recommended reflect a more realistic and sensitive scale.
10	**Sites recommended to be excluded from Core AC boundary**	The development potential of these sites is very limited given they all contain modern apartments or townhouses. Whilst these sites are recommended to be excluded from the core AC boundary, the heights recommended on the map reflect the scale achievable given their sensitive interfaces with parkland, and in the case of the Hoffman Brickworks, prominence of key heritage elements of state importance.
11	**Industrial land**	The industrial-zoned portions of properties fronting Moreland Road and Sydney Road should be excluded from the height map and not subject to built form controls. These areas are not suitable for residential development due to zoning restrictions and their contribution to established industrial precincts/activity.

Figure 4 – Map comparing Phase 2 proposed heights and Council recommended heights for the Coburg AC



Figure 5 – Map comparing Phase 2 proposed heights and Council recommended heights for the Brunswick AC



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Housing Capacity Core

Council generally supports the overall level of growth but suggests moderation in some areas. Council has undertaken a housing capacity assessment of the Activity Centres core, comparing existing planning scheme heights, the State Government's Phase 2 proposal, and Council's position on heights.

The assumptions have been informed by presentations and discussions with the HCAP team. They are the closest approximation Council has of likely capacity considerations.

Table 4 – Housing Capacity Assessment assumptions	
Attribute	Assumptions - Core
Development Type	Apartments
Site coverage	100%
Building efficiency	85%
Average apartment size	90 sqm
Height	Scenario dependent
Commercial	Ground floor only

The results in Tables 5-8 below show that Council's option delivers only a 5% reduction in overall capacity compared with the Department of Transport and Planning's (DTP) proposal, while achieving a more balanced distribution of growth between Coburg (45%) and Brunswick (55%), compared with DTP's 39% and 61%.

Table 5 – Housing Capacity Assessment (All sites dwellings)			
Suburb	DTP	MCC	Existing
Brunswick	61,030	52,874	27,868
Coburg	39,570	42,818	22,580
Total	100,600	95,692	50,448
	100%	95%	50%

Table 6 – Housing Capacity Assessment (All sites percentage)			
Suburb	DTP	MCC	Existing
Brunswick	61%	55%	55%
Coburg	39%	45%	45%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Table 7 – Housing Capacity Assessment (Excluding lots < 200 sqm dwellings)			
Suburb	DTP	MCC	Existing
Brunswick	57,316	49,674	25,903
Coburg	38,043	41,269	21,730
Total	95,359	90,943	47,633
	100%	95%	50%

Table 8 – Housing Capacity Assessment (Excluding lots < 200 sqm dwellings percentage)			
Suburb	DTP	MCC	Existing
Brunswick	60%	55%	54%
Coburg	40%	45%	46%
Total	100%	100%	100%

These capacity figures are preliminary estimates based on the best available information and should be considered the upper limit of housing capacity. Once more information becomes available and a full capacity assessment is undertaken, these figures will decrease.

However, it is considered likely that the Core, together with the catchment areas, will contribute most (if not all) of Merri-bek's 2051 Housing Target of 69,000 dwellings.

Catchment Areas

As mentioned previously, the Phase 2 engagement material provides no information to understand the application or rationale of the proposed inner and outer catchments for each AC, including the housing capacity it aims to facilitate. Without this, it is difficult to meaningfully consider the suitability of the catchment areas.

Nevertheless, Council has concerns with the ability for sites to achieve the anticipated scale directed by the catchments, even with lot consolidation. The proposed inner and outer catchments for these AC's covers some of Merri-bek's oldest streets. These streets included a valued fine grain pattern made up of small and narrow lots within a network of narrow streets and often part of heritage streetscapes, features that constrain development possibility not only in scale but the ability for multi-dwelling developments of any typology.

Recommended changes to catchment areas

Whilst Council considers the heights represented in the catchment plans are largely unachievable, Council's evaluation of the inner and outer catchments considers the following:

- Importance of preserving identified heritage streetscapes and that this reduces the feasibility of lot consolidation, limits housing capacity, and constrains future development scale.
- Importance of consistent controls along streetscapes to support good urban design and cohesive streetscape outcomes.

Figure 6 maps heritage precincts and small lots against the proposed catchment areas to help illustrate the extent of heritage in and around the Brunswick and Coburg AC and to appreciate this constrained setting.

Council recommends changes to the inner and outer catchments, illustrated in Figure 7 & 8. These changes include:

- Removing heritage precincts from the inner catchment and including them in the outer catchment
- Removing areas with high concentration of lots under 300 m^2 in size in the inner catchment
- Resolving isolated pockets of inner catchment that are surrounded by outer catchment areas

Table 8 illustrates these types of recommended changes.

Table 8 – Highlighting the type of changes council recommends to the catchment areas

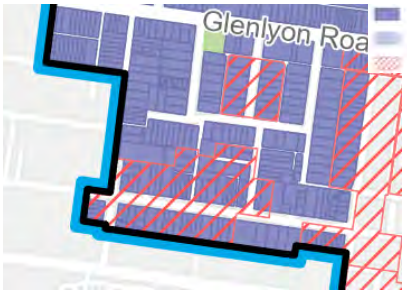
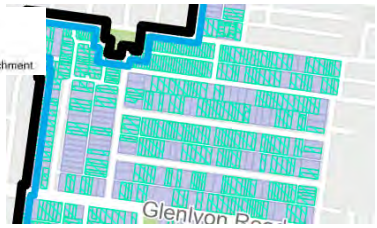
	
Current extent show heritage precincts within the inner catchment area of Brunswick AC	Showing properties within heritage streetscapes in the outer catchment, including adjacent properties to ensure consistent scale in the streetscape.
	
Current extent shows high concentration of lots less than 300 m^2 in size in the inner catchment	Showing an area dominated by small lots in the outer catchment to respond to the constrained setting

Figure 6 – Map illustrating the extent of heritage precincts and small lots around the AC

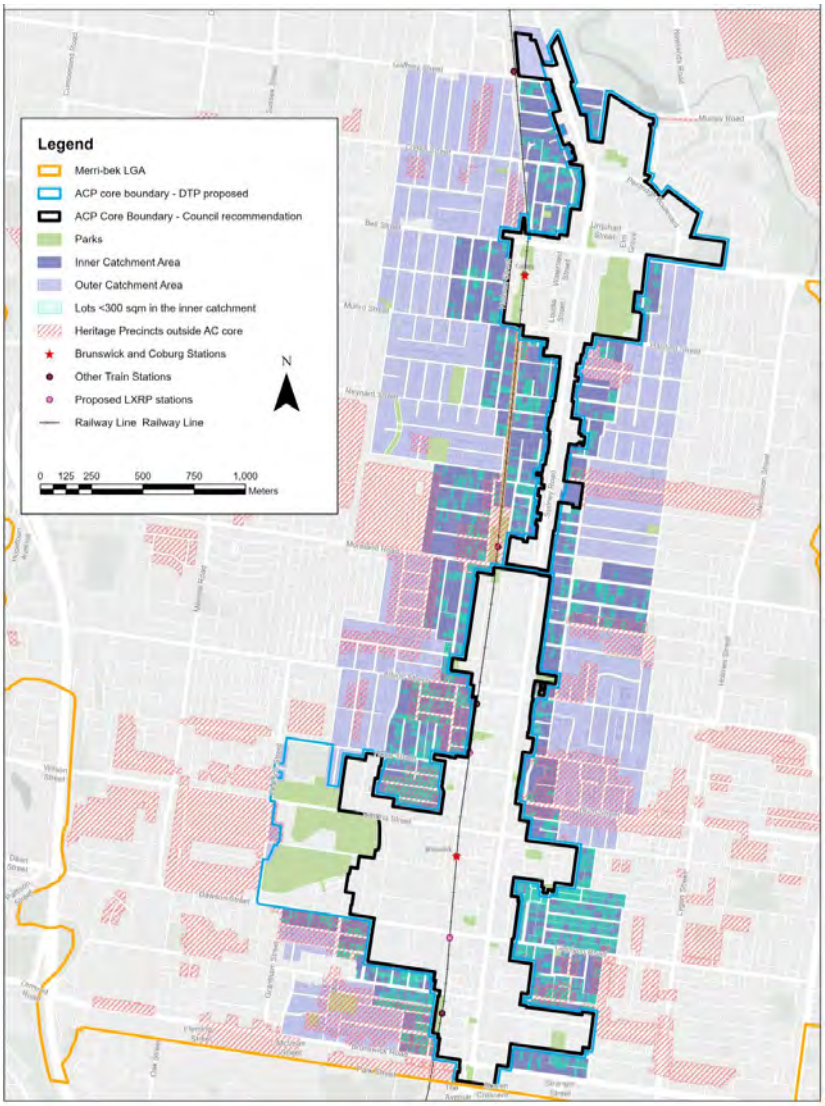
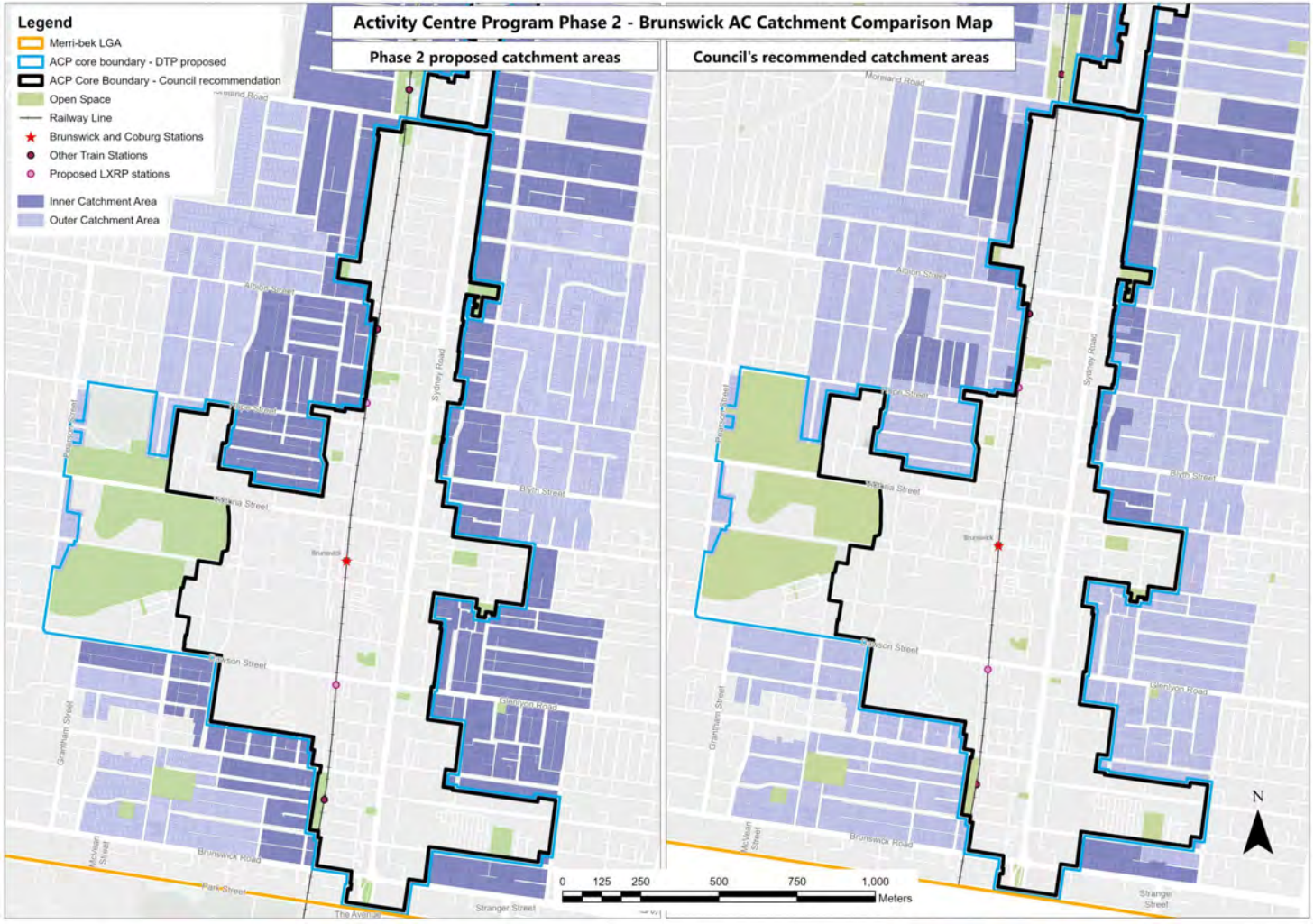


Figure 7 – Map comparing Phase 2 catchment areas with Council recommended catchment areas for the Coburg AC



Figure 8 – Map comparing Phase 2 catchment areas with Council recommended catchment areas for the Brunswick AC



Local metrics to support well designed centres

The BFO may contain requirements in relation to building typology and future character, overshadowing of open space, overshadowing of key pedestrian streets, landscaped setbacks, active frontages, pedestrian connections, weather protection, vehicle access, waste and loading access and signs. The schedules to the BFO identify specific metric requirements and where they are applicable.

Moreland Apartment Design Code

Some elements of the Moreland Apartment Design Code (MADC) were introduced into the Merri-bek Planning Scheme by Amendment C142 in December 2017 and has been driving positive design and amenity outcomes in apartment developments since its introduction.

MADC standards related to building separation and light wells are contained in local policy at Clause 15.01-2L (see Appendix 1). These are important standards to ensure:

- There is adequate daylight and sunlight access to habitable rooms, private open space areas, communal open space areas and open space areas
- Buildings are located and designed to reduce overlooking into habitable rooms and private open space areas
- Quality outlook for residents
- The above objectives are shared equitably across property boundaries

These metrics were robustly tested by expert evidence at Panel and achieve daylight outcomes aligned with local energy efficiency and environmentally sustainable development objectives and strategies in the PPF.

Council requests that these building separation and light well standards be included in the BFO for each Activity Centre. These standards are well-established, have been tested in practice, and are routinely met by the Merri-bek development industry demonstrating their usability and compliance.

Operation of the Planning Scheme

Importance of Consistency

Terminology

The use of the term '*Train and Tram Zone Core Boundary*' in the Phase 2 engagement material is misleading. Council understands that the Program proposes a Built Form Overlay in the core areas and does not propose to rezone land. However, the term '*zone*' implies the introduction of a new planning zone, which is not reflected in Plan for Victoria or the Planning Policy Framework (PPF). This inconsistency in terminology risks confusion among stakeholders.

Built form guidance for Pentridge

The contribution and built form considerations of Pentridge within the Coburg AC also needs further consideration. Pentridge is substantial redevelopment area that is not only close to shops, services and a variety of public transport services (train, tram and bus routes) but is part of the Coburg Activity Centre driving investment and new housing. It is also subject to the same built form guidance contained in the Coburg Activity Centre Zone (ACZ) as the remainder of the properties in the core Coburg AC area.

The rationale behind Pentridge's inclusion in the core boundary but exclusion from the height maps and intended BFO is unclear. It's exclusion from the BFO will in fact result in disjointed built form guidance to the Coburg AC. It is also unclear how the Coburg ACZ can be modified to provide built form guidance to Pentridge but not to the remainder of the activity centre properties.

Including Pentridge in the height maps and subsequent BFO makes sense. This would be a simple exercise of translating the heights in the current ACZ into height maps and the BFO framework. This will ensure all properties within the Coburg AC are subject to the same built form guidance, which is consistent with the purpose of this Program.

Should the AC Program continues to exclude Pentridge, it is imperative that the Victorian Government engage meaningfully with Council to develop a mutually agreeable amendment to the Coburg ACZ to ensure it will be workable.

Residential zone schedules

A small number of sites within the boundary of the proposed activity centre core are in residential zones that have specific height requirements in zone header provisions and/or schedules. The proposed building heights in this Program do not align with these zone height requirements. This will need to be resolved so that different directions about building height are not given in different clauses of the scheme.

Consulting on full suite of planning scheme changes

Phase 2 engagement does not include any draft planning scheme provisions or changes. As mentioned previously, Council understands that there will be limited engagement on a draft BFO with Council only and not accessible to the community prior to implementation.

Implementing the information on the height and catchment maps will require substantial changes to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme to ensure there are no conflicts only consistency within the scheme. These changes are much more widespread than applying Housing Choice and Transport Zone to their catchments and the BFO to the core of the Activity Centres with a local schedule to guide built form requirements. A couple of examples of other parts of the scheme that need addressing have been raised previously related to the MPS, PPF, existing zone height conflicts and how the Coburg ACZ will operate. There are likely many others.

There is currently no evidence that the State has identified which other parts of the planning scheme will require amending to ensure the AC Program does not create conflicting policies. This is a significant task, and if not done properly, it will fall to Council to resolve through separate amendments, placing further pressure on Council's already constrained resources.

Council requests that:

- The Victorian Government work collaboratively with Council to develop the BFO schedules and jointly determine which parts of the scheme require amendment, including the format and approach to those changes, in a way that is mutually agreed.
- Any planning scheme changes to implement the AC Program be subject to Phase 3 engagement, to ensure both Council and the community have the opportunity to review and provide feedback in a meaningful way.

Climate response

Ministerial Direction 22 – Climate Change Consideration (MD22), gazetted on 11 September 2025, outlines what planning authorities must consider to meet their legal duty under the *Planning and Environment Act* to address climate change when preparing or amending planning schemes. The AC program is a large precinct scale transformational program that will have considerable implications to areas of Merri-bek already experiencing climate impacts exacerbated by urban renewal and consolidation.

Council requests that a Climate Change Assessment be prepared in line with MD22 and supporting guidelines to identify local built form standards and supporting policy for the BFO to help mitigate climate impacts.

Conclusion

Merri-bek City Council supports directing housing growth to the well-serviced Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres, provided it is underpinned by strong, evidence-based planning controls. Phase 2 materials set important directions, but the absence of technical reports, modelling, and draft controls limits Council's and the community's ability to provide fully informed feedback. Without this information, there is a risk that the proposed heights, boundaries, and catchments are unachievable, undermining confidence in the Program and placing liveability, design quality, and amenity at risk.

Council urges the Victorian Government to release the technical evidence, refine core and catchment boundaries, and undertake transparent testing of proposed controls against key built form metrics. Investment in public transport, infrastructure, and climate resilience measures must accompany growth, and proven local design standards should be embedded in the Built Form Overlay. Council remains committed to working in partnership with the State to ensure the Program delivers affordable, diverse, and sustainable housing while protecting the unique character and liveability of Brunswick and Coburg for current and future communities.

Appendix 1 – Moreland Apartment Design Standards

Local building setback and separation standards

The building setback and separation standard outlined in Table 1, 2 & 3 are supported by strategies and decision guidelines.

Building setback and separation strategies

Design buildings to:

- Allow adequate daylight to living rooms and bedrooms.
- Provide opportunities for open space and landscaping areas.
- Reduce overlooking into habitable rooms and private open space areas through location and design
- Provide a reasonable outlook from living areas.
- Enable the reasonable future development opportunities of adjoining sites.
- Manage the amenity impacts to adjoining sites.
- Achieve a greater level of privacy and higher levels of daylight compared to bedrooms

Standard 1 – Building setback and separation

Table 1 - Building setbacks to the side and rear boundary		
Building height	**Living room or Main balcony outlook to boundary**	**Bedroom outlook to boundary**
Up to 4 storeys (12 meters)	6 meters	3 meters
5-8 storeys (up to 25 meters)	9 meters	4.5 meters
9 or more storeys (over 25 meters)	12 meters	6 meters

Table 2 – Building setbacks to a lane		
Building height	**Living room or Main balcony outlook**	**Bedroom outlook**
2 storeys (9 meters)	0 meters (from boundary)	0 meters (from boundary)
3-8 storeys (up to 25 meters)	6 meters (from lane centre line)	4.5 meters
9 or more storeys (over 25 meters)	9 meters (from lane centre line)	6 meters

Table 3 – Building separation from another building within a site					
Building height	**Living room or Main balcony outlook to Living room or Main balcony outlook**	**Bedroom outlook to bedroom outlook**	**Living room /Main balcony outlook to bedroom outlook**	**Living room /Main balcony outlook to no outlook**	**Bedroom outlook to no outlook**
Up to 4 storeys (12 meters)	12 meters	6 meters	9 meters	6 meters	3 meters
5-8 storeys (up to 25 meters)	18 meters	9 meters	13.5 meters	9 meters	4.5 meters
9 or more storeys (over 25 meters)	24 meters	12 meters	18 meters	12 meters	6 meters

Decision guidelines - Building setback and separation

Consider as relevant:

- Whether the building setback requirements specified in Tables 1, 2 and 3 have been achieved:
  - Including to the side or rear boundary, a lane or another building within the same site.
  - As measured from glazing line or the external edge of any balcony (whichever is the lesser) to the property boundary for setbacks specified in Table 1.
  - As measured from glazing line or the external edge of the balcony (whichever is the lesser) to the lane centre line for setbacks specified in Table 2.
  - As measured from glazing line or the external edge of the balcony to the glazing line or external edge of the balcony, between buildings, whichever is the lesser for setbacks specified in Standard 3.
- The reasonable future development opportunities for adjoining sites where a building does not achieve the building setback requirements specified in Tables 1, 2 and 3.
- Whether building separation is not required provided:
  - There is no outlook from a living room to a side or rear boundary; and
  - It does not affect the reasonable future development opportunities of the adjoining site.
- Whether an existing residential development on an adjoining site does not meet the distances specified in Tables 1, 2 and 3, siting new development to achieve a comparable adequate setback (from a minimum of one metre and a maximum of three metres). The building setback requirements apply from the first level of residential use.
- Whether existing developments have reasonably incorporated access to daylight on their own site.
- Requiring no building separation where a continuous street wall is encouraged under the relevant place-based control to the extent necessary to comply with that control.

Daylight Access - Light wells

Light wells strategy

Where bedrooms are serviced by a lightwell ensure they are of sufficient size to allow adequate daylight.

Design and locate windows in light spills to protect the privacy of occupants without relying solely on screening including through:

- Staggering lightwells to avoid direct overlooking into existing bedroom windows in separate dwellings.

Standard 2 – Light wells

All lightwells that provide daylight access to bedrooms:

- Staggered to avoid direct overlooking into existing bedroom windows in separate dwellings.
- Painted in a light reflective colour.
- To meet the minimum width and area dimensions for light wells specified in Table 4.

Table 4 – Light well dimensions

Building height	Minimum width	Minimum area
Up to 4 storeys (12 meters)	2 meters	9 sqm
5-8 storeys (up to 25 meters)	4.5 meters	29sqm
9 or more storeys (over 25 meters)	6 meters	51 sqm

Decision guidelines – Light wells

- Applying the light well requirements specified in Table 1 from the first level of residential use. The light well minimum width and area dimensions may be varied for buildings containing multiple levels of non-residential uses.

Appendix 2 – Merri-bek Council's Phase 1 Submission

Merri-bek City Council

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

June 2025



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

Introduction

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

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

Merri-bek City Council submission

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

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

1. Transport

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key asks

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

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

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

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

2. Economic growth and employment

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key asks

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

3. Infrastructure

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key asks

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

4. Climate adaption and resilience

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

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

Environmentally sustainable development

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

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

Flooding

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

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

Key asks

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

5. Affordable and diverse housing

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

Housing diversity and accessibility

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

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

Affordable housing

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

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

Key asks

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

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

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

6. Design quality

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

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

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

Key asks

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

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

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

7. Community and Council engagement

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

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

Key asks

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

Conclusion

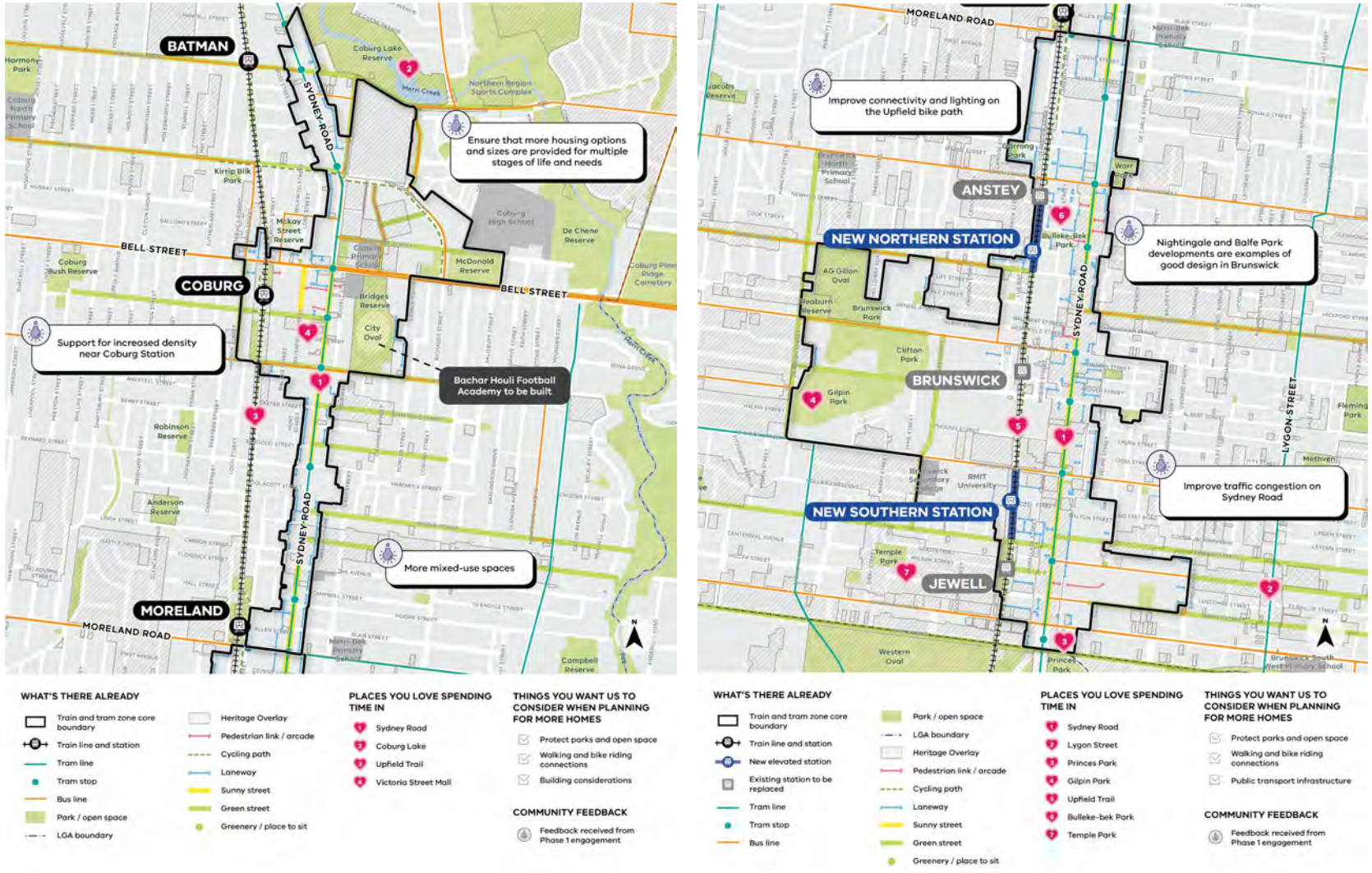
Merri-bek City Council supports well-planned growth in activity centres that reflects local priorities and delivers lasting community benefit. Council looks forward to working with the State Government to achieve these outcomes.

Activity Centres Program

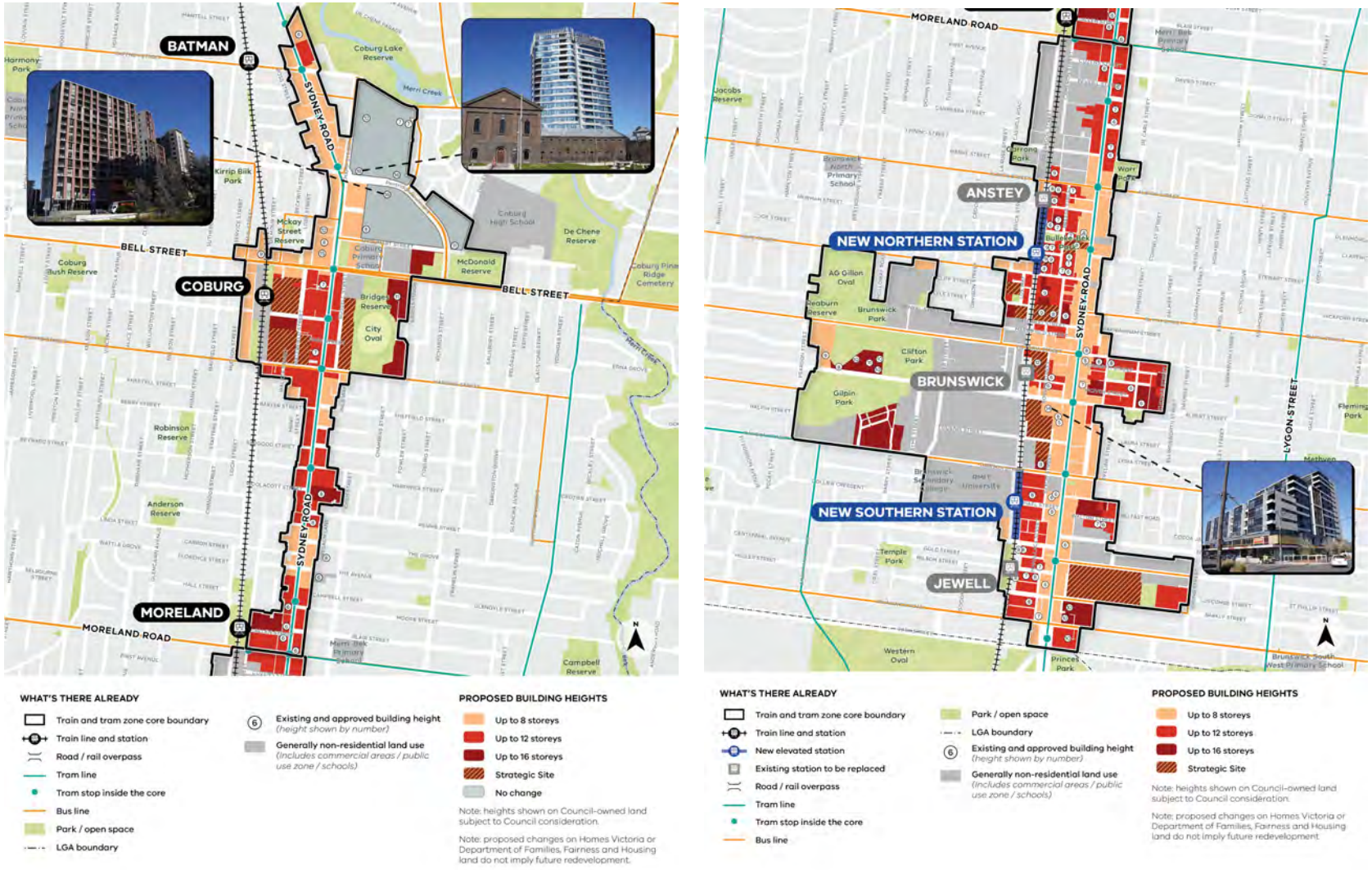
Department of Transport and Planning

Phase 2 Engagement Maps

Map 1 - What the area currently looks like and the places the community said are important



Map 2 - Proposed building heights in the core



Map 3 - Proposed core and catchment areas





WHAT'S THERE ALREADY

- Train line and station
- LGA boundary
- Road / rail overpass
- Tram line
- Tram stop inside the core
- Bus line
- Park / open space
- Generally non-residential land use (includes commercial areas / public use zones / schools)

CATCHMENT AREAS

- Train and tram zone core
- Inner Catchment
- Outer Catchment

Note: proposed changes on Homes Victoria or Department of Families, Fairness and Housing land do not imply future redevelopment.

WHAT'S THERE ALREADY

- Train line and station
- New elevated station
- Existing station to be replaced
- LGA boundary
- Road / rail overpass
- Tram line
- Tram stop inside the core
- Bus line
- Park / open space
- Generally non-residential land use (includes commercial areas / public use zones / schools)

CATCHMENT AREAS

- Train and tram zone core
- Inner Catchment
- Outer Catchment

Note: proposed changes on Homes Victoria or Department of Families, Fairness and Housing land do not imply future redevelopment.

Maps 2 and 3 - Core and catchment heights combined





WHAT'S THERE ALREADY
- Train and tram zone core boundary
- Train line and station
- LGA boundary
- Road / rail overpass
- Tram line
- Tram stop inside the core
- Bus line
- Park / open space
- Generally non-residential land use (includes commercial areas / public use zones / schools)

CORE
- Up to 8 storeys
- Up to 12 storeys
- Up to 16 storeys
- Strategic Site
- No change

Note: heights shown on Council-owned land subject to Council consideration.

Note: proposed changes on Homes Victoria or Department of Families, Fairness and Housing land do not imply future redevelopment.

CATCHMENTS
- Inner Catchment: Up to 4 storeys, 6 storeys on large sites
- Outer Catchment: Up to 3 storeys, 4 storeys on large sites

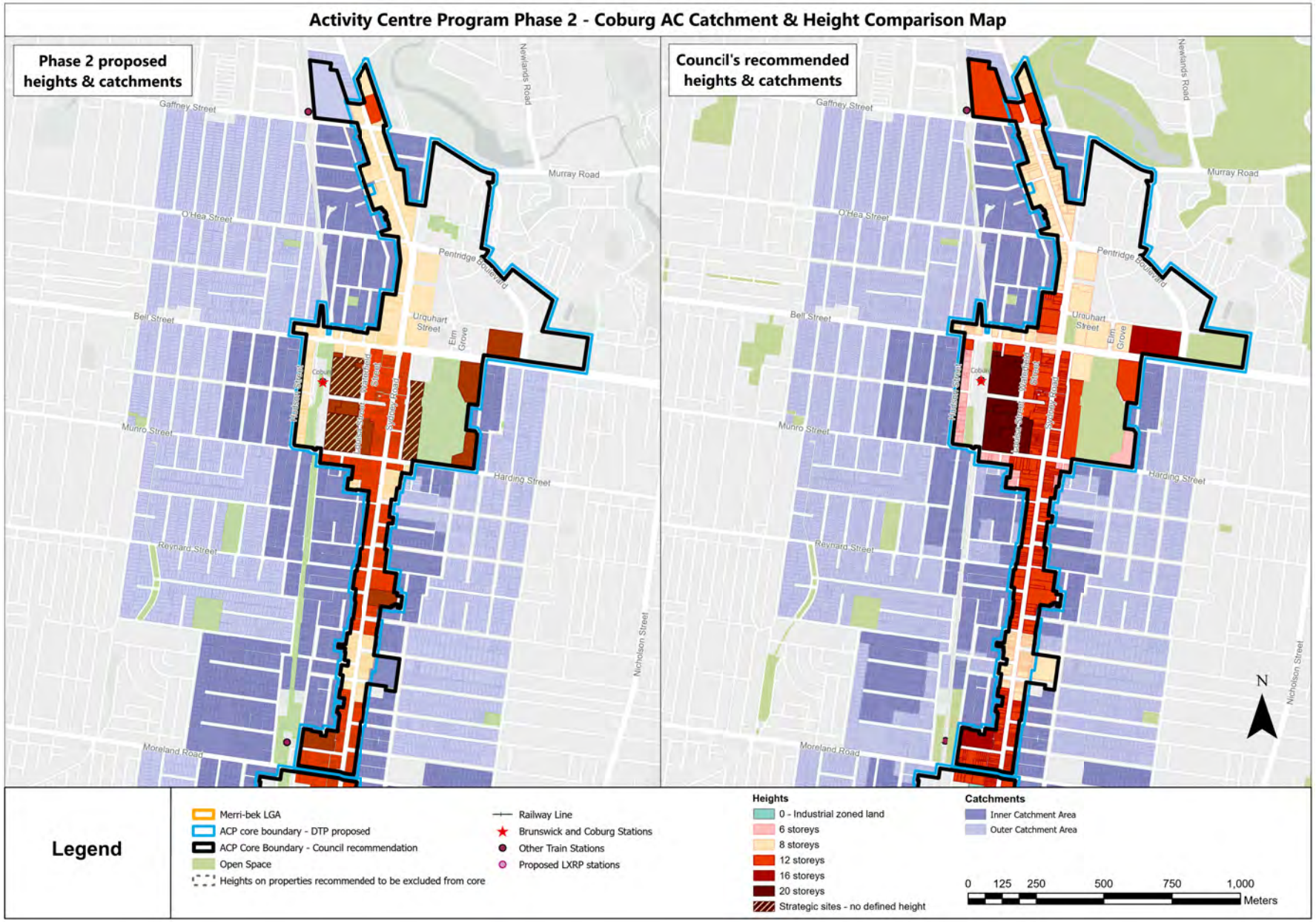
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- Bus line
- Park / open space
- Generally non-residential land use (includes commercial areas / public use zones / schools)

CORE
- Up to 8 storeys
- Up to 12 storeys
- Up to 16 storeys
- Strategic Site

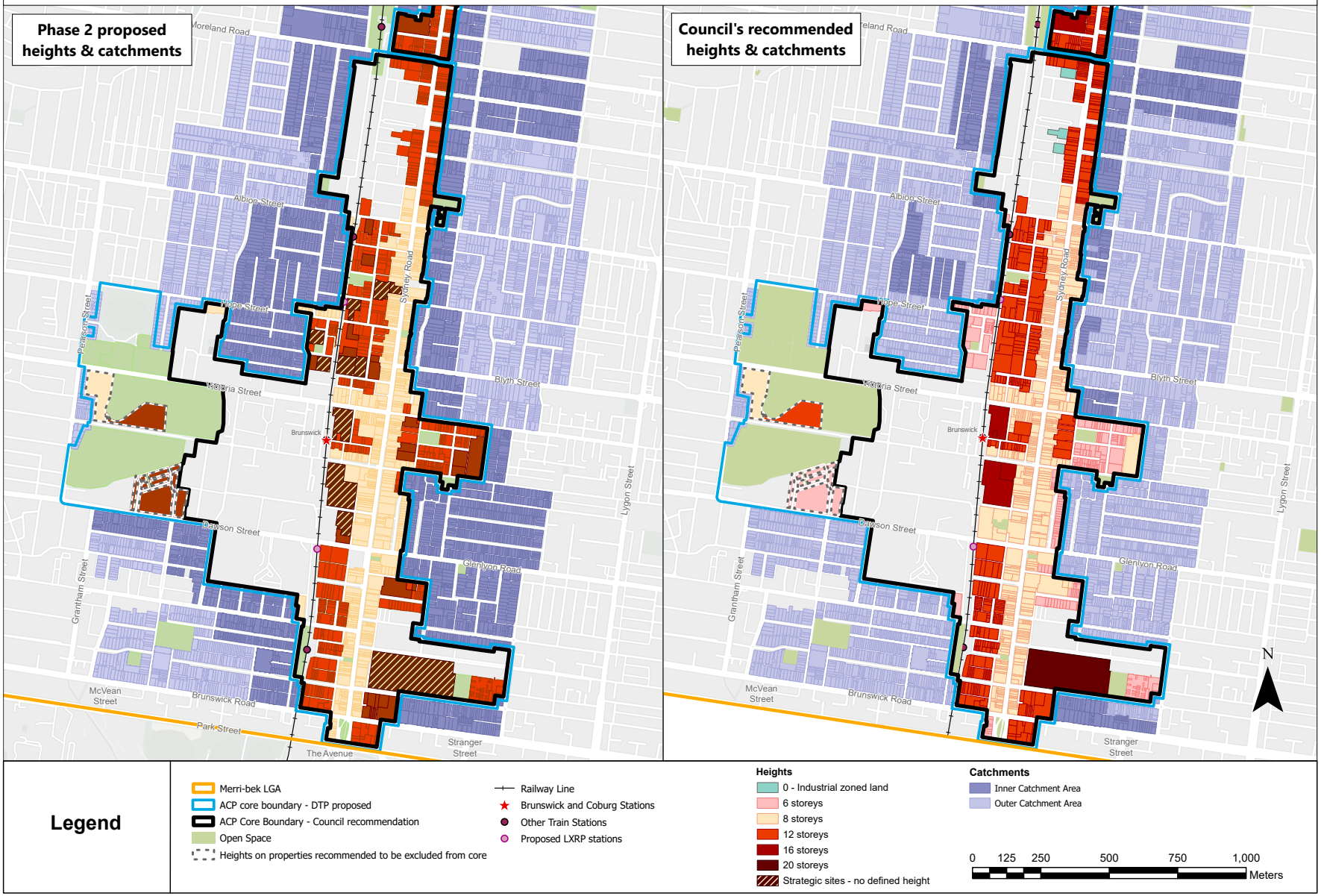
Note: heights shown on Council-owned land subject to Council consideration.

Note: proposed changes on Homes Victoria or Department of Families, Fairness and Housing land do not imply future redevelopment.

CATCHMENTS
- Inner Catchment: Up to 4 storeys, 6 storeys on large sites
- Outer Catchment: Up to 3 storeys, 4 storeys on large sites


Activity Centre Program Phase 2 - Coburg AC Catchment & Height Comparison Map
Phase 2 proposed heights & catchments
Council's recommended heights & catchments
Gaffney Street
Newlands Road
Murray Road
O'Hea Street
Pentridge Boulevard
Bell Street
Urquhart Street
Elm Grove
Munro Street
Harding Street
Reynard Street
Nicholson Street
Moreland Road
N
Legend
Merri-bek LGA
ACP core boundary - DTP proposed
ACP Core Boundary - Council recommendation
Open Space
Heights on properties recommended to be excluded from core
Railway Line
Brunswick and Coburg Stations
Other Train Stations
Proposed LXRP stations
Heights
0 - Industrial zoned land
6 storeys
8 storeys
12 storeys
16 storeys
20 storeys
Strategic sites - no defined height
Catchments
Inner Catchment Area
Outer Catchment Area
0 125 250 500 750 1,000
Meters

Activity Centre Program Phase 2 - Brunswick AC Catchment & Height Comparison Map



Merri-bek cluster Phase 1 community feedback

The Merri-bek Community Vision 2021–2031 supports sustainable, inclusive growth in well-connected locations like Brunswick and Coburg. It prioritises low-emission development, safer built environments, and diverse, affordable housing close to services and open space. The Vision also promotes vibrant, well-designed activity centres that reflect local identity, alongside transparent, community-led planning and strong local leadership.

The Engage Victoria Activity Centres Program – Phase 2 website includes Phase 1 Consultation Summary Report and Statements of Advice from Community Reference Groups. The feedback from the Merri-bek community closely aligns with the transport, economy, infrastructure, climate, affordable housing, design quality matters raised in Council's Phase 1 submission. The documented feedback from the community is summarised below:

Top five program interests (from fixed options)

1. Urban design
2. Open space
3. Traffic congestion
4. Impact on the character of my local area
5. More housing choice.

Top five things to consider with increased density (from fixed options)

1. Protecting parks and open space
2. Walking and bike riding connections
3. Building considerations, such as overshadowing, wind protections and sun access
4. Increased tree planting
5. Public transport infrastructure.

Community Feedback to Phase 1	
Transport and movement	• I Increase public transport services on the Upfield line, signal upgrades and speed restrictions on arterial roads. • Active and public transport improvements. • Safer, pedestrian friendly environments with a focus on reducing car use. • Traffic congestion and dangerous intersections with suggestions to improve crossings, and increase footpath width, particularly on Murray Road and Sydney Road. • Safety, accessibility and improved routes for pedestrians and cyclists. • Better connectivity and safer paths for the active transport network. • Increase the frequency of train services on the Upfield line. • Upgrade roads, footpaths and public transport access. • Improve ways to get around without cars, including upgrading bike trails such as the Upfield bike path – improve connectivity and lighting. • Increase the frequency of services on all modes of public transport to support growth in the area. • Sydney Road is highly congested – suggestions to improve this included dedicated tram lanes, removing on street parking and adding multi-level car parks. • Walkability, family-friendly environment and community feel highly valued. • Upfield train line needs increased services to support more people. • Traffic on Sydney Road and lack of accessible tram stops.

	• Traffic congestion around Pentridge Boulevard, Bell Street and Sydney Road. • Community infrastructure, particularly schools, public and active transport, needs to be invested in ahead of continued population growth. • Trains – more frequency and duplication. • Trams – accessibility of trams and stops. • Bike paths – protected lanes and lighting.
Building	• Height limits consider overshadowing to ensure maximising sunlight and access to solar installations. • Prioritise green infrastructure, reducing emissions and incorporating environmentally sustainable design into new developments. • More diverse, affordable housing options and services for all socioeconomic groups. • Support for increased density but concerns around overshadowing, privacy and potential scale of new developments. • Consider quality, aesthetics, sustainability and overshadowing with new developments. • Consideration for light, sunshine and warmth. • A good balance of building heights, sunlight in open spaces. • Importance of design/ aesthetics of new developments. • We want homes that are sustainable, well thought out, architecturally ambitious and available to all types of households. We should be proud of our built environment.
Heritage and character	• Protect local heritage character. • Preserve the unique, eclectic and community oriented nature of Brunswick and Coburg. • Celebrate local creativity including arts, festivals and street arts. • Ensure new developments are appropriately scaled to fit into the existing neighbourhood character. • Buildings need to be of a high standard and character that are consistent with the general area, as well as providing liveability and amenity that makes us love where we live while celebrating our history and heritage.
Public realm	• Increase green spaces. • Green space, green corridors, pocket parks and tree lined streetscapes. • More community spaces, such as multi-purpose hubs, libraries and inclusive community spaces that foster social connection. • New development that caters to all life stages with play areas, seating and spaces that work for both older people and young families. • More green space for both walking and socialising. • Sunlight, open spaces, shade, greenery and communal spaces. • Improvements to safety and amenity, improved lighting in streets and public spaces. • Impacts on infrastructure and green space a concern. • Support for increased density near Coburg station, but amenity and infrastructure needs to be considered. • Refresh shopping strip to make the area more inviting. • More mixed-use spaces, activation of public areas, and retention of creative/community hubs. • We need to master plan for greenery, safety and good transport for all. • Open spaces – not just for sports clubs.
Housing growth and diversity	• Want more homes. We want to welcome more people to contribute to our creative, progressive, diverse community. • Population growth supports existing industries and new employment in key sectors. We want this.

	• A balanced approach for new developments that includes affordable housing options for residents. • More diverse housing options. • It is important that options and sizes are provided for multiple stages of life and needs – single, families and those with a disability and the elderly.

It is evident that the Brunswick and Coburg communities understand the need for and broadly support housing growth. This is evident in both in the Merri-bek Community Vision and in the state government's engagement for this Program. But understandably, going along with this the community wants the planning scheme, the state government and Council to ensure that development is of a high quality, that housing is sustainable, diverse and affordable, that the public realm and public spaces are protected and enhanced and that there is associated investment in infrastructure, especially, but not limited to, public and active transport infrastructure and parks.

7.11 SUBMISSION - STATE GOVERNMENT RESIDENTIAL MID-RISE CODE REFORM

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade

City Development

Officer recommendation

That Council:

1. Endorses Council's submission to the Department of Transport and Planning on the technical aspects of the draft standards for mid-rise residential developments (up to 6 storeys), at Attachment 1 of this report, which includes recommendations that:
    a) Third party review rights to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal must remain as part of Clause 57 of the Planning Scheme.
    b) Development at this scale should deliver best practice Environmentally Sustainable Design.
    c) Operational provisions must be amended to enable Council to consider environmental risks such as flooding and potentially contaminated land.
    d) It is essential that design quality is supported.
    e) The canopy tree requirement must be adjusted to ensure development at this scale is within a landscaped setting, which contributes to greener, cooler, and healthier neighbourhoods.
    f) The concept of relying on setbacks, to minimise both overlooking and overshadowing, be revisited as this may increase the impacts on neighbours, when compared to the current metrics in Clause 55 of the *Planning and Environment Act*.
    g) The Department of Transport and Planning should undertake wider consultation with the community on such significant changes to planning controls.

REPORT

Executive summary

This report is one of two reports tabled at the October Council meeting, relating to State Government planning reforms. This report relates to statutory planning reforms to planning controls for mid-rise developments. The other report relates to Activity Centre planning reforms which will introduce new zones with three to six storey height limits in Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres.

The Victorian State Government is currently consulting on new draft planning controls for mid-rise residential developments (up to six storeys). The mid-rise residential standards are part of the ongoing planning reforms which seek to boost housing supply. The draft mid-rise residential standards proposed by the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP), set out new planning requirements for residential apartment buildings between four and six storeys, aiming to streamline approvals and clarify residential amenity, design, and development expectations for Councils, the development industry and local communities, on residentially zoned land. In Merri-bek it is expected that apartments up to six storeys will be allowed near activity centres, in land currently within the Residential Growth Zone, Mixed Use Zone or in the proposed new Housing Choice and Transport Zone.

The Victorian State Government is currently undertaking targeted consultation with developers, planning consultants, building designers, industry peak bodies and Councils on the Mid-rise Code. This includes the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), Planning Institute of Australia (PIA), the Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE) and others. DTP is encouraging submissions on the proposed design standards via an online survey. It is expected that the new mid-rise residential standards will be implemented in Victorian Planning Schemes by December 2025.

Some of the key features of the new draft standard for mid-rise residential development are:

- No third-party right of review to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) will apply for objectors if all "deemed to comply" standards are met. Objectors can therefore only seek a review before VCAT, if a standard is not met.
- They limit what can be considered in the planning assessment. This means broader issues including flooding or potentially contaminated land will no longer be considered.

Whilst Merri-bek supports increasing the supply of well-designed new housing, there are some concerns with the draft standards for mid-rise residential developments. These concerns broadly relate to:

- The lessening of the community's ability to participate in the planning process, through limiting the ability of an objector to seek a review at the VCAT.
- The lack of broader consultation on these changes with community, particularly in a setting where new standards allow for greater impacts on residential amenity (e.g. shadowing) through allowing developments up to six storeys in residential areas.
- Removing the need to assess mid-rise apartment buildings against Council's policy which seeks to deliver best practice Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD)

Previous Council decisions

There are no previous Council decisions relating specifically to the State Government's draft mid-rise residential standards.

1. Policy context

Merri-bek Council Plan 2025–2029

The Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029 includes the following initiatives and priorities:

- *Promote genuinely affordable social, quality, and sustainable housing by encouraging well-designed, sustainable developments. (2.14)*
- *Facilitate high-quality built form outcomes and design innovation through*
- *built form policy and controls, planning decision-making, advocacy on state planning reform, and input to State planning decisions. (3.8)*
- *Ensure the Merri-bek Planning Scheme provides an effective framework of local policies and controls that guide the type and location of housing growth – to manage land use change, support economic and sustainability objectives, and protect natural and cultural resources. (3.9)*

Planning Framework

Merri-bek Planning Scheme

The Merri-bek Planning Scheme includes the following policies:

- *Ensure site design, building frontages, design articulation and internal layout achieve a good interface with and surveillance of the public realm, including maximising opportunities for active frontages. (Clause 15.01-1L)*
- *Encourage good-quality contemporary architecture. (Clause 15.01-2L)*

- *To achieve best practice in environmentally sustainable development from the design stage through to construction and operation. (Clause 15.01-2L-05)*

The Council Plan and the Merri-bek Planning Scheme have a consistent ambition for the delivery of high-quality housing.

2. Background

The draft mid-rise residential standards propose new planning requirements for residential buildings between four and six storeys, aiming to streamline approvals and clarify amenity, design, and development expectations for Councils, industry and communities.

The standards are intended to apply to residential buildings of four to six storeys. Other Planning Scheme clauses will continue to apply to other zones. Clause 58 (Better Apartment Design Standards) continues to apply in other zones, such as commercial or certain activity centre contexts; Clause 55 (Two or More Dwellings on a Lot) remains applicable to two and three storey developments in residential zones.

The proposed new mid-rise standards cover key areas of building design and residential amenity. The draft standards are set around the following themes:

- Urban context which includes standards related to front, side and rear setbacks, walls on boundaries, site coverage, tree canopy, access, and front fences.
- Liveability which includes standards related to dwelling diversity, building entry and circulation, private and communal open space, room sizes/dimensions, daylight and ventilation, storage, and accessibility features.
- External amenity which includes standards related to building separation within a site, light courts, overshadowing and overlooking.
- Sustainability which includes standards related to energy efficiency targets, permeability and stormwater management and waste/recycling.

The draft mid-rise residential code offers different options for some of the proposed planning rules. For example, there is a choice about street setbacks of whether to have a sheer six storey wall, a four-storey wall with the upper floors set back, or to match the setback of existing buildings nearby. Other parts of the code have mirrored standards for townhouses from Clause 55, or apartment buildings from Clause 58.

Four to six storey mid-rise apartment buildings must continue to meet the height controls within the existing residential zones. In Merri-bek this would mean that mid-rise apartments would be possible in the Mixed Use Zone (MUZ), Residential Growth Zone (RGZ), or the proposed new Housing Choice and Transport Zone (HCTZ), which are mostly adjacent to activity centres.

The State Government has recently been undertaking consultation on Activity Centres planning reforms, to introduce new planning controls in and around the Upfield Corridor in Brunswick and Coburg (referred to as the Merri-bek Cluster). It is expected that the 'catchment' areas around these Activity Centre will be included with the new Housing Choice and Transport Zone, which provides for the following building heights:

- Inner catchment: buildings up to six storeys on lots over 1,000m² with a 20-metre frontage and up to four storeys elsewhere.
- Outer catchment: buildings up to four storeys on lots larger than 1,000m² with a 20m frontage and up to three storeys elsewhere.

The draft mid-rise residential standards are intended to guide the more intense housing outcomes within the catchment areas around Activity Centres.

3. Issues

The State Government is seeking feedback on the draft standards for mid-rise residential developments. The supplied materials are technical in nature and propose some different options for some of the standards. This report provides high-level feedback on some of the identified key concerns, with **Attachment 1** providing analysis on the more technical aspects of the draft standards for mid-rise residential developments.

Community impact

A longstanding and celebrated attribute of the planning system in Victoria has been the community's right to seek a review before VCAT of a planning proposal that impacts them. The draft standards for mid-rise residential developments, are proposing to reduce VCAT review rights when developments meet certain standards. At the same time, the planning controls that provide protections to existing residents are being weakened. For example, the current rule about building shadowing at the equinox would change to a simpler rule requiring buildings to be set back 4.5 metres from the south boundary. The reason given is that this setback balances existing resident comfort and development feasibility, while leaving space for trees and landscaping. However, it is not yet clear if this change will protect residents as well as the current rules do under Clause 55.

As the wider community has not been consulted, this part of the reform raises concerns about worsening living conditions for residents and loss of VCAT review rights. It is important that the that VCAT review rights are not removed and the current amenity protections for residential zoned land are not reduced without a comprehensive consultation and thorough planning process which enable the views of the community to be heard and considered, prior to any decisions being made.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

The draft standards for mid-rise residential developments as currently drafted will result in planning applications that meet deem to comply standards no longer being considered against the various other planning policies in Victorian Planning Schemes. This means Council has no opportunity to apply planning policy, including Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) objectives which set objectives for best-practice ESD.

This shift is concerning for apartment buildings of four to six storeys. These buildings typically have greater environmental impacts and more opportunities for energy and water savings, so they should be setting higher, rather than lower ESD standards. Reducing ESD requirements reduces the sustainability, affordability, and resilience of new homes, undermining longstanding Merri-bek City Council and planning industry efforts to lift standards for healthier, more environmentally responsible development. It is considered that bare minimum ESD requirements are counterproductive, especially as Victoria seeks to build more apartments in a warming climate were energy and comfort performance matters most.

Environmental risk

The draft standards for mid-rise residential developments are designed to operate as a standalone, complete provision in Victorian Planning Schemes. This proposed operation prevents Council from considering environmental risks that may not be addressed by zoning or overlay controls. For example, if a site is zoned residential but has a past use like a petrol station, a permit could be granted without any assessment of potential land contamination or the need for remediation. This means vital planning permit conditions to protect future residents could not be legally imposed. Similarly, hazards like localised flooding may be ignored if not picked up by an overlay. The deemed to comply standards strip away the precaution needed for safeguarding community health and environmental quality.

Design quality

Introducing requirements for design quality for mid-rise residential developments, is consistent with Council's ambition for the delivery of high-quality housing, as detailed in both the Council Plan and the Merri-bek Planning Scheme. It is considered that design quality is a fundamental ingredient in creating homes and neighbourhoods that people genuinely want to live in, helping to ensure new developments have lasting value and leave a legacy we can be proud of.

It is positive that Victoria's mid-rise building standards include a specific design quality requirement, but more work and detail is needed. Good design goes beyond selecting durable external materials and is something that must be considered holistically, from layout and amenity to details like orientation and landscaping. Design quality is not easily measured or reduced to a checklist, so it is essential for the draft standards to clearly explain what constitutes good design, and how these elements will be assessed fairly and objectively. More detail is needed before Councils, the community, or industry can fully understand or comment on how a design quality provision will support better outcomes in practice.

Urban forest

The draft standards for mid-rise residential developments, propose ten per cent site area tree canopy cover for sites under 1,000 square metres and 20 per cent for larger sites, with minimum tree sizes and specific deep soil requirements. The intention of this standard is to have apartment buildings within landscape settings which is a positive aspiration given that urban apartment living should contribute to greener, cooler, and healthier neighbourhoods.

However, it is unclear how these standards will interact with requirements such as Clause 52.37 (Canopy Trees) and Clause 12.06-1S (Sustainable Environment) in the Planning Scheme, which set additional or sometimes stricter expectations for tree planting, biodiversity and urban greening. Without clearer guidance, the standards risk unintended weakening of tree outcomes. Further work is needed to ensure the achievement of enhanced canopy cover is central to achieving liveability, sustainability, and resilience goals, with enforceable tree targets to address these challenges.

Human Rights consideration

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and was found to be in line with these requirements. This report seeks endorsement of a submission to the State Government that has regard to existing Merri-bek policy and adopted strategies and the importance of public participation in the planning process.

4. Community consultation and engagement

There is currently targeted consultation with developers, the planning and design industry, peak bodies and Councils. This includes the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) and the Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE). Feedback from this process will shape the final form of the mid-rise residential standards and inform the Department of Transport and Planning's advice to the Victorian Government, who will make the final decision.

Council's submission includes that the Department of Transport and Planning should undertake wider consultation with the community.

The Public Transparency Principles outlined in Section 58 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, include several principles including not releasing information if it would be contrary to the public interest. **Attachment 2** is the draft mid-rise standards, which are confidential as it details more permissive planning controls, which may lead to land speculation.

5. Officer declaration of Conflict of Interest

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

6. Financial and resources implications

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

7. Implementation

Once endorsed by Council, the submission will be lodged with the Department of Transport and Planning by the Urban Planning Unit, via an online portal.

Attachment/s

1⇩	Submission Mid-Rise Standard	D25/513630
2	Mid-Rise Standards Overview and Consultation Draft, August 2025	D25/529998

Pursuant to section 3(1)(c) of the Local Government Act 2020 this attachment has been designated as confidential because it relates to land use planning information, being information that if prematurely released is likely to encourage speculation in land values.

Mid-rise standards (Clause 57) - feedback on draft mid-rise residential standards

This document provides Merri-bek City Council's technical response on the proposed standards, that will guide mid-rise apartments of four to six storeys.

Each of the survey questions are provided, with a feedback response. The yellow highlighting is used to nominate the preferred option, when several are provided.

The number of the questions matches the survey, noting questions 1 to 4 are not included, as this relates to the information of the submitter which will be Merri-bek City Council.

Application requirements

Review the application requirements in the Mid-rise standards (Clause 57) consultation draft document.

If you have any comments, please add them in the free text section.

5. Comments on Application requirements

Under the heading "Where will the standards apply?"

Clause 55 will continue to apply to two and three storey apartment developments in a Neighbourhood Residential Zone and General Residential Zone. This leaves a gap for applicants who are seeking to develop lower scale townhouses in Mixed Use, Residential Growth, and Housing Choice and Transport Zones.

We recommend that Clause 57 be specific to apartment typologies of 4 to 6 storeys. This may simplify the task of writing the controls and avoid the need to duplicate Clause 55 standards.

Design quality

DTP is considering introducing a new requirement for design quality as part of clause 57 to support well-designed outcomes for mid-rise development. This requirement could allow assessment of specified elements of a design, such as external materials, in addition to assessment against deemed-to-comply standards.

6. Comments on proposed design quality requirement

Introducing requirements for design quality for mid-rise residential developments is consistent with Council's ambition for the delivery of high-quality development as detailed in both the Council Plan and the Merri-bek Planning Scheme. Design quality is a fundamental ingredient in creating homes and neighbourhoods that people genuinely want to live in, helping to ensure new developments have lasting value and leave a legacy we can be proud of. Including a specific design quality requirement in Victoria's mid-rise building standards is a positive step, but more work and detail is needed.

Good design goes beyond selecting durable external materials and is something that must be considered holistically, from layout and amenity to details like orientation and landscaping. It is not suitable for deem to comply as design quality is not easily measured or reduced to a checklist, so it is essential for the draft standards to clearly explain what constitutes good design, and how these elements will be assessed fairly and objectively. More detail is needed before Councils, the community, or industry can fully understand or comment on how a vital design quality provision will support better outcomes in practice.

Urban Context

Review the Urban Context section of the Mid-rise standards (Clause 57) consultation draft document.

Choose your a most preferred option for each standard from the multiple choice options. If you have any comments, please add them in the free text section.

Where there is only one option presented for a standard in the consultation draft, you will only be able to write a comment.

7. Preferred option - Street setback standard

- **Option A – Upper-level setbacks**
- **Option B – Sheer front wall to six storeys**
- **Option C – Matched setbacks to existing context**

8. Comments on Street setback objective

The inclusion of a four-storey street wall (as outlined in Option A) seems to be the only viable option suitable for the suburban context to which this will mostly be applied. The inclusion of a six-storey sheer front wall option is not supported. The disruption to any sense of visual harmony or alignment with other objectives make Option B a poor choice. All street setback options appear to maintain a level of suburban character through the adequate provision of space for canopy trees, which in the Tree canopy objectives are critical to reduce the visual impact of buildings on the streetscape. Some knock-on effects worth considering:

- Any street wall above 2 storeys (TBC) may impact the viability of tree species located within a front setback facing south, east or west. Overshadowing to

adjacent verges may also limit the viability of grasses or other vegetation. The massing profile proposed is normally limited to activity centres where a high level of pedestrian amenity, such as footpaths, tree grates etc are the norm. Appropriate public realm treatment must be considered alongside the incremental increase in massing within suburban streets.

- The Access objective relating to allowable vehicle accessways or car parks is completely inadequate and contrary to the purpose of having a setback that allows for canopy trees. If a third or more of the frontage width can be taken up by vehicle access, the purpose of the required ground level front setback is largely diminished.

As it currently occurs within activity centres, a more thorough assessment of the context is required when promoting greater heights/densities. Some aspects that must be considered:

- **Relationship to street width** – street wall or front wall dimension should be no more than the street width.
- **North vs south** – high street walls/front walls will impact the viability of trees due to shading and vegetation within the front setback and adjacent public realm. Impacts and remedies should be explicit to ensure the quality of the public realm is not diminished.

Corners and side street setbacks: we are concerned about the limited consideration of corner setback controls, particularly in light of greatly increased density being proposed. A 4.5m (or similar) front setback with 3m side setback contributes to a distinctly sub-optimal outcome, pushing the onus of greening the street onto narrow parcels of land likely to be encumbered by driveways, fences, and paths. Setbacks to soften massing miss the point of urban densification/intensification, as they make it impossible to realise the heights proposed on even large or medium consolidated corner lots. Massing at 4-6 storey which can occur in activity centres tends to allow building to the street boundary, acknowledging Council's role in delivering adjacent public realm improvements (including canopy tree planting) commensurate with the type of density proposed. We recommend a stronger urban presence at corners to align with the ambitions of increased densities and to potentially couple uplift on corner sites with adjacent improvements to public realm.

9. Preferred option - Side and rear setbacks standard

- **Option A – 4.5m setbacks, with increased setbacks to south facing side and rear boundaries above four storeys**
- **Option B – 4.5m setbacks, with increased setbacks to south facing side and rear boundaries above three storeys**

10. Comments on side and rear setbacks objective

We welcome the provision of a 4.5m side setback to allow space for canopy tree planting. Option B allows for a better transitional condition for lots adjacent to established low rise housing and a better outcome for tree viability (due to solar access) more broadly.

Merri-bek has developed side and rear standards within Clause 15.01-2L 'apartment developments in Merri-bek' to account for buildings needing to appropriately 'build in' internal amenity and outlook. These standards were based on significant testing within Merri-bek as well as daylight modelling. It is noted that DTP has not provided any of the testing or modelling to support the Option A or Option B standards; in the absence of this, Merri-bek does not support these lesser Options.

11. Preferred option - Walls on boundaries standard

- **Option A – Existing standard with higher maximum wall height**
- **Option B – Increased opportunity to build walls on boundary**
- **Option C – Reduces allowable wall on boundary to match existing conditions**

12. Comments on walls on boundaries objective

Option B is an appropriate response to the ambitions for greater density. The morphological evolution of building massing proposed by the Clause 57 updates, needs to reflect objectives which acknowledge the 'closer' relationship buildings will have to one another. Allowing for more walls on boundaries could result in more internal/courtyard facing dwellings. If model testing reveals this to be so, the knock-on benefits of shared outlook, cross ventilation, more consolidated areas for planting and open space, may be realised.

13. Comments on site coverage objective

The proposed 70% site coverage is considered appropriate.

14. Comments on access objective

We have already seen poor outcomes for proposals made using the new Clause 55 Deemed-to-Comply requirements. Metrics relating to the percentage of access being allowed for vehicle access reduce Council's ability to assess the relative impact on the public realm. Additionally, where rear lanes are provided and front driveway crossovers are not typical, applications seeking new front crossovers diminish the quality of streetscape and the level of accessibility within the public realm.

If the intention is to create larger buildings with more significant side and rear setbacks, presumably contained in one congruous building, it seems logical to require that only one vehicle crossover be provided into a common parking space – this would reduce the vehicle crossovers in the streetscape, and fulfil the policy's intention by creating additional landscaping and canopy tree planting opportunities. This will also contribute

to fewer hardstand/vehicle crossovers in the frontage of a site, which contributes to activation and building appeal. A requirement to make use of existing rear accessways where available would also avoid unnecessary vehicle crossovers to street frontages.

15. Preferred option - Tree canopy standard

- **Option A – Simplified tree planting and deep soil requirements with new guidance for basements**
- **Option B – Existing requirements**

16. Comments on tree canopy objective

There is no middle ground in delivering on tree canopy based on the size of the land. If the intention of the policy is to encourage consolidation of existing residential land, the step from ten per cent tree canopy coverage at 999m^2, to 20 per cent coverage at 1001m^2, is a substantial increase, and a disincentive to pursue consolidation. Tree canopy needs to have a more nuanced scale approach, with more incremental increases as site size increases.

The use of planters does not deliver canopy tree planting needed to soften the bulk of four to six storey buildings. Consideration should be given to what role planters have for canopy tree planting and how much of the site should be set aside as deep soil. This element of the code requires input by landscape experts, taking into consideration:

- Impact of building shading on the viability of canopy tree planting;
- The benefits and disbenefits of planters for providing canopy tree planting; and
- Nomination or quantum of deep soil planting.

Broadly the deem to comply concept is problematic for the pursuit of meaningful landscaping which often needs a contextual response tailored to environmental factors.

Enter your answer

17. Preferred option - Front fences standard

- **Option A – Front fence with transparency**
- **Option B – Existing requirements**

18. Comments on Front fences objective

We recommend that when permitted (i.e. on main roads), higher front fencing should incorporate design interest or high-quality materials.

A fence with continuous concrete foundations may impact the viability of canopy trees within the front setback, which could be addressed by requiring breaks in the fencing adjacent to canopy trees (existing or proposed).

Liveability

Review the Liveability section of the Mid-rise standards (Clause 57) consultation draft document.

Choose your a most preferred option for each standard from the multiple choice options. If you have any comments, please add them in the free text section.

Where there is only one option presented for a standard in the consultation draft, you will only be able to write a comment.

19. Comments on dwelling diversity objective

Dwelling diversity has removed the requirement for a ground floor accessible dwelling on the basis that "apartments will provide lift access to dwellings". There is no requirement for the provision of lifts as part of these standards, so there will be outcomes where no lift is provided, and these developments will not be accessible. The standards should include requirements for dwellings to achieve a minimum standard of accessibility, to ensure that housing that can support aging in place and accessibility, and to avoid past mistakes associated with four storey walk-up flats

20. Comments on parking location objective

This repeats a Clause 55 or townhouse standard, which was developed for largely low traffic environments – and applies them to higher traffic settings. It is suggested that a setback from an accessway may not protect future residents from adverse noise impacts. A more considered standard is recommended that considers likely traffic volumes and where appropriate an acoustic report to ensure future residents are not adversely impacted by vehicle noise.

21. Comments on Street integration objective

Street activation and integration repeats the standard from Clause 55, where dwellings face the public realm/public space. However, in a higher density setting, this standard would make it possible and feasible to comply with the standard with only one window facing the street in a development that is four storeys in height, with a frontage of around 30m to the street. This is insufficient and will lead to poor street activation but will be 'deemed to comply' because one street facing window has been provided. The standard is easy to exploit and should require that dwellings provide a minimum number of windows for each dwelling that fronts public/common areas.

A higher standard of street integration is required, particularly where front setbacks will be reduced. The standard should be expanded to include considerations currently listed in Clause 58 being:

- Incorporate pedestrian entries, windows, balconies or other active spaces.
- Limit blank walls.

- Limit high front fencing, unless consistent with the existing urban context.
- Provide low and visually permeable front fences, where proposed.
- Conceal car parking and internal waste collection areas from the street.

It is acknowledged that the latter dot point related to concealing parking facilities, is part of the proposed street integration standard. It is agreed that concealed car parking facilities is a factor that helps with street integration. However, the current drafting lacks the precision needed to be a deemed to comply standard and therefore better as part of a design quality standard which can enable a more qualitative assessment of the design as a whole.

Street integration is an essential component of good design and therefore should not be included as a deemed to comply standard.

22. Comments on Building entry and circulation objective

From Great Design Fast Track Design Principles:

> *Activated communal spaces create opportunities for incidental interactions. These include circulation spaces such as lobbies, stairs and corridors, with connections to residents' amenity spaces. Building a dynamic relationship between the lobby, external residents' spaces and shared uses is encouraged.*
>
> *The design of dwelling entries can create a welcoming sense of arrival. The thoughtful use of artwork, colour, seating and/or glazing to identify individual dwelling entries elevates the arrival experience and encourages a sense of ownership.*
>
> *The ground plane of a new building is an important opportunity to activate and positively contribute to the streetscape. Design ground floor program such as retail and commercial space, resident amenities (for example, a workshop) as well as ground floor dwellings, with considerations to weather protection, landscape and the human scale.*

Larger buildings, particularly those that provide for more than 10 dwellings in one building, should have more prominent and attractive building entrances. The existing C55 standard does not translate to larger developments, and will result in building entrances that appear small in scale, unattractive and inappropriate for their role as the gateway into the building.

Building entry and arrival is an essential component of good design and should not be deemed to comply.

23. Preferred option - Private open space standard

- **Option A – Reduces ground floor private open space to 15sqm, removes orientation triggers, introduces a minimum balcony length and a minimum perimeter of balconies clear to the sky**

- **Option B – Existing private open space requirements**

24. Comments on private open space objective

Private Open Space should include consideration of orientation, to ensure that solar access is preserved.

Option A is not supported because it significantly reduces both the area and minimum dimension of private open space at ground level or on a podium. This reduction will create poor outcomes for future residents, noting in some circumstances there will be no communal open space to compensate for the lesser amount of private open space.

25. Preferred option - Communal space objective

- **Option A – Increased communal space provision**
- **Option B – Streamlined requirements aligning with existing metrics from clause 58 with integrated solar metrics**

26. Comments on communal space objective

Communal open space requirements should include minimum dimensions. The deemed-to-comply communal open space on the proposed draft can lead to very poor outcomes (i.e. multiple 4m^2 areas that have no practical function, or denoting side and rear setbacks as communal open space). If the aim is to encourage ground floor communal space, requirements for solar access should be increased, as these areas are more likely to be overshadowed.

27. Comments on functional layout objective

Internal room sizes are supported.

28. Comments on room depth objective

Room depth is supported, provided there is daylight modelling to support the metric to ensure appropriate daylight factors.

29. Preferred option - Daylight to new windows standard

- **Option A– Specifies that habitable room windows must not be located in a basement**
- **Option B – Existing standard**

30. Comments on daylight to new windows standard

Daylight to new windows needs more guidance on deemed to comply outcomes, and should require daylight modelling compliance as part of the standards.

Neither Option A or Option B will ensure achievement of the objective “to allow adequate daylight into new habitable rooms”. This is for a number of reasons:

- The 'lifting of' (hereafter noted as 'turning off') of the local ESD policy (Clause 15.01-2L-05) and 'apartment developments in Merri-bek' (Clause 15.01-2L-05) mean a thorough daylight assessment, including daylight modelling, cannot be required. Daylight modelling allows Council to review proposed buildings' daylight performance based on the nuances and intricacies of the proposed building, the subject site and its site context (including existing development as well as future development). The model reviews the proposed building's specific building fabric, including: the window sizes, the glazing type (e.g. clear or films) and external shading; the layout of the room the window is located within and design alternatives; surrounding built form including existing adjoining building or future development potential; and finally creation of a model that allows Council's to review the modelled daylight entering the various rooms within the development.
- This exercise provides Council with assurance of the quality of daylight entering new habitable rooms is adequate. It also helps Council identify reasons why daylight outcomes might be inadequate and to discuss design alternatives to improve daylight performance with the applicant. It also allows Council to ensure proposed buildings are adequately designing for their own amenity and appropriately consider existing or future adjoining development sites – critical in densifying, urban settings.
- The current policy setting of Clauses 15.01-2L and 15.01-2L-05 provide for assessment against best practice daylight requirements (a Daylight Factor of 1.0 per cent to 90 per cent of the dining/living/kitchen floor area to 90 per cent of dwellings; and a Daylight Factor of 0.5 per cent to 90 per cent of the bedroom floor area in 90% of bedrooms). These best practice daylight requirements have been established and accepted across Merri-bek and the 28 councils with similar ESD clauses for over ten years. They have appropriately provided certainty for applicants, Councils and future residents. The removal of these two local policies and this best practice standard, which is industry and VCAT accepted, will directly reduce natural daylight outcomes in new apartments. This will have significant adverse impact on future residents' amenity and liveability.

31. Comments on natural ventilation objective

Merri-bek's local ESD policy (and best practice ESD) aims for 60 per cent of dwellings in a development to be cross ventilated. The proposed Standards drop this to 40 per cent of dwellings. Council's experience is that more than 40 per cent can be achieved without compromising development potential, and seeks evidence to support the State's proposal to drop this important standard.

32. Comments on storage objective

The standard lacks detail about location or security. We suggest including the wording from Clause 58: "*convenient access to usable and secure storage space"*.

33. Comments on accessibility objective

Where the Dwelling Diversity standard no longer requires ground floor accessible dwellings, the accessibility standard should make allowance for accessible access to accessible dwelling such as by lifts.

34. Preferred option - Building separation within a site standard

- **Option A – 9 metre sheer separation with increased setbacks for orientation**
- **Option B – 9 metre sheer separation with increased setbacks for orientation and an upper-level setback**

35. Comments on building separation within a site objective

Neither Option A or Option B will guarantee that the objective for "separation between buildings within a site provides a reasonable outlook and adequate daylight to dwellings" will be met. This is because:

- The standard numerical metrics will not fit all sites within Merri-bek due to Merri-bek's often smaller and irregularly shaped development sites. It is likely that applicants will seek to reduce these standards (particularly as there are no third party appeal rights if a standard is not met). Combined with turning off the local ESD policy (Clause 15.01-2L-05) and apartment developments in Merri-bek (Clause 15.01-2L-05), and the inability to discuss the objectives in these Clauses or request daylight modelling, this will result in poorer outlook and daylight outcomes.
- Merri-bek has developed building separation standards within Clause 15.01-2L 'apartment developments in Merri-bek' to account for buildings needing to appropriately build in internal amenity assurance. These standards were based on significant testing within Merri-bek as well as daylight modelling. DTP has not provided any of the testing or modelling to support the Option A or Option B standards, which significantly reduce Merri-bek's existing internal amenity assurance standards.

36. Comments on Light courts objective

Clause 15.01-2L 'apartment developments in Merri-bek' requires a larger 29m^2 light well for 3-8 storey buildings to ensure adequate daylight, outlook and ventilation are achieved. These will be reduced to a smaller 20m^2 lightwell under the proposed standards. In the absence of modelling or testing which shows the 20m^2 size is suitable, Merri-bek does not support this new Standard.

External amenity

Review the External amenity section of the Mid-rise standards (Clause 57) consultation draft document.
Choose your most preferred option for each standard from the multiple choice options. If you have any comments, please add them in the free text section.
Where there is only one option presented for a standard in the consultation draft, you will only be able to write a comment.

37. Preferred option - Overshadowing secluded open space standard

- **Option A – Overshadowing standard applies only when side and rear setbacks are not met**
- **Option B – No standard**

38. Comments on Overshadowing secluded open space objective

Neither option is supported. Removal of overshadowing from the assessment is problematic, noting that different contexts can create very varied shadowing outcomes. Compliance with side and rear setbacks does not account for site conditions that can significantly influence shadowing outcomes such as existing built form conditions on adjoining land, the size of adjoining dwellings, non-conventional lot layouts (i.e. freehold land with unusual title dimensions), site orientation or the existing site conditions, such as site with significant variance in gradients. For example, a compliant dwelling on a lot that is more elevated than an adjoining townhouse to the south with open space abutting the shared boundary may be fully compliant, but fully overshadow the existing dwelling, resulting in very poor amenity outcomes.

Overshadowing standards should apply irrespective of side and rear setbacks. The side and rear setbacks standard does not consider the nuances of east and west facing boundaries. It is likely these developments will be adjacent to lower density housing and their SPOS amenity could be significantly reduced should this objective be introduced. A site's context must be considered to properly assess local amenity impacts. Relying solely on setback standards will result in non-contextual built form with the potential to detrimentally impact local amenity while incentivising inefficient site layouts which could be damaging to developers also.

39. Preferred option - Overlooking standard

- **Option A – Overlooking standard applies only when setbacks are not met**
- **Option B – Reduced overlooking requirement when setback standards are met**

40. Comments on Overlooking objective

Overlooking standards should apply irrespective of side and rear setbacks, recognising that not all sites will be developed with 4.5 metre side or rear setbacks and the absence of third party appeal rights if the proposed standards are met. As noted above, local amenity impacts should be assessed because these are not adequately addressed by side and rear setbacks.

Daylight to existing windows and north facing windows standards should be reintroduced into Clause 57.

Sustainability

Review the Sustainability section of the Mid-rise standards (Clause 57) consultation draft document. Choose your most preferred option for each standard from the multiple choice options. If you have any comments, please add them in the free text section.
Where there is only one option presented for a standard in the consultation draft, you will only be able to write a comment.

41. Comments on permeability and stormwater management objective

The Decision Guidelines for the 'permeability and stormwater management objective' should align with the decision guidelines of Clause 53.18 'Stormwater management in urban development. The Clause 57 objective does not adequately include reference to maintenance (e.g. the decision guidelines in Clause 53.18 includes "whether the stormwater treatment areas can be effectively maintained"). Merri-bek's experience over many years confirms that consideration of stormwater management and maintenance of Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) assets is extremely important when stormwater management responses are designed. If a WSUD assets is difficult to maintain, its performance will be limited – with state and local drainage infrastructure under pressure and a changing climate, this is a dangerous outcome.

Merri-bek, like other Victorian Councils, is considering a local stormwater offsets program. This is supported by recent state government policy and publications. The decision guidelines within Clause 53.18 "whether the owner has entered into an agreement to contribute to off-site stormwater management in lieu of providing an on-site stormwater management system" acknowledges this, as should the new Clause 57 guidelines.

42. Comments on Waste and recycling objective

The turning off of the local ESD policy at Clause 15.01-2L-05 materially reduces the achievement of waste management objectives. These are to "promote waste avoidance, reuse and recycling during the design, construction and operation stages of development" and "to encourage use of durable and reusable building materials".

The proposed Clause 57 'waste and recycling' standard and objective does not adequately provide for improved waste management or help progress the State Government's aspirations for a circular economy.

Merri-bek's existing local ESD policy has seen many positive waste management inclusions in new buildings, including: increased construction and demolition waste being diverted from landfill, use of reclaimed materials / less virgin materials within new buildings (such as recycled timber, carpet, and bricks and cement). These positive moves towards a circular economy will be significantly reduced via the new Clause 57 objective and the 'turning off' of the local ESD policy.

43. Comments on Noise impacts objective

The assessment of this standard requires an expert acoustic report.

44. Comments on Energy efficiency objective

Merri-bek has many concerns about this new objective and standard:

The standard will not meet the objectives "to achieve energy efficient dwellings and buildings" and "to ensure dwellings achieve adequate thermal efficiency" as:

- The cooling load will not adequately ensure new apartments are comfortable, safe and energy efficient during warm weather or heat waves. This is because the cooling load is a load for the entire apartment. Merri-bek's significant ESD experience is that whilst a load may be met for an overall apartment, some rooms within the apartment may still perform poorly in warm weather (if other rooms perform better). The Merri-bek local ESD policy at Clause 15.01-2L-05 provides for an assessment of the whole apartment and therefore analyses rooms which, despite the overall apartment meeting the cooling load, will perform poorly in such weather. This can be easily addressed for example with more external shading for exposed windows, window treatments or altered window design. These measures are very difficult and costly to retrofit, so lowering this standard will ultimately lead to higher costs for apartment owners.
- Melbourne and Victoria's climate is mixed: we experience heat waves in most summers (and increasingly in autumn), and cold weather in winter and spring. A 12-month assessment of a building's performance is needed to ensure our new buildings are appropriately energy efficient and liveable all year – not only a focus on warm weather seasons. A NatHERS assessment allows for this, as it includes: a heating load assessment, a cooling load assessment, the fabric of the building (including insulation and glazing), heating and cooling systems and fans, natural ventilation and solar. The new Clause 57 focus on cooling load will not provide for this assessment.
- This will lead to poor outcomes: our new buildings will be less energy efficient; some perverse outcomes will see buildings perform well in hot weather but cold and costly to live in during cold weather; residents' health (and cost of living)

outcomes will be at risk due to cold / hot buildings to heat or cool; and new building stock will not be climate resilient. This contravenes many policies, plans and Acts across Victoria and Australia, including Climate Change Act and sections 4(2)(da), 12 and 12(2A)of the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

- The proposed Clause 57 objective / standard does not include provision of on-site renewable energy or energy demand systems which help dwellings be more energy efficient. Again, this consideration is a standard component of the local ESD policy which is being turned off by the new Clause 57 provisions. This means our new dwellings will not be climate resilient or climate adaptive and again, therefore contravenes both the Climate Change Act and sections 4(2)(da), 12 and 12(2A)of the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

Other existing residential standards not included in the Mid-rise standards

Review the list of other existing residential standards not included in the Mid-rise standards. If you have any comments, please add them in the free text section.

45. Comments on other existing residential standards not included in the Mid-rise standards

Turning off the local ESD policy will greatly reduce the environmental performance of new buildings, and opportunities for making our buildings better places to live. It will reduce the way our new buildings interact with streetscapes, open spaces and private development interface with the public realm. It will result in lesser biodiversity and habitat outcomes for our flora and fauna and reduce biophilic design which is important for people living in dense urban environments, and reduce the liveability of our cities .

Council's experience with applying the ESD policy since its incorporation into the Merri-bek Planning Scheme in November 2015 has been overwhelmingly positive. Through dedicated resourcing, which in 2025 includes 3 officers (varying part to full time) as well as a 2 proactive ESD Planning Enforcement officers, Merri-bek achieves exemplary ESD outcomes. This is noticeable when you traverse across Merri-bek and our diverse but densifying suburbs.

An easily identifiable and tangible benefit of the ESD policy is as-built NatHERS ratings of apartments (obtained from the CSIRO 'Housing Data' website at https://ahd.csiro.au/). Whilst the NCC has required a 7.0 star NatHERS average across class 2 (apartments) from 1 May 2024, prior to this the NCC only required a 6.0 star average rating. Merri-bek has had a local ESD policy since November 2015, which requires improved energy performance of new dwellings. Between 2016 and 2024,

apartments (class 2) built in Coburg had a 7.4 star NatHERS average rating and in Brunswick and Brunswick East apartments had an average of 7.3 stars. This is an easily recognisable and tangible benefit of the local ESD policy – new apartments are much more energy efficient and safer to live in. The new Clause 57 requirements will undermine these outcomes and new apartment performance will likely drop to the minimum NCC 7.0 star requirement.

We urge DTP to reconsider turning off Merri-bek's local planning scheme policies for this more intensive form of development, which can provide improved outcomes at reduced cost. We also remind the DTP of the findings of the '**Inquiry into Victoria Planning Provisions amendments VC257, VC267 and VC274 report**' of 13 May 2025, which found (Finding 16) that setting a statewide ESD policy that had the effect of lowering ESD standards in 28 Council areas (including Merri-bek) with strong existing ESD standards has not created an environmental net benefit. Merri-bek affirms this finding and would like to confirm that the new statewide ESD policy will undoubtedly result in lesser environmental building outcomes.

46. Any further comments?

A longstanding and celebrated attribute of the planning system in Victoria has been the community's right to seek a review before VCAT of a planning proposal that impacts them. The draft standards for mid-rise residential developments, is proposing to reduce VCAT review rights when developments meet certain standards. At the same time, the planning controls that provide protections to existing residents are being weakened. For example, the current rule about building shadowing at the equinox would change to a simpler rule requiring buildings to be set back 4.5 metres from the south boundary. The reason given is that this setback balances existing resident comfort and development feasibility, while leaving space for trees and landscaping. However, it is not clear if this change will protect residents as well as the current rules do under Clause 55.

As the wider community has not been consulted, this part of the reform raises concerns about worsening living conditions for residents and loss of appeal rights. It is important that the that VCAT review rights are not removed and the current amenity protections for residential zoned land are not reduced without a comprehensive consultation and thorough planning process which enable the views of the community to be heard and considered, prior to any decisions being made.

The draft standards for mid-rise residential developments are designed to operate as a standalone, complete provision in Victorian Planning Schemes. This proposed operation prevents Council from considering environmental risks that may not be addressed by zoning or overlay controls. For example, if a site is zoned residential but has a past use like a petrol station, a permit could be granted without any assessment

of potential land contamination or the need for remediation. This means vital planning permit conditions to protect future residents from exposure to contaminants could not be legally imposed, even though risks remain. Similarly, hazards like localised flooding may be ignored if they're not picked up by an overlay. The deemed to comply standards strip away the precaution needed for safeguarding community health and environmental quality.

7.12 CONNOLLY AVENUE SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade

City Design and Economy

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the findings of the community engagement and thanks the community for their participation.
2. Endorses the updated concept plan and notes the implementation plan for those works.
3. Refers the proposed design and project to be considered in the budget process for delivery in the 2026-27 financial year.
4. Notes the advocacy that has been undertaken on a signalised pedestrian crossing on Elizabeth Street.

REPORT

Executive summary

Connolly Avenue is a residential local street in Coburg North, bordered by Goff Street, Elizabeth Street, Murray Road and the Merri Creek. The area includes Newlands Senior Citizens Centre and the Barry Beckett Children's Centre. Numerous road safety concerns have been raised over the years relating to pedestrian safety at the intersection with Murray Road, vehicle speeds travelling through the neighbourhood, and the volume of traffic using the neighbourhood as a rat run.

As part of the area wide 40km/h roll out on all local streets in Merri-bek, the speed limit was reduced from 50km/h to 40km/h in early 2024. Traffic counts were undertaken 12 months after the speed limit was reduced, and it was found that speeds on Connolly Avenue were still well above the new posted speed limit, often 10km/h above.

In February 2025, Council resolved to receive a report detailing potential solutions to these road safety concerns that have been discussed with the community. Officers investigated the issues and developed a draft concept plan with proposed treatments. The draft concept plan was exhibited for community engagement between 25 August 2025 and 14 September 2025, and 85 people provided input on the plans.

Following consultation, the concept plans were updated to include more speed humps and some other minor changes. The updated concept plan includes:

- Two raised crossings
- Six speed humps
- Three new kerb ramps
- Kerb buildouts
- Signage and line marking improvements
- Advocacy for a new signalised pedestrian crossing

Some of the proposed works, including three speed humps on Connolly Street (west) between Meadow Street and Murray Road, and signage and line marking improvements to the Goff Street and Connolly Avenue intersection, can be delivered in the current financial year with existing allocated budgets.

The remaining recommended treatments proposed for future financial years will need to be considered as part of the Capital Works Program from 2026/27 or subject to external funding.

Previous Council Decisions

Improve Safety At Both Intersections Of Connolly Avenue And Murray Road, North Coburg – 12 February 2025

That Council:

1. *Receives a report by October 2025 presenting potential solutions including traffic calming measures that could be implemented to resolve the dangerous conditions that exist at both intersections of Connolly Avenue and Murray Road in North Coburg, having discussed the solutions with local stakeholders and residents and providing an indication of costs that could be referred to future budget processes.*
2. *Investigates the delivery of immediate solutions, to help make the area safer, sooner.*
3. *Advocates to the state for the delivery of the proposed pedestrian crossing at Elizabeth and Goff Street.*

1. Policy Context

Moving Around Merri-bek Strategy (2024)

The Moving Around Merri-bek Strategy was adopted at the March 2024 Council Meeting. The Strategy seeks to ensure all actions impacting the council's transport network contribute to objectives aligned to the values of Safe, Accessible, Sustainable, Healthy, Liveable, and Inclusive. Investigating safety improvements to the Connolly Avenue neighbourhood contributes to delivering on the following components of Moving Around Merri-bek (2024):

- Create streets where everyone feels safe.
- Reduce the frequency and severity of crashes on our roads.
- Create a transport system in Merri-bek that allows everyone to meet their daily needs and to fully participate in our community.
- Create streets and public spaces that encourage physical activity and socialisation amongst local communities.
- Improve access to shops, services and employment for our local community.
- Work to make our streets and public spaces are safe for all people and inclusive of all genders, backgrounds, and abilities.

Council Plan 2025-2029

The Council Plan 2025–2029 sets out Council's strategic direction for delivering on the Community Vision: "*Merri-bek leads, and leaves no one behind"*. Transport is addressed under the Beautiful and Liveable City theme, which aims to ensure streets and public spaces are safe, pleasant, and easy to use so everyone can enjoy and be proud of where they live.

Key actions that align with this report include:

- Keeping public places and streets well-maintained, safe, and inviting for community use.
- Fixing and improving streets and footpaths to make them more friendly for walking and riding.
- Encouraging walking, cycling, and scooting – especially for getting to school.
- Making it easier and safer to use public transport to move around.

The Moving Around Merri-bek Action Plan is a key mechanism to deliver on these outcomes and ensure that transport investments reflect the priorities of the Merri-bek community.

2. Background

Connolly Avenue in Coburg is in a residential area that forms part of the Newlands Estate housing development. The project area investigated is bordered by Elizabeth Street, Murray Road, the Merri Creek, and Goff Street (See Figure 1). In recent years, road safety concerns have been raised periodically with Council, predominantly centred around the intersections with Murray Road, the area being used as a rat-run, and the speed of vehicles using local streets.



Figure 1. Project area map.

In 2024 the speed limit of all streets within the Connolly Avenue neighbourhood was reduced to 40km/h as part of Council's *Safer Speeds on Local Roads rollout.* Traffic surveys were undertaken 12 months after the new speed zones were installed, and it was found that the speeds remained significantly higher than the posted speed limits.

The eastern intersection of Connolly Avenue and Murray Road, which is adjacent to the Newlands Senior Citizens Centre and the Barry Beckett Children's Centre, is very wide. This intersection design does not adequately slow vehicles when turning from Murray Road into the Connolly Avenue neighbourhood and is also difficult for people walking to cross because of its excessive width. These issues are exacerbated by the fact that older and younger people use this area.

Following the Council resolution in February 2025 to investigate solutions to these road safety concerns, officers developed draft concept plans with proposed improvements to address these issues. The draft concept plan included treatments that Council can deliver in the short and medium term, as well as other longer-term solutions that would be reliant on external funding or delivery. The treatments identified for Council to deliver between 2025 and 2027 are:

- Narrowing the Connolly Avenue (east) and Murray Road intersection, and installing a raised threshold.
- Installing speed humps on Connolly Avenue (west) between Meadow Street and Murray Road.
- A new kerb ramp from Connolly Avenue to the Merri Creek Trail.
- New 'give way' signage and line marking at Goff Street and Connolly Avenue intersection.

The treatments identified that require external funding or external delivery are:

- A raised threshold on Connolly Ave (west) and Murray Road intersection.
- A raised pedestrian operated signal over Elizabeth Street between Goff Street and Raymond Street.

The draft concept plan was exhibited for community feedback between 25 August 2025 and 14 September 2025.

3. Issues

Community engagement results

There were 85 survey responses, and a submission from local community advocacy group Safer Walking and Riding for Murray Road. Respondents were asked how supportive of the proposed treatments they were overall, and then they were asked whether they had any feedback on the proposal.

Figure 2 below shows the level of support for the project amongst respondents, with 94 per cent stating that they were 'very supportive' or 'supportive'. Of the three respondents who were either unsupportive or very unsupportive, all said they wanted to see more done to improve safety in the area than what was proposed.

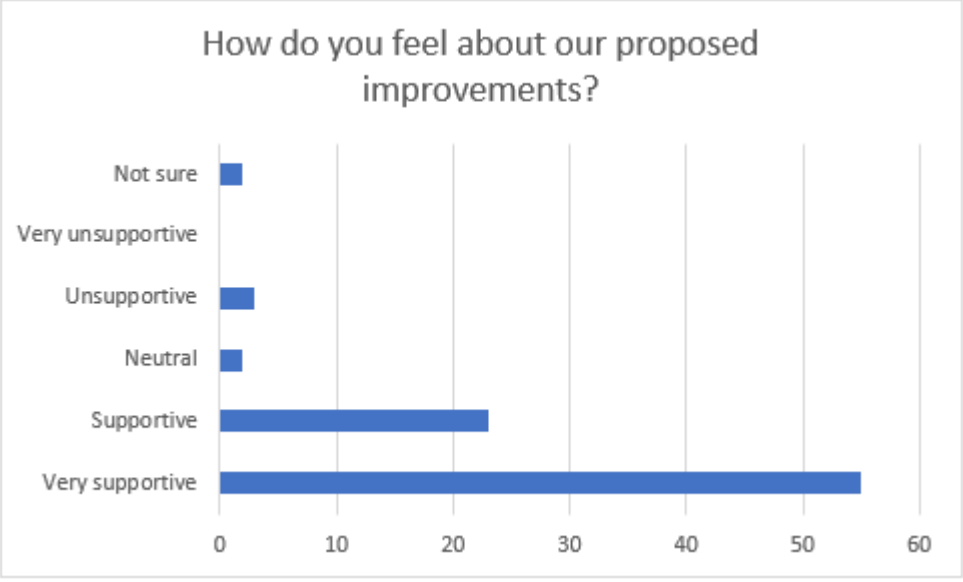


Figure 2. Level of support for draft concept plan amongst respondents

The qualitative feedback was analysed and categorised thematically. The most common themes in the responses were:

- Request for more speed humps (mentioned by 24 per cent of respondents)
- Requests for safety improvements to Murray Road (22 per cent)
- Requests to address Murray Road / Outlook Rd / Connolly Avenue intersection (11 per cent)
- Requests for road narrowing and chicanes (11 per cent)
- Requests for road closures and restrictions on through movement of vehicles (6 per cent)
- General support for the project (11 per cent

Other suggestions and feedback raised included parking controls, new pedestrian crossings, faster implementation, temporary and interim treatments, safety improvements to Elizabeth Street; and further speed reductions. Only one participant explicitly opposed the kerb build outs proposed for the Connolly Avenue (east) and Murray Road intersection.

Updated Concept Plan

Following consultation, officers reviewed the draft concept plans to ensure they are aligned with community expectations and have made some updates. The updated concept plan can be found in Attachment 1, and is summarised below and in Figure 3:

- Narrowing the Connolly Avenue (east) and Murray Road intersection, and installing a raised threshold
- Installing speed humps on Connolly Avenue (west) between Meadow Street and Murray Road
- A new kerb ramp from Connolly Avenue to the Merri Creek Trail
- New ‘give way’ signage and line marking at Goff Street and Connolly Avenue intersection, and realigning the kerb ramps to align with the pedestrian desire line along Connolly Avenue
- Installing a speed hump on Meadow Street between Grey Street and Rasmussen Court
- Installing speed humps on Connolly Avenue (west) between Meadow Street and Goff Street, with one on the approach to the new shared path kerb ramp
- A raised threshold on Connolly Ave (west) and Murray Road intersection, to be delivered if external funding is secured
- A raised pedestrian operated signal over Elizabeth Street between Goff Street and Raymond Street, that Council is to advocate to the state government for Department of Transport & Planning (DTP) to deliver



Figure 3. Updated concept plan

The changes to the concept plan following consultation are:

- Three additional speed humps, one on Meadow Street and two further south on Connolly Avenue (west)
- Realigning the kerb ramps at Goff Street and Connolly Avenue intersection so that they follow the pedestrian desire line

Officers also investigated more significant changes to the neighbourhood to stop the rat running through the area. This included a traffic filter on Goff Street to completely restrict vehicular through traffic, and an 'exit-only' treatment at the intersection of Meadow Street and Connolly Avenue.

This is considered a relatively cost-effective solution, that would nearly entirely limit the rat running in the area, without significantly impacting any resident's access. This type of treatment would require a much lengthier community engagement process, a hearing of submissions, and a trial, which would take multiple years to deliver. This would require greater resourcing costs, but may be considered in future projects.

At this time, officers are confident that the treatments identified in the updated concept plan will have a positive impact on traffic volumes and speed in the neighbourhood.

Advocacy

The primary advocacy item recommended in the updated concept plan is a raised, signalised crossing over Elizabeth Street, between Goff Street and Raymond Street. This treatment was well supported by participants of the community engagement.

Elizabeth Street is managed by the Department of Transport and Planning, and the delivery of the project would need to be led entirely by DTP. Officers have worked with officers at Darebin City Council to identify a preferred location and type of crossing, and Darebin has previously developed a concept design. Advocacy has been ongoing, and the item forms part of Council's advocacy priorities for the 2026 state election. Officers are again writing to Ministers and DTP to request delivery.

Officers will seek external funding to assist with the delivery of improvements in the updated concept plan. The proposed raised threshold at Connolly Avenue (west) and Murray Road presents a good opportunity for external funding through a road safety grant.

A number of participants also raised concerns and suggestions for safety and accessibility improvements to Murray Road, which is outside of the scope of this project. This feedback included requests for speed limit reductions on Murray Road, a reduction of the number of travel lanes in both directions, and safer crossing points. Improving safety on Murray Road as part of Council's road safety advocacy is an advocacy priority for Council for the 2026 state election, and this advocacy will include safer speeds and safer road design to complement safer speed.

Some participants raised concerns related to the Outlook Road and Murray Road intersection, opposite Connolly Avenue, requesting signalisation of the intersection. Again, this was considered beyond the scope of the current project and could be explored through future advocacy to the state government. Any proposed treatment at this intersection should consider potential impacts of inducing additional traffic demand to the local road network.

Community impact

The recommendations of this report are intended to contribute towards improving safety and liveability of the streets within the Connolly Avenue neighbourhood, and to mitigate the negative impacts of through traffic. Before any changes are made to the street, all impacted residents and businesses will be notified of the proposed changes and have an opportunity to have any concerns heard.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

Transport emissions are the second largest source of emissions in Victoria and are set to become the largest source in the coming years.

Reducing transport emissions and the effects of climate change is a key focus of Council's Transport Strategy, "Moving Around Merri-bek". Council aims to reduce transport emissions by providing infrastructure that enables people to use zero emission transport modes such as walking and cycling.

By improving the safety of the Connolly Avenue neighbourhood, it is expected that it will provide opportunities for more people to choose low and zero emission transport modes for their local trips and support community efforts to reduce their transport emissions.

Human Rights Consideration

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, and the assessment has found that the recommendation will not have any adverse impacts any persons human rights. It is anticipated that through the delivery of these improvements to the Connolly Avenue neighbourhood, the right to freedom of movement (section 12) is expected to be improved for people, particularly those walking in the area.

4. Community consultation and engagement.

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. Primarily, this project impacts the residents within the project area. Additionally, consideration needed to be given to the rights of older people and younger people, given the proximity of the Barry Beckett Children's Centre and the Newlands Senior Citizens Centre.

All residents and owners within the project area were sent letters providing details of the project and inviting feedback. Officers reached out directly to Barry Beckett Children's Centre to invite them to participate in the consultation and to share the information with the families and community connected to the centre.

Community engagement

Community engagement on the draft concept plans for safety improvements to Connolly Avenue was undertaken from 25 August 2025 until 14 September 2025. Information about the project and the concept plans was exhibiting on the Conversations Merri-bek website, and was also mailed to all residents and property owners in this project area. During that time, 85 of surveys were completed, including online surveys and hard copies.

On Saturday 6 September, officers ran an in-person session at the Newlands Senior Citizens Centre where people could come and ask questions about the project and provide feedback on the proposal. Approximately 27 people attended, including families with young children, older residents, and people caring for older people.

Communications

All residents and property owners in the project area were sent letters containing information about the project, the draft concept plans, and details on how to provide feedback on the project. 3208 emails were sent to people who have registered for updates for transport projects on Conversations Merri-bek inviting them to participate in the consultation. An active community advocacy group, Safer Walking and Riding for Murray Road, were also directly notified of the consultation and invited to submit feedback.

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

Whilst some elements of the updated concept plan can be delivered with the existing Council budget, the officer recommendation will have financial implications for future financial years.

For the current financial year (2025/26), the design of treatments identified within the updated concept plan will be done using the existing council budget. The proposed speed humps on Connolly Avenue (west) between Meadow Street and Murray Road have been budgeted for through the 40km/h roll out program and are ready to be delivered. Similarly, new give way line marking, signs, and pram ramps at Goff Street and Connolly Avenue can be installed with exiting budget this financial year.

The remaining works identified in the updated concept plan, which have not been included in Capital Works Program forecasts, are estimated to total $250,000. This includes a raised threshold with kerb build outs, three additional speed humps, and a new pram ramp for the shard path. As such, it is recommended that these treatments are assessed and considered along with all other projects within the Capital Works Program for 2026-27 financial year unless external grant funding can be acquired before that time.

7. Implementation

Subject to a Council decision, works can commence on designing and delivering different elements of the proposal immediately. Officers will monitor the works installed in 25/26 financial year the following financial year to evaluate impact on traffic speed and volume.

The implementation plan for this project would be as follows:

2025-26 financial year:

1. Notify participants of the community engagement of the Council decision and thank them for their feedback.
2. Install three speed humps on Connolly Ave (west) between Meadow Street and Murray Road.
3. Design a new raised threshold with kerb build outs at Murray Road and Connolly Avenue (east).
4. Design and install new give way line marking, signs, and kerb ramps at Goff Street and Connolly Avenue intersection.
5. Design a raised threshold at Murray Road and Connolly Avenue (west).

2026-27 financial year, subject to consideration in the 2026/26 budget process:

6. Install two speed humps on Connolly Avenue (West) between Meadow Street and Goff Street.
7. Install one speed hump on Meadow Street between Connolly Avenue west and Connolly Avenue east.
8. Install new kerb ramp up to the Merri Creek Trail approximately 40m west of Goff Street.
9. Install raised threshold and kerb build outs at Connolly Avenue (east) and Murray Road.
10. Apply for external funding to support delivery if opportunities arise.

Attachment/s

1⇩	Connolly Avenue safety improvements - updated concept map - September 2025	D25/479404

Connolly Avenue safety improvements

Concept plan

Merri-bek City Council





1 Speed humps

Slows vehicles travelling on Connolly Avenue

Council to install 2025/26

2 Kerb ramp connecting to Merri Creek Trail

Improves access to the shared user path

Council to install 2026/27

3 Improved crossing at Murray Road intersection - east

A raised crossing with built-out kerbs to make it easier and safer to cross the busy intersection

Council to install 2026/27

4 'Give Way' sign and new line marking

Reduces confusion and slows vehicles entering Connolly Avenue from Goff Street

Council to install 2025/26

5 Improved crossing at Murray Road intersection - west

Creates safer crossing point and slows vehicles entering Connolly Avenue

Council to seek external funding to deliver in future years

6 Signalised pedestrian crossing

Creates safer crossing point for people walking near Connolly Avenue

Council to advocate to State Government for delivery

7.13 ADVISORY COMMITTEES - APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS

Director Business Transformation, Sue Vujcevic

Governance and Strategy

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Appoints the community members listed in confidential attachment 1 to this report titled Advisory Committees and Reference Groups.
2. Notes the appointments to the Advisory Committees and Reference Groups will sunset on 30 June following the next General Election.
3. Endorses postponing the appointment of the vacant positions on the First Peoples Advisory Committee and Disability Reference Group to the November Council meeting.
4. Notes that all applicants will be contacted to thank them for their application and receive notification of the outcome of their application and the final Terms of Reference made available via the Merri-bek City Council website.

REPORT

Executive Summary

At its meeting on 13 August 2025, Council endorsed the establishment of the following Advisory Committees and Reference Groups to support the delivery of its strategic directions and objectives:

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.

The Community Engagement Policy was adopted by Council on the 9 December 2020, superseding Council's Community Engagement and Public Participation Policy 2018. It supports Council's integrated strategic planning and reporting framework required under the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) and meets Council's legislative requirements for community engagement which is a key focus for local government.

Council's Advisory Committees and Reference Groups are an important network of stakeholders who are regularly engaged to provide detailed feedback on Council's operations and decisions that may affect specific communities. Council's Advisory Committees and Reference Groups play a key role in providing early advice to Council about significant strategies and policies that impact the community.

Previous Council Decisions

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.*

Councillor Appointments to Portfolios, Internal Committees, Advisory Committees and other External Bodies – 17 November 2021

That Council:

…

3. *Appoints Councillors to internal, advisory, network and external committees for the 2021/2022 Mayoral year as follows:*

…

b) Advisory Committees

Sustainable Transport Advisory Committee: Cr Conlan

Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee: Cr Panopoulos

Human Rights and Inclusion Advisory Committee: Cr Bolton and Cr Panopoulos

Moreland Arts Advisory Committee: Cr Riley

…

Review of Council's Advisory Committees – 11 August 2021

That Council:

1. *Note the findings of a recent review undertaken of Council's Advisory Committees.*
2. *Endorse the proposal to establish the following Advisory Committees by November 2021:*
    a) *Sustainable Transport Advisory Committee*
    b) *Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee*

c) Human Rights and Inclusion Advisory Committee

d) Moreland Arts Advisory Committee

3. Endorse the proposal for Council officers to review Reference Groups and Working Groups with a view to refreshing or establishing these by December 2021.

4. Endorse that Council officers implement process improvements to enable better quality coordination of Advisory Committees.

1. Policy Context

The review of Advisory Committees and Reference Groups and subsequent establishment of them at the 13 August 2025 Council meeting, enhances Council's commitment to integrated strategic planning and community engagement, as required under the Act.

The establishment of five Advisory Committees, each aligned to a Strategic Direction within the Council Plan 2025–2029, seeks to ensure community input and advice sought, is aligned with Council's key priorities, directions and increases Council's strategic oversight.

In accordance with Merri-bek City Council's Community Engagement Policy and Governance Rules, Advisory Committees and Reference Groups are established by Council to provide early input on related policy, strategy or major operational proposals.

Consistent with Council's Community Engagement Policy, Advisory Committees and Reference Groups are an important network of stakeholders to regularly engage to obtain detailed feedback on the ways our operations and decisions may affect specific communities.

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.

Subject to the *Local Government Act 2020*, the Council may appoint any number or combination of its members and officers to be on an Advisory Committee to consider and make a recommendation to the Council upon any matter, but no recommendation of any Advisory Committee shall have any force or effect until approved by the Council.

Advisory Committees are guided by the community's aspirations captured in the Community Vision 2025-2035. They also provide relevant input to support Council deliver its 4-year Council Plan 2025-2029 and key policies.

2. Background

At the Council Meeting on 13 August 2025, Council endorsed the establishment of the following Advisory Committees and Reference Groups, and approved the commencement of a public engagement process to invite applications for membership:

1. Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience Advisory Committee
2. Health, Wellbeing and Social Inclusion Advisory Committee; supported by the following Reference Groups:
    a) Gender Equality Reference Group
    b) LGBTIQA+ Reference Group (established as part of the LGBTIQA+ Action Plan)
    c) Disability Reference Group
    d) Older Persons Reference Group

3. Liveability Advisory Committee; supported by a Strategic Transport Reference Group
4. Merri-bek Arts Advisory Committee
5. First Peoples Advisory Committee.

At that meeting, Council also resolved that a report would be presented at the 8 October 2025 Council Meeting, outlining the outcomes of the application process and recommending the appointment of community members (and Councillors) to the newly established Advisory Committees and Reference Groups. Councillor appointments to these groups will be established at the upcoming 19th November Council meeting.

3. Issues

Application and selection process

An extensive and inclusive call for applications was carried out over 4 weeks, from Friday, 15 August 2025 to Friday, 12 September 2025.

The opportunity was featured on the Conversations Merri-bek platform via the dedicated page: Advisory Committee and Reference Group Expressions of Interest | Conversations Merri-bek

The campaign received a total of 215 applications. Overall, the campaign attracted a strong level of diversity across applicants, contributing to broad representation for the advisory groups.

The recruitment campaign was successful for recommending members for 8 of the 10 groups. However, six positions remain vacant on the First Peoples Advisory Committee, and two positions are yet to be filled on the Disability Reference Group.

To allow additional time for further engagement and to encourage additional submissions, the Convenors of the First Peoples Advisory Committee and the Disability Reference Group have requested that the appointment of the further six community members to the First Peoples Advisory Committee and the two remaining positions on the Disability Reference Group be deferred to the November Council meeting.

The following shortlisting and selection process was followed by Council officers:

1. Officers assessed whether the applications received reflect the diversity of the Merri-bek community and its priority groups. A quantitative analysis was conducted to determine whether each group received too many, too few, or an appropriate number of applications.
2. For groups with a high volume of applications, candidates were assessed against the selection criteria, scored out of three, and shortlisted accordingly. In addition to this quantitative scoring, convenors completed a qualitative assessment to evaluate the suitability of applicants based on experience, alignment with group objectives, and potential contribution. Where appropriate, applicants who were not recommended to be selected for their nominated group were considered for other groups they had indicated a willingness to join. Convenors met to discuss and identify candidates who may be suitable for reassignment to these groups.
3. For groups with fewer applications, these were also rated against the selection criteria, ranked and shortlisted. Overflow from other groups were considered to ensure appropriate numbers and representation. Convenors met to discuss and identify candidates suitable for reassignment to these groups.

As a result, a broad range of community members have been recommended to be selected to each Advisory Committee or Reference Group with recommended applicants listed in Confidential **Attachment 1**. These members bring a wide range of perspectives and lived experiences that will enrich Council's engagement and decision-making processes.

Advisory Committees and Reference Group Term

The appointments to Advisory Committees and Reference Groups will conclude on 30 June following the next general election.

Councillor Appointments to the Advisory Committees and Reference Groups

Each year, Council appoints Councillors to Portfolios, Internal Committees, Advisory Committees, Reference Groups, and other External Bodies.

Appointments to Portfolios, Internal Committees, Advisory Committees, Reference Groups, and other External Bodies for the 2025/26 Mayoral Year will occur at the Council Meeting (Mayoral Election) to be held Wednesday, 19 November 2025.

Community impact

The establishment of the Advisory Committees and Reference Groups will enable a focused contribution from the various Committees and improved engagement between council and the community. The overarching result expected will be improved community engagement and Council decision making, resulting in positive outcomes for the Merri-bek community.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

The Advisory Committees and Reference Groups, particularly the Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience Advisory Committee, are guided by the community's aspirations captured in the Community Vision and provide relevant input to support Council to deliver its 4-year Council Plan including priorities for addressing the climate emergency and environmental sustainability.

Economic sustainability implications

The Advisory Committees and Reference Groups will be able to contribute and provide relevant input to support Council to deliver its 4-year Council Plan including priorities for addressing economic sustainability.

Legal and risk considerations

The Advisory Committee and Reference Groups Appointment of Members is in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* and Council's Community Engagement Policy.

Human Rights Consideration

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

Advisory Committees and Reference Groups, the community and those affected by decisions and actions will continue to have the opportunity to contribute to decision making.

4. Community consultation and engagement

The community were engaged through an Expression of Interest featured on Conversation Merri-bek website.

To broaden reach and accessibility:

- The webpage was shared via email with 290 members of the broader community program network and 1,000 individuals who had previously expressed interest in joining the deliberative panel earlier in the year.

- The campaign was promoted on Facebook and in Merri-bek News.
- Paper copies of the application form were made available at customer service centres and libraries, with translations provided upon request.
- Drop-in sessions were hosted to support older community members in completing their applications.
- Posters were displayed in key community locations to raise awareness.

Affected persons rights and interests

Before making a decision that affects a person's rights, Council must identify whose rights may be directly affected and provide an opportunity for that person (or persons) to convey those views regarding the effect on their rights and consider those views. In this regard, persons within the Merri-bek community have had an opportunity to apply to become a member of an Advisory Committee or Reference Group.

Communications

All applicants will be thanked for their application and notified of the outcome of their application following Council's decision. The adopted Terms of Reference for Advisory Committees and Reference Groups will be made available via the Merri-bek City Council website.

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 Resource Implications

The appointment of various members to the Advisory Committees and Reference Groups have no financial or resources implications as they are contained within the existing budget allocations.

Furthermore, First Peoples Advisory Committee members will be paid $100 per meeting to recognise the multiple responsibilities First Nations people have to their cultural obligations both through their work roles and wider community responsibilities. It also acknowledges and values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members' cultural knowledge, advice and guidance.

The Community Co-Chair will receive a higher sitting fee to reflect the increased responsibilities and standing of this role.

7. Implementation

Pending Council endorsement of community members to the Advisory Committees and Reference Groups, all applicants will be thanked and notified of the outcome of their application.

Attachment/s

1 Confidential - Advisory Committees and Reference Groups D25/525444

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.

7.14 ROAD MANAGEMENT PLAN

Director City Infrastructure, Anita Curnow

Capital Works Planning and Delivery

Officer Recommendation

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.

REPORT

Executive Summary

The *Road Management Act 2004* (the Act) requires each municipal Council to review its Road Management Plan by 31 October in the year following general election of Council.

Council's Road Management Plan was reviewed after internal and external consultation pursuant to Section 54(5) of the Act and Section 8(3) of the *Road Management (General) Regulations 2016* (the Regulation).

In accordance with the Regulation, a summary report of the findings as well as the proposed amendments to the Road Management Plan was presented at the August 2025 Council meeting to seek endorsement for broader public consultation.

Public notice was published in *Victoria Government Gazette*, *The Age* newspaper and feedback was also sought through Conversations Merri-bek webpage in accordance with Section 10 of the Regulation.

Some 33 submissions were received through Conversations Merri-bek webpage, which closed on 18 September 2025, and it is therefore, proposed to adopt the revised Road Management Plan (**Attachment 1**) based on the outcome of the review process.

Previous Council Decisions

Road Management Plan Review and Proposed Amendment – 13 August 2025

That Council:

1. Endorses the proposed amendments to the Road Management Plan as outlined in Attachment 1, in accordance with Section 41 of the Road Management Act 2004.

2. Publishes a notice of the proposed amendments to the Road Management Plan in the Victoria Government Gazette and a local newspaper in accordance with the provisions of the Road Management (General) Regulations 2016 stating:

a) The purpose and general purport of the proposed amendments to the Road Management Plan.

b) What road infrastructure or road related infrastructure or classes of roads or pathways will be affected by the proposed amendments.

c) Where the written report can be obtained or inspected that summaries the proposed amendment.

d) That any person can make a submission in respect of the proposed amendments within 28 days of the public notice being published.

e) *Those submissions can be made through Conversations Merri-bek webpage or in hard copy.*

1. Policy Context

Where a Council has adopted a Road Management Plan, the *Road Management (General) Regulations 2016* require a review of the plan within the period referred to in section 90(3) of the *Local Government Act 2020*. As such, a review of the current Plan is required by 31 October 2025.

The Road Management Plan defines a minimum level of service for Council's maintenance of the local road and pathway network.

The Municipal Association of *Victoria* (MAV) circulated a template identifying benchmark intervention standards and response times. This serves as a general guide to all councils.

2. Background

The purpose of the Road Management Plan is to demonstrate that Council, as the road authority, is responsibly managing all the road and pathways assets under its control. The plan must specify the standards and inspection regimes required to manage civil liability, which are reasonable and achievable.

In consideration of Section 9(1) of the Regulations, Council undertook a review of the Road Management Plan to:

> *Ensure that the standards in relation to, and the priorities to be given to, the inspection, maintenance and repair of roads and classes of road to which the plan applies are appropriate.*

The internal review was undertaken by Council officers who are responsible for development and delivery of the Road Management Plan in consultation with other stakeholders who have responsibility in the areas of accessibility, ageing well and other transport functions. In reviewing the Road Management Plan, the following were considered:

- Current activities and performance in relation to meeting the requirements of the Road Management Plan
- Management systems, operational objectives and maintenance standards
- Benchmarking of intervention standards across similar metro Councils and recommendations from Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)
- Feedback from user groups

In accordance with the Regulation, a report summarising the findings and describing proposed amendments was presented to the 13 August 2025 Council meeting. Council resolved to support the review of the Road Management Plan and publish a notice in *Victoria Government Gazette*, local newspaper and feedback was sought through Council's conversations Merri-bek webpage.

The plan has been finalised after considering the feedback received during the consultation period.

3. Issues

In accordance with Section 10 of the Regulation, Council gave notice in the *Victoria Government Gazette* and in *The Age* newspaper as well as Council's conversations Merri-bek webpage. The notice stated:

- The purpose and general purport of the review of the Road Management Plan
- The road and pathways infrastructure or classes of roads and pathways affected by the proposed amendments
- That a written report summarising the findings and conclusions of the review and proposed amendments could be inspected at Council office and through Council's website.
- That any person could make submission in respect of the proposed amendment in writing or through Conversations Merri-bek webpage during the submission period (28 days).

Community impact

There were 33 submissions received during the submission period, which closed 18 September 2025. Questions were tailored in Conversations Merri-bek page to seek feedback on a proposed amendment.

The table below shows the survey feedback.

Road Management Plan feature	Yes (%)	No (%)	Unsure (%)	Did Not Respond (%)
Support for more frequent scheduled inspections including night inspection	88	6	6	–
Support for earlier intervention of potholes, depressions and deformations	97	0	3	–
Support for quicker response times	82	9	6	3
Support for new maintenance items identified	85	6	9	–
Support for inclusion of new intervention for footpath trip hazard (25mm–30mm)	64	21	15	–
Support for proposed lowering of service levels	30	33	36	–

There was majority support for all proposed amendments with improved service levels. Support was more divided on the small number of items with a reduction of service levels. A further analysis of the verbatim comments on the reason for not supporting are summarised below:

- Lack of clarity on the definition of some defect types (unevenness vs trip hazard)
- General disagreement on lowering of any services
- Disagreement on removal of level 2 inspection for bridges from Road Management Plan (covered through asset inspection for valuation purposes).

In addition, the verbatim comments highlighted some confusion about the proposed new footpath trip hazard intervention. Response times for this item are proposed at 6 months, whereas in the current plan there is no requirement for any rectification of defects in the 25mm to 30mm range. Therefore, this is an improvement rather than a reduction in service levels, but it has been interpreted that way by some. This may also explain the lower level of support (64%) for this item compared to other improvements proposed in the Road Management Plan.

After consideration of these comments, no further amendments to the Road Management Plan are proposed. The items with lower service levels are not considered to carry significant risk and the resource reduction associated with them will partly offset the increased resources needed to achieve the well-supported improvements in intervention levels.

On social media, there were 130 comments from the public and have shared a wide range of feedback and suggestions, including:

- Road Conditions
- Congestion and Safety
- Specific Streets Mentioned

The summary of the feedback from the community from the “Conversations Merri-bek” page.

Summary Table of Community Feedback on Road Management Plan Amendments

Topic	Community Sentiment	Common Themes
More frequent & night inspections	Mostly supportive	Improves visibility of hazards; better assessment during low traffic; peak-time inspections suggested
Earlier intervention for potholes & deformations	Strongly supportive	Prevents escalation; reduces accidents; aligns with community expectations
Quicker response times	Strongly supportive	Current delays seen as unacceptable; safety risks highlighted; calls for immediate action
New items added to response regime	Mixed support	Some see value; others question prioritization over community programs
Trip hazards (25mm–30mm)	Supportive but cautious	Many feel even small hazards are dangerous; concern for elderly, disabled, and pram users
Lowering of service levels	Mostly opposed	Seen as unjustified; ratepayer frustration; calls for transparency and accountability
General feedback	Rich and varied	Requests for better bike paths, clearer reporting mechanisms, improved footpath accessibility, and more community engagement

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

Council assets including roads and pathways are subject to the impacts of climate change. Extended periods of extreme heat, more frequent and severe rain events and unpredictable dry and wet periods can impact functionality of these assets. The increased scheduled proactive inspection enables significant changes to the performance of the road and pathways and allows for early intervention.

One of the notable amendments is the introduction of overhanging vegetation clearance on trafficable portion of road and pathways. The intervention level for the overhanging vegetation clearance is set to make sure that mature trees are protected whilst ensuring safe passage of road and pathway users.

Legal and risk considerations

The Road Management Plan sets the standards for inspection, defect identification and response times based on Council's resources and considers standards that are reasonable in order to minimise public risk as well as Council's legal exposure.

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 more specifically the right to freedom of movement. Having considered the scope for the amendments proposed to the Road Management Plan, the rights for freedom of movement is not considered to be negatively impacted.

4. Community consultation and engagement

Prior to seeking community feedback, extensive internal and external consultation of the Road Management Plan was undertaken. The proposed amendment was presented at the 13 August Council meeting to seek feedback from broader community and all feedback received during the consultation process has been considered in finalising the amended Road Management Plan.

Communications

Subject to Council resolving to adopt the amended Road Management Plan, officers will publish the amended Road Management Plan in Council's website and publish the notification of adoption through *Victoria Government Gazette*, local newspaper, Council's social media platforms.

5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

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

6. Financial and Resources Implications

A key part of the consideration of changes to the inspection regime, intervention levels, response times and the addition and removal of items into the Road Management Plan has been Council's ability to meet these requirements within existing budgets. In some cases where better levels of service are identified (for example missing pit lids), our regime is already at the levels we are now proposing, so it made sense to align the Road Management Plan with our current risk-based practice.

Council has dedicated three staff to the road inspection function, this was set at two for most of the period of the current Road Management Plan and so the more frequent inspections can be addressed without a further increase in resources. The inspection regime will focus on a wider range of items during inspections, covering those 'new' items identified.

The introduction of night time inspections will require internal allocation within the relevant budgets, as a focused activity usually conducted over winter months.

The proposed Road Management Plan amendments are expected to be within existing budget and resource allocations. Opportunities for improving efficiency in the inspections and response regime will continue to be identified and harnessed.

7. Implementation

Subject to Council adoption of the amended Road Management Plan, the Plan will be published in Council's website and notice of adoption will be given via *Victoria Government Gazette*, local newspaper and Council's social media platform.

Attachment/s

1⇩ Road Management Plan 2025 – Draft D25/511349

Road Management Plan 2025



Acknowledgement of Country

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

CM Ref: D25/511349

RMP REVISIONS:

DATE	DETAILS Road Management Plan 2021 - Review & Update
13 October 2021	Amendment to Table 2: private driveways listed as being the responsibility of the owner; description of off street carparks "listed as ancillary areas in the Register of Public Roads" is removed Removal of Table – Details of Ancillary Assets (previously Table 3) Removal of Table – Details of Ancillary Kerb & Channel (prev. Table 6) Amendment to Table numbering based on the above. Amendment to 3.4 General Functions of a Road Authority: updated Amendment to Figure 1; clarified. Amendment to 3.5.3 Car-Parks; no longer ancillary assets Amendment to 3.5.8 Unmade Roads, Footpaths & Laneways: updated to reference Council's Rights of Way Strategy. Amendment to 3.5.11 Vehicle Crossings; updated to clarify areas of responsibility. Amendment to 3.8 Obligation of Road Users; updated.
October 2025	Amendments to Appendix A, • In line with recommendations from MAV

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1. INTRODUCTION

Merri-bek City Council's Road Management Plan (Plan) has been reviewed to meet legislative requirements of the *Road Management Act 2004 (RM Act)* and the strategic directions adopted by Council.

This Plan identifies responsibilities, maintenance standards and inspection regimes required to manage civil liability and must demonstrate that Council, as a road authority, is responsively managing all the road assets under its control.

Council has identified key external and internal stakeholders to this Plan. Among other obvious users it is recognised that many other departments of Council have a key interest as either users of the asset or as providers of other services to the community.

The RM Act requires that Council keep a Register of Public Roads showing the roads reasonably required for general public use for which it is the Coordinating Road Authority. Other road authorities will have separate Registers of Public Roads under their control. Council's Road Register only includes details of the roads for which Council has responsibilities. Council is generally responsible for the overall management and development of the Council's local road network, which make up around 92% of the roads in the municipality. Department of Transport and Planning has declared those roads in the municipality that it requires as part of its principal routes for the movement of people and goods across the metropolitan area, to be Arterial Roads. The remaining main roads under council's jurisdiction are called Link Roads.

The Register of Public Roads establishes Council's road and footpath hierarchy. The road classifications or hierarchy is based on the road abutting land users, 'Public Transport' and 'Trip Generators'. The footpath hierarchy is based on existing activity centres and shopping strips (H1) and Council Plan - Streets for People (H2). This ensures a higher level of pedestrian amenity and service along routes with higher levels of pedestrian activity, which links key trip generators across the municipality.

Inspections of the roadway and footpath network form the cornerstone of the maintenance program and are undertaken regularly to ensure that the roadway and footpath assets are being maintained in an appropriate manner and that adopted intervention levels are being met. Local circumstances such as the influence of schools, hospitals, community facilities or particular concentrations of older, disabled or other potentially vulnerable users are also considered.

This Plan builds on the assumption that existing levels of service targeted by Council are generally to the satisfaction of the users. The need to seek a balance of the economic, social, safety and environmental expectations of the community, as well as the requirements of the RM Act to achieve 'reasonable' service targets, are also considered. A combination of risk assessment and road/footpath hierarchies are used to determine the response times for road maintenance.

As customer expectations change and/or budgetary constraints have an effect it will be necessary to review the levels of service stated in this Plan. The RMP and the response times or Level of Service targets will be reviewed every 4 years in line with legislative requirements.

CM Ref: D25/511349

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of this Plan is to establish a management system for the road management functions of Council to inspect, maintain and repair its public roads based on policy and operational objectives, having regard to available resources.

It also sets the relevant standard in relation to the discharge of duties in the performance of those road management functions.

The key elements of this Plan include:

- Asset management systems and processes that Council uses to manage maintenance and repair of its public road network; and
- Road and Infrastructure Levels of Service that details the maintenance practices used by Council.

2.2 Legislative Basis for the Plan

The RM Act 2004 came into operation on 1 July 2004. The main aim of the Act was to provide a more efficient and safer Victorian road network. Section 49 of the Act states that a road authority may develop and publish a Road Management Plan in accordance with Division 5. Section 54 sub-section (6) provides for an amendment of the Road Management Plan in accordance with the regulations and sub-section (7) provides for amendments to be incorporated into the Road Management Plan.

2.3 Details of Road Assets

The Plan is a document, adopted by Council that establishes a strategic framework for managing its road assets. Road assets included in this Plan are as follows:

Asset Type	Comments
Roads	Located on road reserves and/or on publicly owned land within the municipality
Kerb and Channels	Located on road reserves
Footpaths, Bike paths and Shared paths	Located on State Highways, Arterial Roads road reserves, including all open space areas within the municipality and any other agreements between Council and other land owners (such as VicTrack and Fawkner Memorial Park) regarding bikepaths
Sealed Rights of Way, Laneways	Located on road reserves that are recognisably narrow laneways, rather than streets.
Bridges and Major Culverts	Located on road reserves, as well as open space areas within the municipality – span or dia. > 1.8 m or have a waterway area > 3 m^2
Traffic Management facilities	Located on road reserves
Pedestrian Crossings & Traffic Signal installations	Only those located on roads for which Council is the responsible road authority and trams do not operate.

Table 1 – Details of Road Assets

CM Ref: D25/511349

Assets not considered in this Plan are:

Asset Type	Comments
Road pavements and kerb and channel on all Arterial Roads	Responsibility of Department of Transport and Planning
All Tram tracks including road pavement within 450mm from the outer tracks	Responsibility of Tram Operator
Unmade Rights of Way, Laneways	Classified as per Council's Rights of Way Strategy 2011-2021
Vehicular & pedestrian pavements within 3000mm from the outer tracks of railway tracks	Responsibility of Train Operator
Vehicular Crossings	Responsibility of the owner of the property which gains access via the crossing (refer to section 3.5.11)
Street trees and landscaping treatments	Undertaken in accordance with other Council Operations guidelines/practice/policy
Nature strips	It is the expectation of Council that residents maintain nature strips outside their properties
Street lighting	Dealt with in coordination with the utility supplier
Artwork – within the road reserves	Undertaken in accordance with other Council Operations standards/practice
Underground stormwater drainage systems & swale drains (Open Drains)	Covered by Council's Drainage Asset Management Plan (DAMP)
Structures, pits, pipes/conduits that are owned & maintained by Service Authorities (i.e. Telstra, Optus, Yarra Valley Water, Melbourne Water etc.) within the road reserve	Responsibility of utility supplier
Private roads, private driveways, private laneways, private Rights of Way and private carparks	Responsibility of owner
Public Transport Shelters (not owned by Council)	Responsibility of the Transport Operator/Owner
Off Street Carparks	Covered by Council's Road Asset Management Plan (RAMP)

Table 2 – Assets Not Included in RMP

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2.4 Key Stakeholders in the Plan

There are numerous internal and external stakeholder groups within the community that are both users of the road network and/or are affected by a decision or activity concerning a road. Council recognises the varying needs of external and internal stakeholders, depending on whether these stakeholders are the business community, residents, pedestrians, drivers or visitors.

The key stakeholder groups of the community who are users and/or affected by the road network include:

- Residents and citizens of the municipality;
- Business and commercial operators;
- Pedestrians, including the very young, those with disabilities, and the elderly with restricted mobility;
- Users of a range of miscellaneous smaller, lightweight means of transport such as bicycles, motorised buggies, wheel chairs, prams, etc.;
- Users of motorised vehicles such as trucks, buses, commercial vehicles, cars and motor cycles;
- Tourists & visitors to the municipality;
- Property developers
- Emergency Service agencies;
- Traffic & Transportation managers;
- Construction & maintenance personnel involved in building and maintaining asset components;
- Public utility agencies;
- Council as the responsible Road Authority; and
- State & Federal Government departments that provide funding support.

2.5 Availability of Plan and Associated Documents

This Plan and the Register of Public Roads are available on Council's website www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au and hard copies can be viewed at the Civic Centre Office at 90 Bell Coburg, during office hours: 8.30 am to 5.00 pm each working day.

3. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Register of Public Roads

Section 19 of the RM Act requires Council to keep a Register of Public Roads for which it is the Co-ordinating Road Authority. Schedule 1 to the RM Act sets out the matters that must be included in a Register of Public Roads.

The Register must include:

- The name of each Public Road;
- The date on which the road became a Public Road;
- If a Public Road ceases to be a Public Road, the date on which the road ceased to be a Public Road;
- The classification, if any, of the road;
- The reference to any plan or instrument that fixes or varies the boundaries of a Public Road;
- Any Ancillary Areas; and

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- A reference to any arrangement under which road management functions is transferred to or from another road authority.

The Register of Public Roads is a key element of Council's overall records management system that will enable it to comply with the evidentiary provisions of the RM Act and maintain records of defects or other matters requiring repair or maintenance that are found on inspection or reported to Council, together with the details of proposed and completed repair and maintenance works.

The information in the Register of Public Roads is generated from Council asset records extracted from the 'Assetic' Asset Management System. If a road is not included, it will ordinarily be unconstructed and not reasonably required for general public use or the responsibility of another road authority such as Head, Transport for Victoria, Owners Corporation etc. The information will be updated as assets are created, modified, discontinued or disposed of to meet the needs of the community.

Council is the Responsible Road Authority (RRA), as defined in the RM Act, and is responsible, for approximately 659 kms of local roads, and 1,151 kms of associated footpath and shared paths. Department of Transport and Planning is responsible for maintenance of the Arterial Road network but not including the footpaths and nature strips.

Council's Register of Public Roads also includes a listing of some non-road areas, such as bike paths and carparks.

The following tables below show details of Council's road network for all road assets and non-road assets owned and managed by Council at the date on which this Plan is adopted:

ROADS	Length (km)
Link Roads	52.4
Collectors Roads	25.4
Access roads	471.0
Constructed Laneways/Right of Ways	94.0
Unmade Laneways/Right of Ways/Roads	16.0
Totals	658.7

Table 3 – Details of Road Network

KERB & CHANNELS	Length (Km)
Link Roads	85.8
Collectors Roads	44.3
Access Roads	894.9
Sealed Laneways (RoW)	8.3
Unmade Laneways (RoW) & Unmade Roads	1.9
Totals	1,035.2

Table 4 – Details of Kerb & Channel

FOOTPATHS - BIKEPATHS – SHARED PATHS	Lengths (km)
High Use 1 (H1) and High Use 2 (H2) – Activity Centres/Shopping Strips	298.8
Standard	852.4
Totals	1,151.2

Table 5 – Details of Footpath / Bikepath / Shared Paths

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3.2 Road and Footpath Hierarchy

Roads and footpaths within the City of Merri-bek are classified in a hierarchical system based on traffic and pedestrian volumes. The Register of Public Roads includes this hierarchical classification system, which is used to determine levels of service and maintenance standards.

The road classifications or hierarchy is based on the road abutting land users, 'Public Transport' and 'Trip Generators'.

The footpath hierarchy has been developed to ensure a higher level of pedestrian amenity and service along routes with higher levels of pedestrian activity which links key trip generators across the municipality.

Bicycle Lanes are a dedicated 'on road' lane and are classified under roads for inspection frequency. Bike paths and shared paths are 'off road' paths; Maintenance standards for these paths are specified within Appendix A

The Road and Footpath hierarchies adopted in this Plan are as shown in Table 6 and

Table 7 below:

Road Class	Description
CL	**Constructed Laneways/Rights of Way** Those roads where the main function is to provide rear access to properties for delivery of goods, as in the case of commercial premises, or as a means to garage a car in the property in the case of residential properties.
A	**Access Roads (<3000 estimated vehicles per day (vpd)** Those roads where the main function is to provide access to abutting properties or is to provide access to limited numbers of properties, or which provide almost exclusively for one activity or function.
C	**Collector Roads (3000-5000 estimated vpd)** Those roads where the main function is to supplement arterial roads in providing for traffic movements, or which distribute traffic to local street systems.
L	**Link Roads (>5000 estimated vpd)** Those roads where the main function is to perform the principal avenue of communication for large traffic movements and/or between important centres, but Head, Transport for Victoria has not declared to be part of its Arterial network.

Table 6 – Road Hierarchies

Footpath/Bike/Shared Path Hierarchy –Inspection Frequency
H1 – Shopping Strips/Activity Centres
H2 – Access routes
Standard – other paths

Table 7 – Footpath Hierarchies

3.3 Road Authority

3.3.1 Arterial Roads

Under Section 36 of the RM Act, Head, Transport for Victoria is the 'coordinating road authority' for Arterial Roads. That means that any application for works within that road reserve (i.e. between the boundary fences) must be made to Department of Transport and Planning.

Under Section 37 of the RM Act, Head, Transport for Victoria is the 'responsible road authority' (RRA) for only that portion of the Arterial Road used by through traffic. This means that Department of Transport and Planning manages the traffic and maintains the road pavement.

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Council is the RRA for all areas of the Arterial Road that is not 'Department of Transport and Planning' responsibility. This means that Council manages the traffic (pedestrian and vehicular) and maintains the footpath (and road pavements, if any) on those portions that are not 'Department of Transport and Planning' responsibility.

3.3.2 Municipal Roads

Under Section 36 of the RM Act, Council is the 'coordinating road authority' for municipal roads within its municipality. This means that any application for works within the road reserve (i.e. between boundary fences) must be made to Council.

Under Section 37 of the RM Act, Council is the RRA for municipal roads. This means that Council manages the traffic (pedestrian and vehicular) and maintains all footpaths and road pavements within those road reserves.

3.3.3 Infrastructure Managers

The RRA is also the Infrastructure Manager for all road infrastructure (i.e. roadway, pathway or shoulder) and road related infrastructure (e.g. signs, barriers, etc.). However, other assets are owned by other Infrastructure Managers, including Utility provider assets (pipes, pits, poles, wires, etc.) and private property assets (e.g. stormwater drainage connections).

3.4 General Functions of a Road Authority

As stated under *Section 34 of the RM Act,* Council, as a road authority, has the following general functions:

a) to provide and maintain, as part of a network of roads, roads for use by the community served by the road authority;

b) to manage the use of roads having regard to the principle that the primary purpose of a road is to be used by members of the public and that other uses are to be managed in a manner which minimises any adverse effect on the safe and efficient operation of the public road and on the environment;

c) to manage traffic on roads in a manner that enhances the safe and efficient operation of roads;

ca) to design, construct, inspect, repair and maintain roads and road infrastructure;

d) to coordinate the installation of infrastructure on roads and the conduct of other works in such a way as to minimise, as far as is reasonably practicable, adverse impacts on the provision of utility or public transport services; and

e) to undertake works and activities which promote the functions referred to in paragraphs (a), (b), (c) and (ca) and to undertake activities which promote the function in paragraph (d).

A responsible road authority must, in performing road management functions, have regard to the principal object of road management and the works and infrastructure management principles [Section 33 RM Act].

A responsible road authority has power to do all things necessary or convenient to be done for or in connection with the performance of its functions under this Act [Section 35 of RM Act].

3.5 Road Management Responsibilities

The Code of Practice – Operational Responsibility for Public Roads, made under Section 28 of the RM Act, provides practical guidance in determining operational responsibility between road authorities for different parts or elements within the road reserve of public roads. It provides for the demarcation of responsibility to ensure that accountability for road infrastructure rests with a single entity. The Code is available from the Department of Transport and Planning website.

Council has maintenance agreements with Department of Transport and Planning:

- to undertake street sweeping along the Arterial Road network at a higher service level than that specified by Department of Transport and Planning in its RMP;
- for vegetation clearance and for drainage pit maintenance especially along the northern gateway of Sydney Road (Park St to Bell St); and
- for the maintenance of shared paths - Victrack (Licence 2012).

Council also has agreements with neighbouring municipalities where a boundary road or bridge asset may be maintained by either council. The agreements define the primary responsibility for management of these assets and are identified in the Register of Public Roads.

3.5.1 Arterial Roads and Freeways

Council is generally responsible for some assets along arterial roads, such as footpaths and linemarking associated with parking bays. Department of Transport and Planning is responsible for the road pavement, kerb and channel, traffic signals, medians and some underground drainage (refer Figure 1), including bikepaths belonging to Department of Transport and Planning (e.g. along the Western Ring Road).

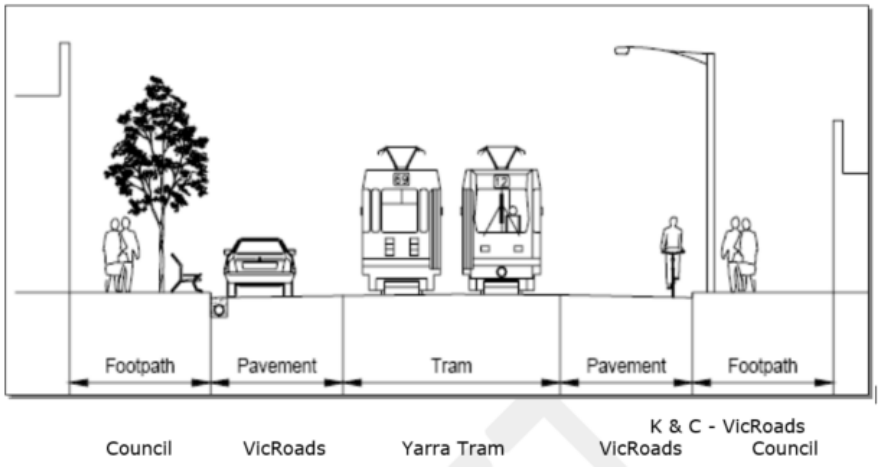


Figure 1 Arterial Road

3.5.2 Municipal Roads and Footpaths

All public roads, Rights of Way and footpaths, not under the control of Department of Transport and Planning and listed in the Public Road Register, are the responsibility of Council as shown in Figure 2 below.

In the case of a boundary road, each council has operational responsibility for that part of the road that lies within its municipal boundary or as defined in any agreement. The costs of any upgrade works on boundary roads are shared on a proportional basis.

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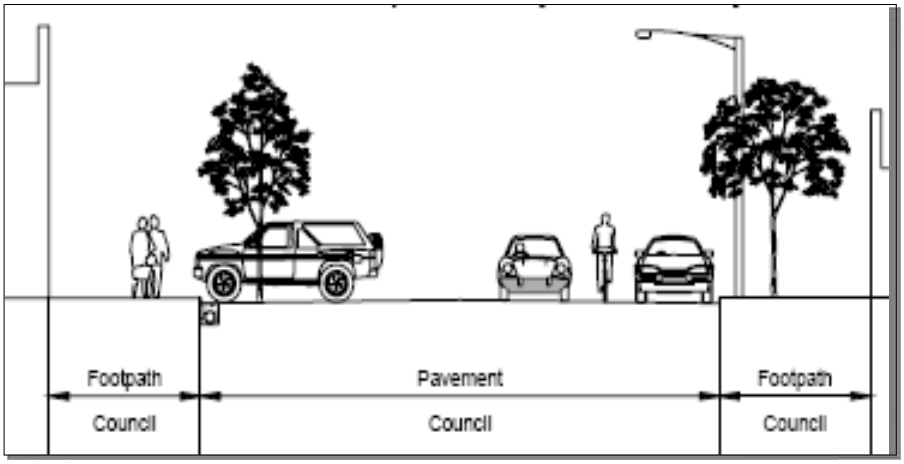


Figure 2 Public Road & Footpath

3.5.3 Carparks

Off Street carparks are covered under Council's Road Asset Management Plan (RAMP).

3.5.4 Surface Drainage

Responsibility for upgrading of any surface drainage where a kerb and channel or spoon drain crosses a municipal boundary shall be agreed to by the councils involved. Generally, any upgrade or maintenance works on one side of the municipal boundary shall be funded by that council.

3.5.5 Private Property Drains in Road Reserves

Stormwater pipes that drain private property and pass through the road reserve and connect to Council's drainage system at the legal point of discharge (Kerb and Channel, open drain or underground drain) are owned by the relevant owner, who is the Infrastructure Manager for this asset.

3.5.6 Bridges

Department of Transport and Planning is responsible for the management and maintenance of the bridges and underpasses over or under Arterial Roads. All railway bridges that cross above or below roads and underpasses are the responsibility of and are maintained by the Rail Authority.

All other road and footpath/bike path bridges belong to Council. Some footbridges that cross municipal boundaries along creeks have a shared responsibility between neighbouring councils.

3.5.7 Public Transport Facilities

3.5.7.1 Tram Operators

Tram Operator is responsible for assets in the road reservation such as, tram tracks, overhead powerlines and shelters. Tram operators are also responsible for the road pavement between tram tracks, between the rails of each track and for a distance of 0.45 metres from the outside rail of each tram track. The responsible road authority is responsible for the road reserve outside these limits. Centreline road marking along a tram reserve is the responsibility of the responsible road authority but (yellow) line marking designating tram operational limits is the responsibility of the tram operator. Some Tram and Bus Shelters are maintained by other private companies under agreement with Council and/or the Tram Operator or Public Transport Victoria.

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3.5.7.2 Train Operators

Train Operators provide the metropolitan and intra-state and inter-state train services that pass within or through the municipality. All the assets required to deliver the above service, such as overhead cables, shelters, pedestrian crossings, vehicular crossings, boom gates, fencing and train tracks, located within the rail reservation (including the full width of the road pavement 3.0m from the outside tracks at level crossings) are the responsibility of Train Operator to maintain. The responsible road authority is responsible for the road reserve and kerb and channel outside these limits.

3.5.8 Unmade Roads, Footpaths and Laneways

Construction of unmade infrastructure is undertaken in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1989*. The inspection and maintenance of unmade roads and laneways where house frontages exist are covered in this Plan.

The maintenance of unmade laneways (ROWs) that are **not** reasonably required for general public access is not covered by this Plan. In its Rights of Way Strategy 2011-2021, Council determined that maintenance of these assets is limited to: -

- Removal of dumped rubbish
- Vegetation control

3.5.9 Services

Pursuant to Clause 6 of Schedule 7 to the RM Act, Council is not subjected to any duty to maintain third party assets. Utility providers (water, gas, electricity etc.) that own assets (pits, poles, pipes, cables etc.) within the road reserve are infrastructure managers under the RM Act, and are responsible for managing those assets. These are covered in the Ministerial Code of Practice – Management of Infrastructure in Road Reserves and the Telecommunications Act 1997 (Commonwealth).

3.5.10 Bike Paths

The maintenance and management of bike paths along creeks and/or other open space may be subject to relevant agreements between Council, Melbourne Water and/or other relevant land owners. Council has an agreement with Vic Track for maintenance of bike-paths along rail reserves.

3.5.11 Vehicle Crossings

An owner of premises must ensure that each vehicle crossing to their premises from an adjacent road is maintained to the satisfaction of Council. It is recognised that the section of vehicle crossing along the footpath line serves a dual purpose (pedestrian use and vehicle traffic) and that therefore this section will be inspected by Council to ensure the safety of users. Where it is a wide or full width footpath, Council is only responsible for that part of the crossing that provides a continuous path of travel for pedestrians (Note: this is generally the first 1.5m from the property boundary).

Where a vertical displacement or linear cracks exist between the footpath and the area of crossing which is the responsibility of the adjoining land owner (described as a potential tripping hazard in Figure 3), Council will attend to that potential defect in accordance with the 'Schedule of Intervention Levels – Footpaths' in Appendix A if the cause of the defect is the heaving or subsiding of the footpath.

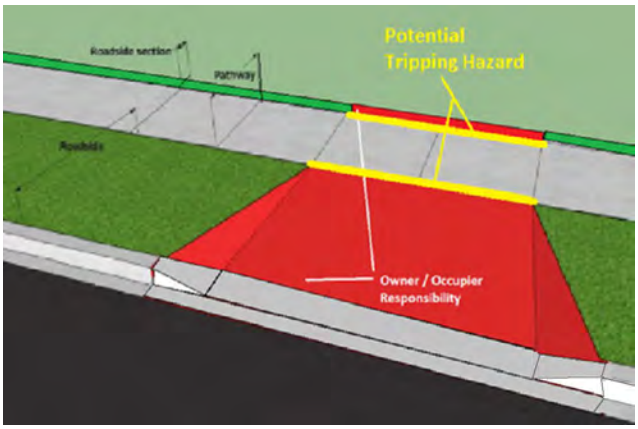


Figure 3 Vehicle Crossing

Where curved kerbing exists on Type 1 cross-overs, the curved kerbing is considered as part of the crossing and hence the responsibility of the adjoining land-owner, as shown in Figure 4.

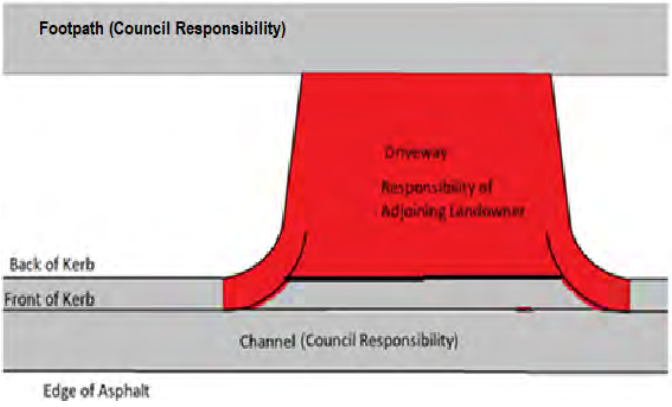


Figure 4 'Type 1' Vehicle Crossing

3.5.12 Repair of Damaged Council Assets

Where damage has been caused to a Council asset or road, the party that caused that damage shall be responsible for the repair of the damage at their cost to ensure that it is safe and operates at the level it previously operated. In particular, where secondary or 'consequential' damage has been caused to Council's assets (such as subsidence from water damage at a location other than the specific site of the asset works or repairs) the damage must be repaired by the responsible party to Council's satisfaction.

3.6 Safety Interface Agreements

In accordance with the *Rail Safety Act 2006*, Road and Rail Authorities are required to systematically identify risks at rail crossings. Council has entered into Safety Interface Agreements (SIA) under that Act with the relevant rail authority. These agreements detail the responsibility of each authority at each crossing.

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3.7 Demarcation

Demarcation will generally be defined within the relevant Codes of Practice for various assets and responsible authorities. The following Codes, relevant at the date of adoption of this Plan, shall be used to resolve any demarcation that may arise:

- Code of Practice for Operational Responsibility for Public Roads (updated 30 May 2017)

  This Code provides guidance in determining the physical limits of operational responsibility between road authorities for the different parts or elements within the road reserve of public roads.
- **Code of Practice for Road Management Plans**
  This Code provides guidance for road authorities in the making of a road management plan for the inspection, maintenance and repair of public roads.
- Code of Practice for Management of Infrastructure in Road Reserves

  This Code provides guidance for road authorities, utilities and providers of public transport in planning and managing their infrastructure in road reserves.
- Code of Practice for Worksite Safety – Traffic Management

  This Code provides practical guidance to any person conducting, or proposing to conduct, any works on roads in Victoria.

3.8 Obligations of Road Users

All road users have a duty of care with particular obligations prescribed in Section 17A of the *Road Safety Act 1986* which states:

A person who drives a motor vehicle on a highway must drive in a safe manner having regard to all the relevant factors including (without limiting their generality):

- physical characteristics of the road;
- prevailing weather conditions;
- level of visibility;
- condition of the motor vehicle;
- prevailing traffic conditions;
- relevant road laws and advisory signs; and
- their physical and mental condition.

A road user (other than a person driving a motor vehicle) must use a highway in a safe manner, having regard to all relevant factors.

A road user must-

- take reasonable care to avoid any conduct that may endanger the safety or welfare of other road users;
- take reasonable care to avoid any conduct that may damage road; infrastructure and non-road infrastructure on the road reserve;
- take reasonable care to avoid any conduct that may harm the environment of the road reserve.

3.9 Incident Claims

Any person wishing to make a claim against a Road Authority in relation to the performance of the road management functions is to give notice of the incident in accordance with the requirements of Section 115 of the RM Act. Council is not liable for property damages less than or equal to the threshold stated in the RM Act.

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4. LEVELS OF SERVICE

The process for determining levels of service has been based on extensive consultation with maintenance crews, key staff and the public. Levels of service were matched to industry standards and the available funding adopted in the budget process. Where shortfalls are identified, funding will be proposed in future budgets.

When assessing appropriate levels of service required for the various activities, the following was also taken into consideration:

- Road and Pathway hierarchy
- Road usage
- Level of risk

In developing these service levels, Council has ensured that the adopted service levels match the community's needs as far as possible (i.e. within cost and resource constraints).

4.1 Review of Level of Service

Council has subjected its infrastructure service provisions to the fundamental elements of competitiveness, community consultation, collaboration and challenging the status quo, compared with other service delivery options. For the purpose of this Plan and particularly from the perspective of the RM Act, service provision criteria have been used to determine the following: -

- What type of service activities will be required to deliver an overall level of service;
- What the intervention levels for each service activity are; and
- What the responsiveness for each activity is.

4.2 Risk Management

According to AS/NZS ISO 31000n 2018 Risk Management Standard, *risk is the "effect of uncertainty on objectives", and an effect is a positive or negative deviation from what is expected*. Therefore, risk is the chance that there will be a positive or negative deviation from the objective you expect to achieve.

ISO 31000 recognises that organisations operate in an uncertain world. Whenever we try to achieve an objective, there's always the chance that things will not go according to plan, or we will not achieve what we expect to achieve. Every step taken to achieve an objective involves uncertainty, and has an element of risk that needs to be managed. Accordingly, we can reduce uncertainty and manage risk by using a systematic approach to risk management.

The overall objectives of a formal risk management approach are to:

- Outline the process by which Council will manage risk associated with its road assets, so that all risks can be identified and evaluated in a consistent manner.
- Identify operational and organisational risks at a broad level.
- Allocate responsibility for managing risks to specific staff to improve accountability.
- Prioritise the risks to identify the highest risks that should be addressed in the short to medium term.

A risk management approach that is consistent with the process outlined in the AS/NZS ISO 31000:2018 (ISO 31000) has been adopted to achieve these objectives. The process is illustrated in the figure below:

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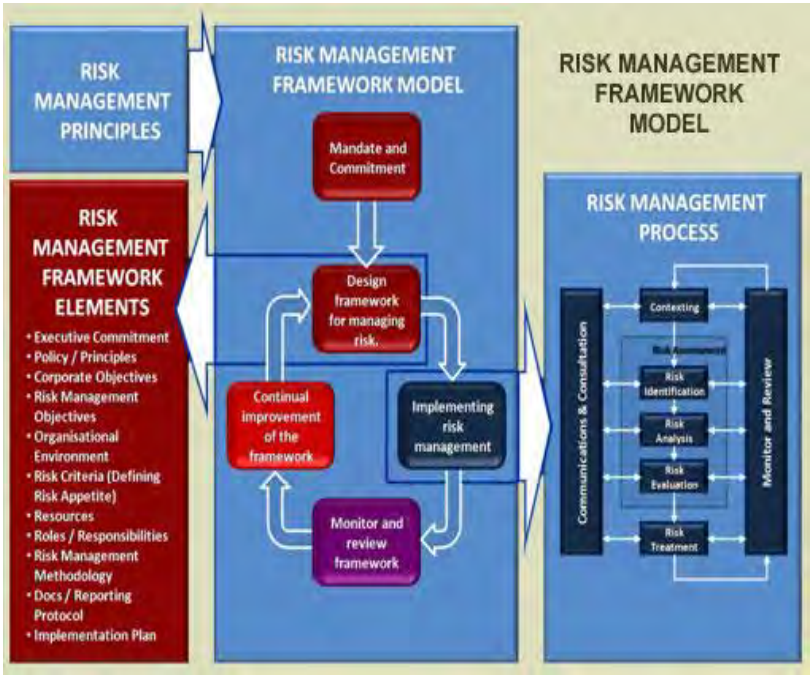


Figure 5 Risk Management Framework

4.3 Levels of Service

Council is committed to providing a safe and efficient road and footpath network. Utilising a risk assessment approach is seen as the best way to allocate available resources. It considers the severity of the defect and the road hierarchy in allocating a suitable response time. The objectives of this type of approach are to separate the minor acceptable risks from the major risks, and to provide data to assist in the evaluation and treatment of these risks.

This analysis has been used in determining inspection frequencies (including treatment options based on the identified risk), response times and intervention levels. These tasks are expected to be undertaken in combination with available resources and have been considered to be the main factors in setting reasonable levels of service presented in Appendix A – Maintenance and Inspection Standards.

4.3.1 Inspection Frequencies

Council's proactive inspection system is based on 18 maintenance areas which are used to ensure that a full coverage of the road and footpath network is systematically carried out. Within each area, proactive inspections are undertaken annually (within 13 months) on link roads, collector roads and high use (H1 and H2) footpaths. Proactive inspections are carried out on a 3 yearly (37 month) cycle on other roads and footpaths assets, in accordance with standard timeframes outlined in Appendix A.

4.3.2 Intervention Levels

Intervention levels serve as trigger points in determining whether repair works need to be carried out. As a general practice, intervention levels will be regularly monitored to reflect changing conditions and best appropriate practice standards. It is anticipated that the intervention levels established may also change over time in relation to other Council roads and resource allocations.

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4.3.3 Response Times

Initial response times following a reported hazard or identified failure of an asset will be in accordance with the specific timelines outlined in Council's Customer Service System - Pathway. Each response, whether reactive or proactive (following routine or scheduled inspections), will be carried out within these timelines. This will involve:

- an assessment of risk and if required, installation of temporary control measures such as barricades and signs;
- determining whether repair works are to be carried out;
- immediate repair works; and/or
- scheduling of repairs within the response times as outlined in Appendix A.

The process for responding to reactive or customer service requests is documented in Appendix B.

5. EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Although Council will make every effort to meet all aspects of this Plan, it may find itself in situations or circumstances that affect its activities and ability to deliver specified service levels in the Plan. These circumstances include but are not limited to:

- Natural disasters – including floods, fires, droughts etc.;
- Human factors – such as unavailability of Council staff or suitably qualified contractors etc.; and
- Any other major event beyond the control of Council

In the event that the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Council has considered the impact of such event on the limited financial resources of Council and determined that requirements of this Plan cannot be met, then consistent with *Section 83 of the Wrongs Act 1958*, the CEO will decide and inform relevant officer(s) that some or all of the timeframes and responses in this Plan are to be suspended.

Following determination of the scope of the event/s and identification and commitment of resources responding to the event, there will be ongoing communication between Council's CEO and Council Officers who will determine which parts of Plan are to be reactivated and when.

Council will, in such circumstances, issue statements to residents advising of the suspension or changes to the service levels under this Plan and will include reference to how the work that will be done is prioritised and the period for which it is likely to be affected.

Details of the incident that led to the "Exceptional Circumstances" clause being activated, and then the process taken to reactivate the Plan, will be recorded and stored along with this Plan.

6. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND REVIEW

6.1 Level of Service Adopted by Council for Road Assets

The adopted levels of service have been developed within overall policy considerations, consistent with Council's long-term financial forecasts, whilst responding constructively to the expressed views of the community. In developing these service levels, Council has ensured that the adopted service levels match the community's needs as far as possible (i.e. within cost and resource constraints).

6.2 Performance Monitoring

Performance monitoring is undertaken regularly, generally as follows:

- Regular management meetings to review all operational matters of routine maintenance, including inspections, hazardous situations, work programs, OH&S matters, etc.

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- Regular meetings of the management team to manage and monitor the implementation of the Capital Works Program.
- Reports on performance to the community are via Council's Annual Report.
- Annual performance report to State Government Departments
- Assessment of community feedback via the Community Satisfaction Surveys.

The overall objective is to ensure that the Council meets its obligations under the RM Act.

6.3 Benchmarking with Adjoining Municipalities

Council intends to provide a consistent approach with regard to this Plan with adjoining municipalities. It has reviewed and considered the levels of service previously adopted by the adjoining municipalities.

This process has ensured that Council has addressed issues of consistency and joint or cross boundary issues. Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) are being reviewed and discussed for agreement by Council's adjoining municipalities for assets considered to be shared assets.

6.4 Audits

A program of auditing, using both internal and external auditors, will be implemented for the purpose of ensuring that the management systems in place are delivering on the levels of service within this Plan. Council is subjected to Public Liability auditing by Council's insurance providers.

6.5 Amendment of Road Management Plan

The level of service may be reviewed in light of existing conditions i.e. defects intervention level and/or response time is not feasible or inadequate. Any revision of this Plan will be in accordance with Section 54 of the RM Act, which includes community consultation.

6.6 Road Management Plan Review

The Register of Public Roads will be reviewed at least annually in order to meet the changing needs of the City and legislative requirements. The changes will also reflect the change in assets as they are created, modified, discontinued or disposed of, and changes in processes and procedures as part of continuous improvement.

In compliance with the *Road Management (General) Regulations 2016* – Regulation 8(3), this Plan will be reviewed following each Council election.

7. MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

7.1 Relevant Government transport and other policies

Council's management of roads (and road related infrastructure) also gives due consideration to a variety of other initiatives and government policies, such as:

- Federal policies and strategies like "Auslink" and "Roads to Recovery".
- Operational Responsibility for Public Roads
- Code of Practice – Management of Infrastructure in Road Reserves
- The Council Plan.
- State Government policies and strategies
- Council's Planning Policy Framework
- Council's Integrated Transport Strategy (MITS).
- Council's Asset Management Policy and Asset Management Plans

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7.2 Monitoring Road Condition

A condition survey of Council's roads, footpaths, kerb & channels, Rights of Way is carried out every 4 years. A condition assessment of Council's bridges is carried out every 3 years.

Council maintains an Asset Management System and a road and inventory register. This system records the location and nature of road assets for which Council has maintenance responsibility listed on Council's road register of public roads. These details are recorded when assets are created, and then updated progressively as assets are changed or a condition assessment is undertaken.

7.3 Establishing Priorities & Allocating Resources

Council will establish maintenance works priorities in accordance with set criteria using operating data from its contracted service providers' maintenance management systems taking into account its duty to inspect, maintain and repair public roads for which it is responsible. A comprehensive maintenance program is developed using the severity of defects, community demand and budget constraints.

7.3.1 Network level

Road funding requirements are determined using a predictive modelling tool (myPredictor). Updating of the data is performed to reflect the rehabilitation and resurfacing programs undertaken during that year. Council uses these results to undertake a long term analysis for a number of different funding scenarios optimising the funds to minimise User and Agency costs. The results of this analysis determine the optimum funding levels for the maintenance of the road network. This analysis also provides a means by which Council can identify gaps in asset performance caused by changes in external influences and budgetary constraints, as well as any changes to asset management strategies.

7.3.2 Project level

The maintenance program aims to identify the best mix of maintenance treatments that can satisfy the identified asset maintenance needs at the lowest life-cycle cost and within the level of funding provided. Candidate road pavement and road resurfacing projects are ranked in priority order using the results of road condition surveys and the outputs of the myPredictor analysis. Bridges are ranked using the condition results of the level 2 bridge inspections undertaken by a qualified bridge inspector every 3 years.

7.3.3 Routine Maintenance Repairs

Routine maintenance projects are identified and prioritised based on the defect and safety inspections and is based on meeting Council's statutory obligations under this Plan, preserving asset integrity and satisfying safety criteria including any environmental goals.

7.4 Delivering and Auditing Maintenance Programs

The Chief Executive Officer shall have responsibility for assigning the roles and responsibilities of the appropriate Council Officers for the purposes of implementing the requirements of the RM Act and this Plan. The duties to be undertaken by Council staff are set out below.

7.4.1 Transport Unit

The Transport Unit provides strategic planning, policy development and day to day management of municipal traffic engineering related issues.

7.4.2 Asset Management Unit

The Asset Management Unit undertakes cyclical reviews, as well as ongoing compliance audits of this Plan in collaboration with the Roads and Transport Development Units.

The unit also develops and undertakes regular reviews of the AM Policy, the AM Improvement Strategy, AM Plans and asset condition inspection standards.

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7.4.3 Roads Unit

The Roads Unit undertakes Plan inspections as outlined in Appendix A, as well as systematic inspections of development works within the municipality. Regular monitoring reduces asset and environmental damage as well as improve public safety.

Routine maintenance work is carried out on the road and footpath infrastructure in a regular and orderly manner within available funds and resources and within the requirements of this Plan. Reactive works resulting from customer requests are also assessed using the processes mentioned in this Plan.

The majority of the operational reactive maintenance programs and works planning records are stored on Council's Asset Management System. These records include but are not limited to, the date the inspection was undertaken, date the work was completed, location and task completed.

7.4.4 Finance and Business Systems Branch

The Finance and Business Systems Branch of Council is involved with the recognition of assets and depreciation issues in compliance with the relevant codes of practice, input in preparing and review of the long term financial plan.

7.5 Recording Asset Performance

Asset performance is recorded primarily through Council's Asset Management System. After the completion of the 4 yearly condition assessment, Council undertakes an analysis of the relative condition of the road network compared to the previous survey.

Performance monitoring is undertaken on a programmed basis and generally follows:

- Regular management meetings of the City Infrastructure Department.
- Reports on performance to the community via the Council Annual Report.

The management systems that have been put in place provide Council with a means to ensure it is delivering the levels of service adopted. It also provides a means by which Council can review the service levels from one year to the next and make decisions about the need for any additional resources to address scope of works and funding requirements.

7.6 Responding to Incidents and Emergencies

7.6.1 After Hours Service

Calls are received through Council's after hours Call Centre and are screened for public safety by a Council Officer. A supply of warning signs and barricades are available to on-call staff to make areas safe until the following working day. Backup resources are available to on-call staff if required. The details resulting from the after-hours calls are recorded in the Customer Request System and Asset Management System for any follow up action.

7.6.2 Temporary Measures and Warning Systems to warn road users of hazards

If a section of road is closed for any reason, appropriate assistance or guidance is provided to members of the public. Council will assist emergency services as requested at any accident.

During storm events, Council's Roads Unit and Street Cleansing Unit attends ponding/flooding locations that present a risk to the public or property before attending to any that might impact on the road infrastructure.

If the road is obstructed by abandoned vehicles, Council's Amenity and Compliance Unit is notified and steps in to safeguard the traffic is undertaken.

In the event of a spillage on the road the relevant fire-fighting authority is notified of hazardous materials spillages. Where spillage of oil/fuel/chemicals occur action can be undertaken by either/or all agencies including Council/EPA/FRV, based on the circumstances and the type of spillage (vehicle accident or hazardous substance). The affected area is treated to minimise spilling entering the water courses and to ensure the road is safe for all.

In the case of mud on roads, Asset Protection Officers within the Roads Unit are notified and appropriate action to clean up is initiated.

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7.6.3 Incident Inspections and Response

Council may undertake within 14 days of receiving a formal Notice of Incident, an inspection (s116 of the RM Act) and prepare a condition report of the part of the public road or infrastructure, specified in the notice.

7.6.4 Recording and Assessment of Complaints/Requests

Requests and complaints for work/repairs are received as reactive. These reactive complaints or requests are logged onto Council's Customer Request System (CRS) and are forwarded to the relevant Unit for investigation. Road and footpath infrastructure complaints are handled by the Roads Unit. The inspector responds to the request by carrying out a site inspection/assessment in accordance with this Plan. This inspection also determines whether it is necessary to install temporary measures including signs and barriers until work resources become available. The assessment is recorded in Council's Asset Management System. Reactive complaints/requests are linked via their complaint number making an easy audit trail.

7.6.5 Temporary Repairs

Council is committed to providing a response to situations in accordance with the specified response times. However, in some circumstances where a hazard cannot be rectified within the timeframes due to lack of resources or budgetary constraints, a temporary repair will be carried out. Permanent works will then be planned as part of Council's planned maintenance program.

7.6.6 Duty to Inform Utility or Service Provider

If, during an inspection, Council becomes aware that any non-road infrastructure not belonging to Council is in need of repair or appears to be in an unsafe condition, it will convey the information in writing to the relevant service provider as per the response times indicated in Appendix A.

7.6.7 Inspection Regime – Proactive and Reactive

Details of the type and frequency of proactive inspection regimes are covered in Section 4 of this Plan. Reactive inspections are undertaken when a request from the public is received. The request is assessed on the same criteria as a proactive inspection.

7.6.8 Linkage between Inspections and Actual Maintenance/Action Undertaken

Every inspection whether it is proactive or reactive is assigned a unique reference number automatically. All works undertaken to repair any defect are consecutively entered in the Asset Management System having the same unique reference number. This allows for a complete and accurate audit process to be established tracking the defect from the day it was reported or captured to its completion.

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 ≥50mm 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

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2.0 SCHEDULE OF INTERVENTION LEVELS – SIGNS						
ITEM	OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY	INTERVENTION LEVEL	RESPONSE TIME			
			L	C	A	CL
2.1	Warning, Regulatory and Hazard Signs on 60km/hr roads	Missing/Damaged/graffitied (when sign has become ineffective)	1W	2W	4W	12W
2.2	Warning, Regulatory and Hazard Signs on 50km/hr (and lower speed) roads	Missing/Damaged/graffitied (when sign has become ineffective)	2W	2W	4W	12W

3.0 SCHEDULE OF INTERVENTION LEVELS – FENCING and DELINEATION						
ITEM	OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY	INTERVENTION LEVEL	RESPONSE TIME			
			L	C	A	CL
3.1	Guard Rail and Fencing	Damaged (ineffective) or missing sections	4W	8W	4M	12M
3.2	Linemarking	Faded (ineffective) or missing sections resulting in a safety risk	4W	8W	4M	12M

4.0 SCHEDULE OF INTERVENTION LEVELS – ROADSIDE VEGETATION						
ITEM	OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY	INTERVENTION LEVEL	RESPONSE TIME			
			L	C	A	CL
4.1	Canopy Clearance	Overhanging vegetation limiting vertical clearance to less than 4.3m	2W	2W	Not applicable	Not applicable
		Overhanging vegetation limiting vertical clearance to less than 3.5m	Not applicable	Not applicable	3M	3M
4.2	Sightline Provision	On 60km/h road, minimum sightline of 40m to be provided	2W	2W	4W	8W
		On 50km/h (or lower) road. Minimum sightline of 30m to be provided	2W	2W	4W	8W

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5.0 SCHEDULE OF INTERVENTION LEVELS – FOOTPATHS (ALL PATHS INCLUDING BIKE, SHARED AND IN RESERVES)					
ITEM	OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY	INTERVENTION LEVEL	RESPONSE TIME		
			H1	H2	Std
5.1	Concrete, Asphalt & Segmental Paths	When pavement vertical displacement ≥30 mm	4W	4W	8W
		When pavement vertical displacement is between 25mm and 30mm	6M	6M	Not applicable
		Cracking along path of travel ≥20 mm	4W	4W	8W
		Cracking perpendicular to path of travel ≥30 mm	4W	4W	8W
		When path is heaved or depressed ≥75 mm over 1.5m straight edge	2W	4W	8W
5.2	Asphalt Paths and Unsealed (crushed Rock or Gravel Paths)	When a pot hole ≥150 mm and ≥20 mm in depth	2W	4W	8W
5.3	Segmental Paths	Loose, unstable or missing pavers	4W	4W	8W
5.4	Tactile Pavers	Dislodged or missing	4W	4W	3M
5.5	Pathway Vegetation	Overhanging vegetation limiting vertical clearance to less than 2.5m	2W	4W	8W
		Vegetation obstructing intersections, or signage (regulatory warning or hazard) for bike-paths and shared paths from a distance of 20m	4W	4W	8W

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6.0 SCHEDULE OF INTERVENTION LEVELS – ROADSIDE AND STREET FURNITURE						
ITEM	OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY	INTERVENTION LEVEL	RESPONSE TIME			
			L	C	A	CL
6.1	Street furniture: Includes Bollards, Seats, Bins, Bus Shelters	Vandalised or Damaged	4W	4W	4W	4W

7.0 SCHEDULE OF INTERVENTION LEVELS – SERVICE AUTHORITIES AND THIRD PARTY WORKS					
ITEM	OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY	INTERVENTION LEVEL	RESPONSE TIME		
			H1	H2	Std
7.1	Utility Service Pits	Missing and/or Damaged Service Pits when ≥ 30mm vertical displaced	1D	1D	4D
			Management of Service Authorities' assets within the road reserve is subjected to the "Code of Practice for Management of Infrastructure in Road Reserves". Report to responsible Service Authority		
7.2	Third Party Pavement Reinstatements/Road Openings	When the level difference is ≥30 mm at any point of the work area	4W	4W	4W
			Pursuant to Schedule 7 of the Act and "Code of Practice". Notify responsible third party or asset owner to make safe.		

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8.0 INSPECTION FREQUENCIES ROAD & FOOTPATH NETWORK			
ITEM	OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY	HIERARCHY	FREQUENCY
8.1	Road Inspections	Link	6M
		Collector	12M
		Access with Shimmies	12M
		Access	24M
		Constructed Laneways	24M
8.2	Footpath Inspections - All paths including shared and in reserve Inspections	High Use 1 - H1 - Activity Centres/Shopping Strips	6M
		High Use 2 - H2 - Access Routes	12M
		Standard	24M
8.3	Road and Footpath Condition assessments (In accordance with the Road Asset Management Plan)	All	48M
8.4	Bridge & Culvert Inspections	Level 1	6M
		Level 2	As part of condition inspections
		Level 3	As Needed
8.5	Retaining Walls	height > 1.5m	6M
		height 1.0m to 1.5m	24M
		height < 1.0m	Response to CRS
8,6	Night Inspection for regulatory signs, warning signs, hazard signs and pavement marking	Link	12M
		Collector	24M
		Access	24M
		Constructed Laneways	48M
8.7	Electrical Hardware/Traffic Signals Inspections	All	Response to CRS and as part of maintenance contract

Abbreviations

Roads

L – link roads

C – collector roads

A – access roads

CL – constructed laneways

Shimmies – signed low trafficked roads which cyclists are encouraged to use; indicated by bicycle stencils on road surface

Time frames

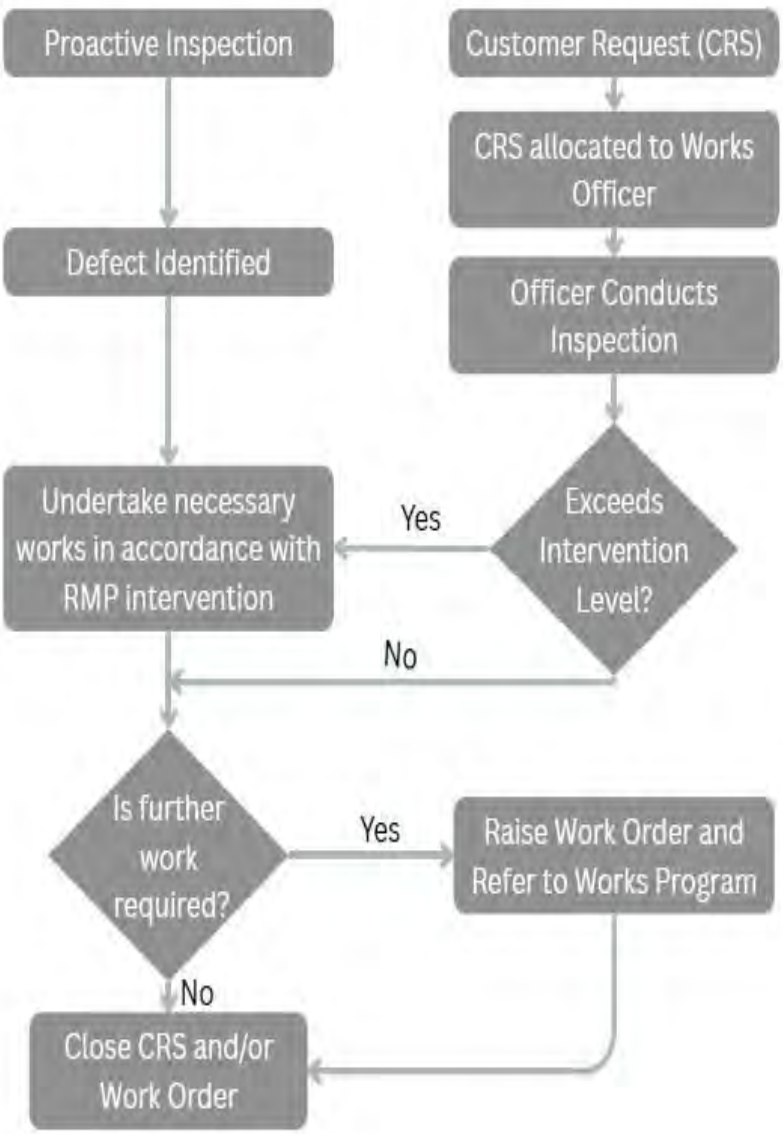
D – calendar day

W – week

M- Month

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9. Appendix 'B' Management System



CM Ref: D25/511349

7.15 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 AUGUST 2025

Director Business Transformation, Sue Vujcevic

Finance and Procurement

Officer Recommendation

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

REPORT

Executive Summary

This report presents the Financial Management Report for the financial year to date period ending 31 August 2025.

The 31 August 2025 Income Statement shows that Council has recorded a surplus of $174.4 million, $0.4 million lower than the year-to-date budget of $174.8 million, as a result of lower overall revenue. This difference is considered largely timing in nature. As set out in the issues section of this report, operating surplus funds do not convert to immediately available cash to Council. The accounting surplus includes items such as non-cash contributions, capital grants and is used to fund items such as loan repayments, the rates funded capital works program and transfers (savings) via reserves.

Council has spent $4.5 million on capital expenditure, which is tracking above the year-to-date (YTD) budget of $3.4 million, with $89.4 million budget remaining.

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

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

Relevant Council Plan action, strategy, policy, or resolution

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

3. Issues/Discussion

Council ended August 2025 with a surplus operating result of $174.4 million which is $0.4 million (0%) less than the year to date (YTD) forecast of $174.8 million.

It is important to note that the $174.4 million operating surplus does not convert to immediately available cash to Council. The accounting surplus includes items such as non-cash contributions, capital grants and is used to fund items such as loan repayments, the rates funded capital works program and transfers (savings) via reserves.

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

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

The main items contributing to the overall variance are:

Revenue

- **Grants – Operating** ended $1.5 million (30%) unfavourable primarily due to delays in the receipt of the CHSP Grants ($1.3 million). This variance will be resolved in the coming months when payment is received.

Expenditure

- **Contracts, Materials & Services** ended $1.7 million (12%) favourable due to a minor savings in insurance policies ($0.3 million - permanent), as well as timing variances in areas such as communications ($0.4 million) and cleaning & waste removal ($0.3 million).

Key Definitions

Surplus – is reported based on the Australian Accounting Standards and includes all operating income and expenditure recognised in the financial period, including gifted subdivisional assets (non-monetary), developer contributions and grants towards capital works projects. It is important to note that the surplus is not a cash surplus. It does not convert to immediately available cash for Council. Significant amounts of the surplus are restricted by legislation and must be used for future infrastructure investment.

Adjusted underlying surplus – is the surplus for the year adjusted for non-recurrent capital grants and contributions. It is an accepted measure of financial sustainability as it is not impacted by non-recurring or once-off items of revenue and expenses that can often mask the operating results.

Unrestricted result – this is the net funding result after considering the funding requirements to meet loan principal repayments and transfers to and from reserves.

Capital Projects – Capital Expenditure

Council has spent $4.5 million on capital expenditure year to date which is tracking $0.6 million (12%) below the YTD forecast of $5.1 million, with $97.7 million (96%) of the revised budget remaining.

Cash

Council's cash assets were $79.9 million as at 31 August 2025. This is a $16.5 million decrease on 30 June 2025 cash levels.

Cash fluctuates frequently over the year due to a number of factors, mainly due to the timing of when the rates instalments fall due. The first instalment for 2025-26 rates payments are due 30th September 2025.

Solvency Assessment

Council officers have reviewed Council's liquidity (Current Assets divided by Current Liabilities) at 31 August 2025 as 4.1. The Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) recommends that this ratio be 1.5 or higher. This is a positive result and shows that Council is solvent.

Human Rights Consideration

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

4. Community consultation and engagement

Community consultation and engagement was not required for this report as it reflects the performance against the budget and delivery of the capital works program.

Affected persons rights and interests

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

5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

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

6. Financial and Resources Implications

The overall corporate objective is to deliver the 2025-26 budget with the best possible outcome for Council and the community and in line with the approved revised forecast targets.

7. Implementation

The financial position of Council will continue to be monitored and managed. The progress of the capital works program will continue to be monitored and managed.

Attachment/s

1⇩ Council Monthly Financial Management Report - August 2025 D25/486024

Merri-bek City Council

Council Monthly Financial Management Report

2 Months Ended August 2025

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Executive Summary

Operating Performance

For the two months ended 31 August 2025, Council recorded an operating surplus of $174.4 million which is $0.4 million (0%) less than the year to date (YTD) budget of $174.8 million. This comprises total revenue of $213.3 million which is $1.2 million (1%) less than the YTD budget of $214.4 million and total expenditure of $38.9 million which is $0.8 million (2%) favourable compared to the YTD budget of $39.7 million.

Income Statement	YTD Actuals $'000	YTD Budget $'000	YTD Variance $'000	YTD Variance %	Annual Budget $'000	Annual Forecast $'000	Annual Variance $'000
Total Revenue	213,253	214,444 ▼	(1,191) ▬	(1%)	**281,292**	283,509 ▲	2,218
Total Expenses	38,874	39,694 ▲	820 ▬	2%	**237,964**	237,964 ▬	-
Surplus/(Deficit)	**174,379**	**174,750** ▼	**(371)** ▬	**(0%)**	**43,328**	**45,546** ▲	**2,218**

YTD unfavourable variance in revenue is driven by $1.2 million relating to delay in the receipt of CHSP operating grants of 1.3 million. YTD favourable variance in expenses of $0.8 million is primarily due to the insurance costs of $0.6 million lower due to new insurance policies, Christmas decoration expense of $0.1 million being later than anticipated and $0.1 million expense of Outdoor Help & Transport being lower than originally forecasted.

Capital Works Program

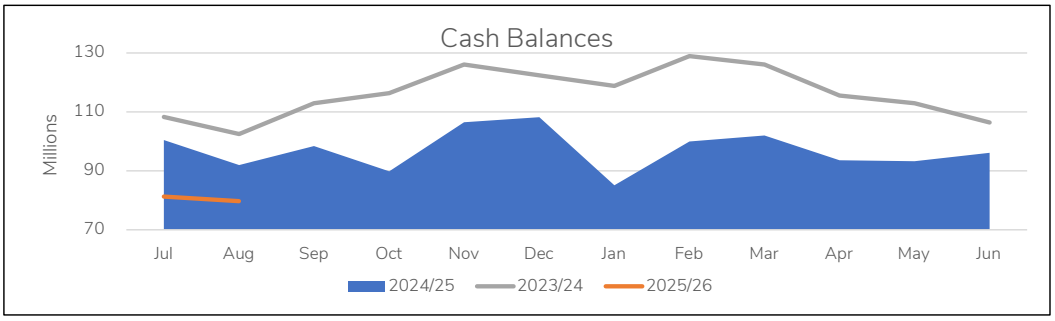
Council has spent $4.5 million on capital expenditure to 31 August 2025, which is $0.6 million (17%) more than the YTD budget, with $89.3 million (95.2%) of the full year budget remaining. The variance is driven by overspends to the budget for Parks, Open Space & Streetscapes projects ($0.7 million), buildings projects ($0.3 million) and roads projects ($0.3 million). This is offset by underspends in Footpaths & Cycleways projects ($0.5 million) and Building Improvement projects ($0.2 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	1,039	174	(865)	(496%)	**11,345**	11,029	317
Asset renewal expenditure	2,304	2,544	239	9%	**61,647**	67,515	(5,868)
Asset upgrade expenditure	1,195	1,175	(20)	(2%)	**20,894**	23,709	(2,815)
Total capital works expenditure	**4,538**	**3,893**	**(646)**	**(17%)**	**93,887**	**102,253**	**(8,366)**

Cash & Investments

Cash assets are $79.7 million as at 31 August 2025. This is a decrease of $16.5 million on 30 June 2025 cash levels, mainly as a result of expenditure on contracts, materials and services and the delay of receiving the CHSP grant. It has been 2 months since the first rates instalment has been sent out to ratepayers. 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 $79.7 million cash assets, $69.7 million is convertible to cash in less than 60 days and $45.0 million (88.2%) is held in green investments. The portfolio is in compliance with Council policy which requires at least $20.0 million to be convertible to cash and green investments to make up greater than 70% of all investments.



Operating Performance

Income Statement

YTD Variance ($)		YTD Variance (%)	
▲	> $500k	▲	> 10%
▬	< $500k & > ($500k)	▬	< 10% & > (10%)
▼	< ($500k)	▼	< (10%)

Income Statement	Notes	YTD Actuals $'000	YTD Forecast $'000	YTD Variance $'000	YTD Variance %	Annual Budget $'000	Annual Forecast $'000	Annual Variance $'000
Revenue								
Rates and charges		201,745	201,970 ▬	(226) ▬	(0%)	**202,778**	202,778 ▬	-
Statutory fees and fines		3,684	3,731 ▬	(47) ▬	(1%)	**19,323**	19,323 ▬	-
User Fees		1,049	959 ▬	90 ▬	9%	**8,899**	8,899 ▬	-
Contributions - Monetary		1,491	1,493 ▬	(2) ▬	(0%)	**8,232**	8,232 ▬	-
Grants - Operating	1	3,589	5,099 ▼	(1,510) ▼	(30%)	**21,205**	21,205 ▬	-
Grants - Capital		251	- ▬	251 ▬	0%	**12,964**	15,182 ▲	2,218
Other Revenue		1,405	1,165 ▬	240 ▲	21%	**7,797**	7,797 ▬	-
Asset Sales		39	26 ▬	13 ▲	48%	**92**	92 ▬	-
Total Revenue		**213,253**	**214,444** ▼	**(1,191)** ▬	**(1%)**	**281,292**	**283,509** ▲	**2,218**
Expenses								
Employee Benefits		18,216	17,440 ▼	(776) ▬	(4%)	**116,144**	116,144 ▬	-
Contracts, Materials & Services	2	12,611	14,274 ▲	1,663 ▲	12%	**73,203**	73,203 ▬	-
Depreciation		7,270	7,270 ▬	- ▬	0%	**43,621**	43,621 ▬	-
Amortisation		39	39 ▬	0 ▬	0%	**236**	236 ▬	-
Bad and doubtful debts		565	500 ▬	(65) ▼	(13%)	**3,153**	3,153 ▬	-
Net loss on disposal of assets		-	- ▬	- ▲	100%	**-**	- ▬	-
Finance Costs		131	122 ▬	(9) ▬	(8%)	**816**	816 ▬	-
Other Expenses		42	48 ▬	7 ▲	14%	**790**	790 ▬	-
Total Expenses		**38,874**	**39,694** ▲	**820** ▬	**2%**	**237,965**	**237,964** ▬	**-**
Net Result		**174,379**	**174,750** ▬	**(371)** ▬	**(0%)**	**43,329**	**45,546** ▲	**2,218**

Notes

Revenue

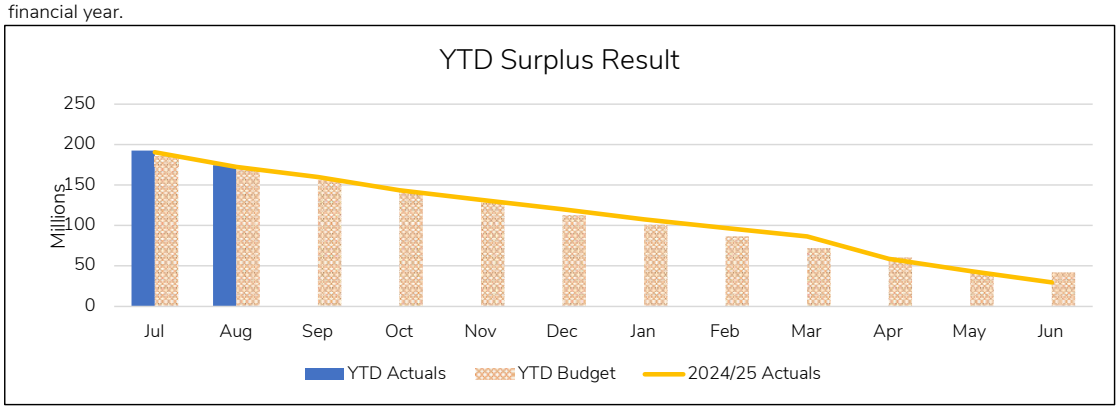
1. Grants - Operating ended $1.5 million (30%) unfavourable primarily due to delays in the receipt of the CHSP Grants ($1.3 million). This variance will be resolved in the coming months when payment is received.

Expenses

2. Contracts, Materials & Services ended $1.7 million (12%) favourable due to new insurance policies savings ($0.3 million), communications invoice delays ($0.4 million) and a timing variance of cleaning & waste removal invoices being paid ($0.3 million). The remaining $0.7 million favourable variance is made up a variety of different types of costs caused by delays of Council activities.

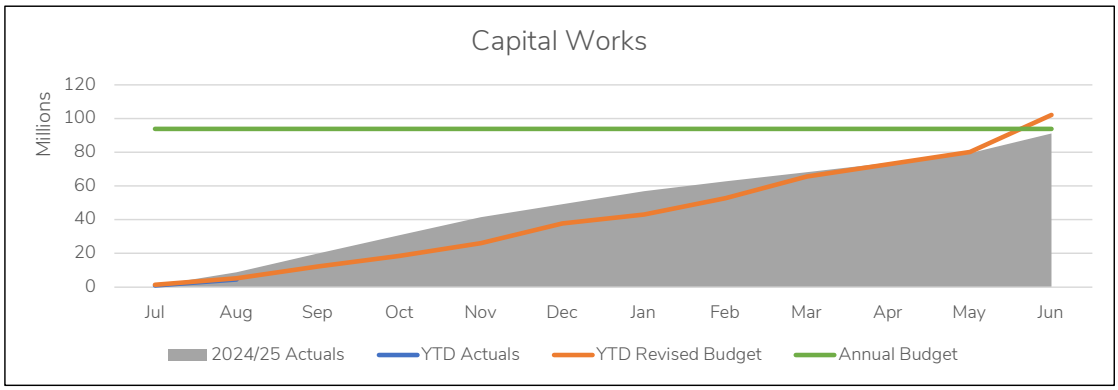
YTD Operating Result

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.

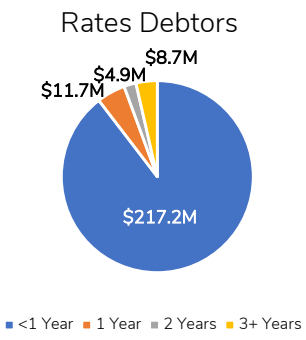


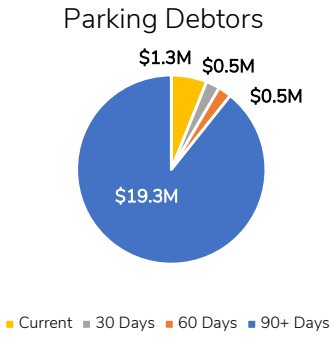
Capital Works

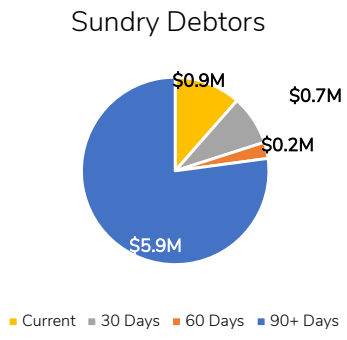
Council has spent $4.5 million on capital expenditure to 31 August 2025 which is $0.6 million (12%) lower than the YTD revised forecast, with $89.3 million (95%) of the full year budget remaining. The capital revised forecast of $102.3 million reflects the adopted 2025-26 budget and an additional $8.4 million of carry forwards from 2024-25



Debtors

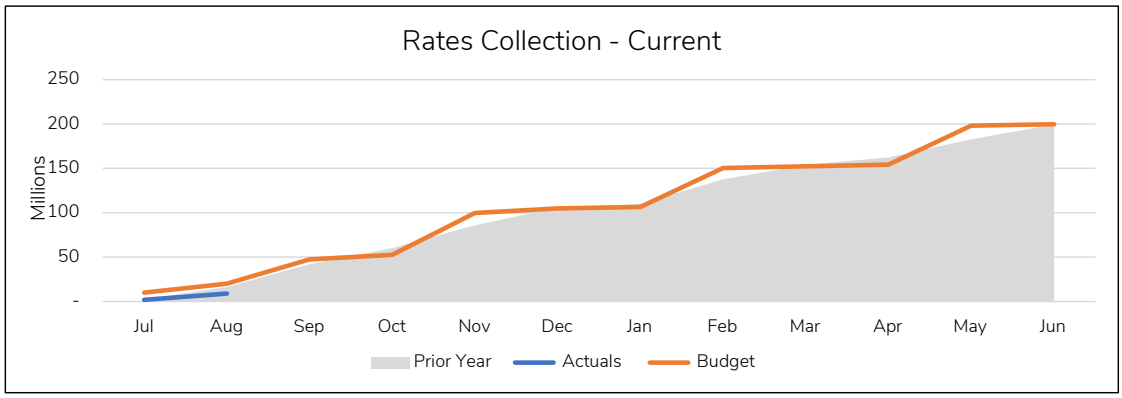


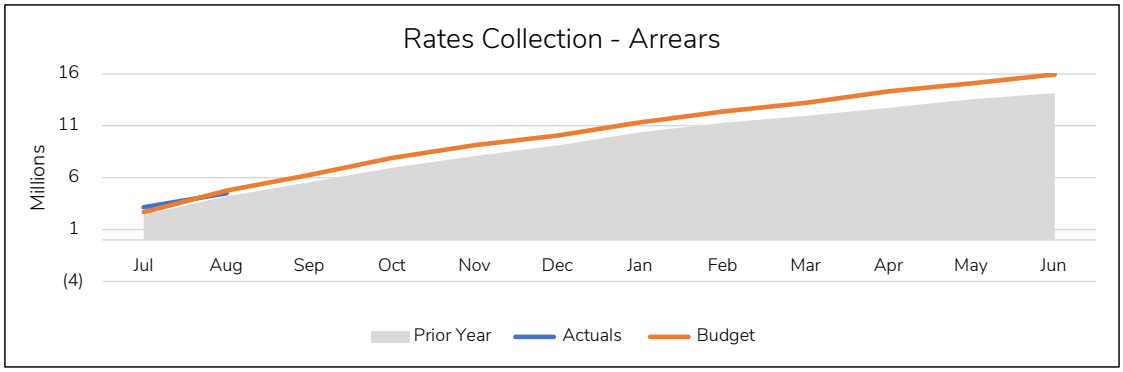




Rates Collection

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





Investments

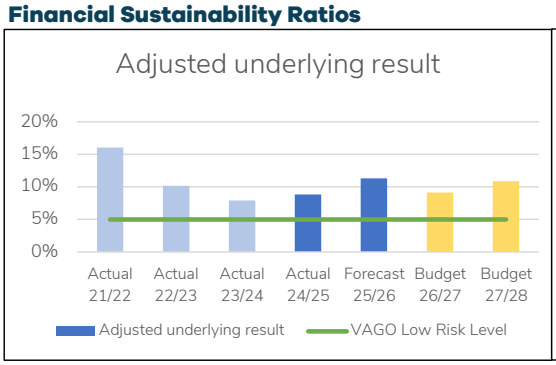
Of the $79.6 million cash assets, $69.6 million is convertible to cash in less than 60 days and $45.0 million (88.2%) is held in green investments. The portfolio is in compliance with Council policy which requires at least $20.0 million to be convertible to cash and green investments to make up greater than 70% of all investments.

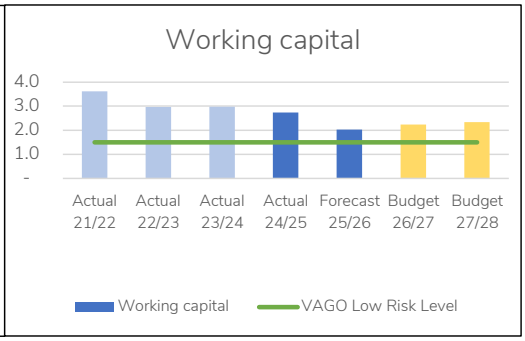
Bank	Maturity Date	Green %	Interest Rate %	S & P short term rating	Amount $'000	Ratio %
Minor Cash*	N/A		N/A	N/A	103	
Westpac	N/A		4.20%	A-1+	18,429	
Westpac	N/A		4.30%	A-1+	10,121	
ME Bank - 2	18/11/2025	100%	4.00%	A-2	5,000	9.8%
Bendigo Bank - 2	18/11/2025	100%	4.00%	A-2	5,000	9.8%
Suncorp - 3	24/09/2025	100%	4.21%	A-1	10,000	19.6%
IMB - 3	1/10/2025	100%	4.20%	A-2	10,000	29.4%
IMB - 3	8/10/2025	100%	4.20%	A-2	5,000	
Westpac - 6	27/02/2026	100%	4.14%	A-1+	4,000	19.6%
Westpac - 6	10/10/2025	100%	4.36%	A-1+	6,000	
CBA - 3	29/10/2025		4.19%	A-1+	6,000	11.8%
Total		88%			**79,653**	**100.0%**
Green					**45,000**	**88.2%**

** Minor cash includes NAB holding account and Petty Cash*

Financial Sustainability

Financial Sustainability Ratios



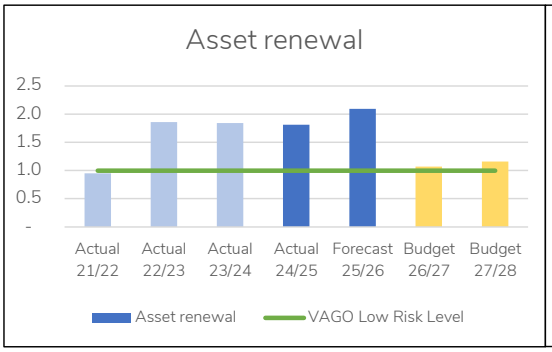


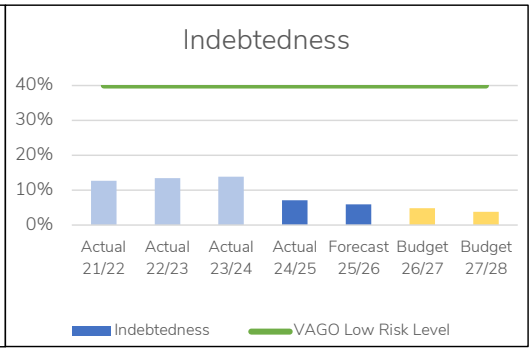
Adjusted underlying surplus (deficit) / adjusted underlying revenue

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 Councils 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	110
Interest Bearing Loans	Interest Bearing Liabilities/Own Source Revenue	< 60%	6%

TCV financing is conditional upon the Council maintaining a sustainable financial position when measured by the interest cover and interest bearing loans ratios. Forecast results indicate that the Council is meeting the minimum requirements. TCV loan requirements are well within target given limited borrowing compared to own source revenue and liability obligations.

Standard Statements

Comprehensive Income Statement

Comprehensive Income Statement	YTD Actuals $'000	YTD Forecast $'000	YTD Variance $'000	Annual Budget $'000	Annual Forecast $'000	Annual Variance $'000
Revenue						
Rates and charges	201,745	201,970	(226)	**202,778**	202,778	-
Statutory fees and fines	3,684	3,731	(47)	**19,323**	19,323	-
User Fees	1,049	959	90	**8,899**	8,899	-
Contributions - Monetary	1,491	1,493	(2)	**8,232**	8,232	-
Grants - Operating	3,589	5,099	(1,510)	**21,205**	21,205	-
Grants - Capital	251	-	251	**12,964**	15,182	2,218
Other Revenue	1,405	1,165	240	**7,797**	7,797	-
Asset Sales	39	26	13	**92**	92	-
Total Revenue	**213,253**	**214,444**	**(1,191)**	**281,292**	**283,509**	**2,218**
Expenses						
Employee Benefits	18,216	17,440	(776)	**116,144**	116,144	-
Contracts, Materials & Services	12,611	14,274	1,663	**73,203**	73,203	-
Depreciation	7,270	7,270	-	**43,621**	43,621	-
Amortisation	39	39	0	**236**	236	-
Bad and doubtful debts	565	500	(65)	**3,153**	3,153	-
Finance Costs	131	122	(9)	**816**	816	-
Other Expenses	42	48	7	**790**	790	-
Total Expenses	**38,874**	**39,694**	**820**	**237,964**	**237,964**	**-**
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	**174,379**	**174,750**	**(371)**	**43,328**	**45,546**	**2,218**

Underlying Result	YTD Actuals $'000	YTD Forecast $'000	YTD Variance $'000	Annual Budget $'000	Annual Forecast $'000	Annual Variance $'000
Surplus for the Year	**174,379**	**174,750**	**(371)**	**43,328**	**45,546**	**2,218**
Other Comprehensive Income						
Net asset revaluation	-	-	-	**49,206**	49,206	-
Total Comprehensive Result	**174,379**	**174,750**	**(371)**	**92,534**	**94,752**	**2,218**
Non Operating Income and Expenditure						
Net loss on disposal of assets	(39)	(26)	(13)	**(92)**	(92)	-
Contributions Capital (cash & non-monetary)	(126)	-	(126)	**(32)**	(32)	(0)
Grants - Capital	(251)	-	(251)	**(12,964)**	(15,182)	(2,218)
PRRLF Reserve	(1,362)	(1,493)	131	**(8,200)**	(8,200)	-
DCP Reserve	(3)	-	(3)	**-**	-	-
Net asset revaluation	-	-	-	**(49,206)**	(49,206)	-
Total Capital Income	**(1,781)**	**(1,520)**	**(261)**	**(21,289)**	**(23,506)**	**(2,218)**
Underlying Result	**172,599**	**173,230**	**(632)**	**22,040**	**22,040**	**(0)**
Less						
Loan Principal Repayments	336	336	-	**14,212**	14,212	-
Additional Rates Funded CAPEX	2,174	2,174	-	**13,041**	13,041	(0)
Transfers to Reserves - Operating	3	1,297	1,294	**7,783**	7,783	0
Transfers from Reserves - Operating	-	-	-	**(13,500)**	(13,500)	0
Total Transfers & Other	**2,512**	**3,806**	**1,294**	**21,536**	**21,536**	**(0)**
Unrestricted Surplus/(Deficit)	**170,085**	**169,423**	**662**	**504**	**504**	**(0)**

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	28,653	36,116	(7,463)	89	(6,060)	(6,149)
Trade and other receivables	254,388	41,679	212,709	45,793	45,793	-
Other financial assets	51,000	60,000	(9,000)	73,107	73,107	-
Inventories	690	690	-	659	659	-
Prepayments	2,939	3,160	(221)	2,429	2,429	-
Non-current assets classified as held for sale	22,975	22,975	-	-	-	-
Other assets	4,519	4,156	364	2,208	2,208	-
Total current assets	**365,165**	**168,776**	**196,389**	**124,284**	**118,136**	**(6,149)**
Non-current assets						
Unlisted Shares	2	2	-	2	2	-
Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	2,639,699	2,635,161	4,538	2,983,191	2,991,557	8,366
Right-of-use assets	780	813		128	128	-
Investments	37,232	37,232	-	36,024	36,024	-
Total non-current assets	**2,677,713**	**2,673,207**	**4,538**	**3,019,345**	**3,027,711**	**8,366**
Total assets	**3,042,878**	**2,841,983**	**200,927**	**3,143,629**	**3,145,847**	**2,218**
Current liabilities						
Payables						
Payables	51,370	20,543	30,827	18,753	18,753	-
Revenue Received in Advance	2,508	2,302	206	6,898	6,898	-
Provisions	20,843	20,923	(81)	27,110	27,110	-
Interest Bearing Loans and Borrowings	14,209	14,209	-	2,172	2,172	-
Trust Funds & Deposits	1,026	5,822	(4,796)	6,384	6,384	-
Lease liabilities	103	121	(18)	-	-	-
Total current liabilities	**90,058**	**63,920**	**26,138**	**61,318**	**61,318**	**-**
Non-current liabilities						
Provisions	2,510	2,510	-	2,603	2,603	-
Interest-bearing liabilities	13,330	12,961	369	11,437	11,437	-
Lease liabilities	459	457	2	-	-	-
Trust Funds & Deposits	706	706	-	-	-	-
Total non-current liabilities	**17,005**	**16,633**	**371**	**14,040**	**14,040**	**-**
Total liabilities	**107,063**	**80,554**	**26,509**	**75,358**	**75,358**	**-**
Net assets	**2,935,815**	**2,761,430**	**174,385**	**3,068,272**	**3,070,489**	**2,218**
Equity						
Asset revaluation reserves	1,871,459	1,871,459	-	-	-	-
Other reserves	47,408	66,701	(19,293)	2,151,921	2,151,921	(0)
Accumulated surplus	1,016,948	823,270	193,678	916,351	918,569	2,218
Total equity	**2,935,815**	**2,761,430**	**174,385**	**3,068,272**	**3,070,490**	**2,218**

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	(13,627)	199,737	199,737	-
Statutory fees and fines	2,320	18,357	18,357	-
User fees	1,410	8,721	8,721	-
Grants - operating	3,589	21,205	21,205	-
Grants - capital	251	12,964	15,182	2,218
Contributions - monetary	1,489	8,232	8,232	-
Interest received	763	-	-	-
Trust funds and deposits taken	33,930	41,524	41,524	-
Other receipts	1,534	7,797	7,797	-
Net GST refund/(payment)	1,334	-	-	-
Payments to Employees	(21,039)	(113,670)	(113,670)	-
Payments to Suppliers	(15,072)	(73,167)	(73,167)	-
Trust funds and deposits repaid	(5,882)	(41,414)	(41,414)	-
Other payments	(51)	(790)	(790)	-
Net cash (used in) / provided by operating activities	**(9,049)**	**89,497**	**91,714**	**2,218**
Cash flows from investing activities				
Payments for property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	(15,924)	(93,886)	(102,252)	(8,366)
Proceeds from sale of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	69	92	92	-
Proceeds from sale of investments	-	-	-	-
Payments/(Proceeds) for investments	9,000	4,993	4,993	-
Net cash used in investing activities	**(6,855)**	**(88,801)**	**(97,167)**	**(8,366)**
Cash flows from financing activities				
Finance costs	(204)	(816)	(816)	-
Repayment of borrowings	(337)	(14,212)	(14,212)	-
Interest paid - lease liability	(2)	-	-	-
Repayment of lease liabilities	(16)	(20)	(20)	-
Net cash used in financing activities	**(559)**	**(15,048)**	**(15,048)**	**-**
Net increase/(decrease) in cash held	**(16,463)**	**(14,352)**	**(20,501)**	**(6,149)**
Cash at beginning of period	36,116	14,441	36,116	21,675
Cash at end of period	**19,653**	**89**	**15,615**	**15,527**

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	28,653	89	(6,060)	(6,149)
Other Financial Assets at end of financial period	51,000	73,107	73,107	-
Cash & cash equivalents at end of financial period	**79,653**	**73,196**	**67,047**	**(6,149)**

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	428	178	(250)	**7,560**	5,597	1,963
Building Improvements	737	980	243	**12,341**	13,287	(947)
Total property	**1,171**	**1,158**	**(13)**	**19,901**	**18,884**	**1,016**
Plant and equipment						
Plant, machinery and equipment	92	114	21	**5,877**	6,257	(381)
Fixtures, Fittings and Furniture	31	17	(14)	**191**	229	(38)
Computers and telecommunications	14	-	(14)	**1,125**	1,185	(60)
Artworks	1	3	2	**47**	47	-
Library books	291	175	(116)	**1,082**	1,082	-
Total plant and equipment	**429**	**309**	**(120)**	**8,322**	**8,800**	**(478)**
Infrastructure						
Roads	1,069	1,452	383	**27,223**	30,976	(3,753)
Bridges	22	10	(12)	**3,334**	3,358	(24)
Footpaths and cycleways	167	675	508	**6,663**	6,761	(98)
Drainage	-	-	-	**2,812**	2,642	170
Waste management	(11)	140	151	**2,183**	2,527	(345)
Parks, open space and streetscapes	1,679	1,386	(292)	**23,450**	28,305	(4,855)
Other infrastructure	14	-	(14)	**-**	-	-
Total infrastructure	**2,938**	**3,663**	**724**	**65,664**	**74,569**	**(8,905)**
Total capital works expenditure	**4,538**	**5,129**	**591**	**93,887**	**102,253**	**(8,366)**
Represented by:						
New asset expenditure	1,039	431	(608)	**11,345**	11,029	317
Asset renewal expenditure	2,304	3,112	808	**61,647**	67,515	(5,868)
Asset upgrade expenditure	1,195	1,586	391	**20,894**	23,709	(2,815)
Total capital works expenditure	**4,538**	**5,129**	**591**	**93,887**	**102,253**	**(8,366)**

Procurement reporting

Contracts approved under delegation

This includes a listing of all of the contracts entered under delegation for the month of August.

Contract Description	Contract	Start date	Delegation	Total Contract (excluding GST)
McDougall Street and Penn Court Intersection Upgrade	RFQ-2025-55	4/08/2025	Manager	$157,636.22
Landells Road and Essex Street, Pascoe Vale - Raised intersection with zebra crossings	RFT-2025-19	4/08/2025	Manager	$223,671.58
Valuation Services	RFT-2025-4	4/08/2025	CEO	$690,000.00
Stormwater Upgrade - 11 Haig Ave, Coburg	RFQ-2025-10	8/08/2025	Manager	$207,185.13
Road Reconstruction at Ellenvale Avenue, Pascoe Vale South (Hillside to dead end)	RFT-2025-29	13/08/2025	Manager	$ 250,906.00
James Martin Annex - Refurbishment	RFT-2025-22	14/08/2025	Director	$ 316,086.00
Drainage Improvement - 30 Horne Street, Brunswick	RFQ-2025-9	19/08/2025	Manager	$ 171,440.00
Road Reconstruction - Baxter Street, Coburg (Sydney Road to Railway Place)	RFT-2025-26	27/08/2025	CEO	$ 706,124.00

7.16 GOVERNANCE REPORT - OCTOBER 2025 - CYCLICAL REPORT

Director Business Transformation, Sue Vujcevic

Governance and Strategy

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the Records of Meetings, at Attachment 1 to this report.
2. Notes responses to questions taken on notice during Public Question Time at the 13 August and 10 September 2025 Council meetings, provided as Attachment 2.
3. Notes the summary of minutes from the Audit and Risk Committee held 2 September 2025 at Attachment 3 to this report.
4. Endorses the Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Performance Report 2024/25 at Attachment 4 to this report.
5. Notes the Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Recommendations and Findings Report at Attachment 5 to this report.
6. Endorses the updated Audit and Risk Committee Charter as provided in Attachment 6 to this report (as recommended by the Audit and Risk Committee).

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 Advisory Committees and Groups.
- Records of Meetings, with a recommendation that Council notes the records.
- Responses to Public Question Time items taken on notice at the 13 August and 10 September 2025 Council meetings, with a recommendation that Council notes the responses.
- The summary of minutes from the Audit and Risk Committee held 2 September 2025.
- The Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Performance Report 2024/25.
- The Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Recommendations and Findings Report.
- The updated Audit and Risk Committee Charter.

Previous Council Decisions

Nil.

1. Policy Context

The *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) and the Governance Rules set out the requirements for keeping and reporting records of meetings held under the auspices of Council.

Council's Governance Rules contains provisions which enable the Chairperson to take a question On Notice, with a considered written response being provided to the questioner, in circumstances including where the question requires information that is either not available or accessible at the time of that meeting, or where the time allowed for Public Question Time has elapsed.

2. Background

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

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

3. Issues

Records of Meetings held under the auspice of Council

Records of matters discussed at meetings organised or hosted by Merri-bek that involve Councillors and Council officers are kept in accordance with the Governance Rules.

Meeting Records must include meeting attendees, including organisations represented by external presenters; the title of matters discussed; and any conflicts of interests disclosed and whether the declarant of a conflict of interests recused themselves from the meeting.

Some examples include Councillor Briefings, meetings with residents/developers/ clients/organisations/Government departments/statutory authorities and consultations.

Records of Meetings received since the previous Council Meeting are presented at **Attachment 1** as follows:

- Councillor Briefing – 8 September 2025
- Councillor Briefing – 15 September 2025
- Councillor Briefing – 22 September 2025
- Councillor Briefing – 29 September 2025.

Responses to Questions taken On Notice at Council meetings

At Council Meetings, questions are taken On Notice during Public Question Time, where persons submitting questions are not in attendance or where the maximum allowable time for public questions has elapsed.

Questions taken On Notice are provided with a written response following the meeting for which they are submitted and reported to Council at the next practicable meeting. The questions are recorded in the meeting minutes.

The responses to questions taken On Notice at **Attachment 2** to this report relate to questions from 13 August and 10 September 2025 Council meetings regarding:

- Governance Rules
- Merri-bek library staff
- Tate Reserve.

Audit and Risk Committee minutes

A summary of the minutes from the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held 2 September 2025 is provided at **Attachment 3**.

Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Performance Report 2024/25

The Audit and Risk Committee is required to report its performance annually to Council.

At the Audit and Risk Committee meeting on 2 September 2025, the Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Performance Report 2024/25 was endorsed by the Committee for presentation to Council for endorsement.

The Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Performance Report 2024/25 is shown at **Attachment 4**.

Audit and Risk Committee Recommendations and Findings Report

The Audit and Risk Committee is required to report its Recommendations and Findings report to Council twice a year.

The Audit and Risk Committee recommendations and findings report is shown at **Attachment 5**.

Audit and Risk Committee Charter

The Audit and Risk Committee Charter, originally adopted in November 2023, remains compliant with Council's obligations under the *Local Government Act 2020*.

At its meeting on 2 September 2025, the Audit and Risk Committee reviewed the Charter and endorsed several updates. While the Charter retains most of its existing provisions, the proposed amendments include minor grammatical and administrative refinements.

The Committee also endorsed the following key changes:

- The formal three-year Risk Management Improvement Plan has been replaced with targeted actions incorporated into the Integrity, Risk and Resilience Team's annual operational plan. References to the original plan have been removed from the Charter, with ongoing improvements now monitored and tracked through annual planning processes.
- The annual Audit and Risk Committee meeting schedule will now be presented to the Committee in September each year, rather than in November.
- The Charter review cycle has been extended from every two years to every three years, based on the observation that significant changes are uncommon unless prompted by legislative reform

The reviewed Audit and Risk Committee Charter can be viewed at **Attachment 6**.

Human Rights Consideration

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

4. Community consultation and engagement

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

5. Officer Declaration for a Conflict of Interests

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

6. Financial and Resources Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

7. Implementation

Governance activity, including reports of Committees to Council, Records of Meetings and Community Question Time items will continue to be reported to Council monthly.

Subject to Council's decision the next steps include:

- The Audit and Risk Committee Performance Report 2024/25 and revised Audit and Risk Committee Charter will be published on Council's website.

Attachment/s

1⇩	Records of Meeting - October 2025	D25/522375
2⇩	Responses to questions taken On Notice - October 2025	D25/522306
3⇩	Summary of Audit and Risk Committee Minutes - 2 September 2025	D25/522498
4⇩	Audit and Risk Committee Performance Report 2024-25	D25/469422
5⇩	Recommendations and Findings Report - September 2025	D25/470083
6⇩	Audit and Risk Committee Charter - 2025	D25/469778

Record of Meeting

Meeting: Councillor Briefing
Date: 8 September 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	
Apologies	Cr Oscar Yildiz	Cr Katerine Theodosis
	Cr Adam Pulford	Cr Sue Bolton
Council Staff (name and position)	• Cathy Henderson, Chief Executive Officer • Anita Curnow, Director City Infrastructure • Eamonn Fennessy, Director Community • Pene Winslade, Director Place and Environment • Sue Vujcevic, Director Business Transformation	
External participants	Nil	

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

Name and title of Council officer completing record: Sue Vujcevic, Director Business Transformation

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: 15 September 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
Apologies	Cr Oscar Yildiz	Cr Katerine Theodosis
	Cr Adam Pulford	
Council Staff (name and position)	• Cathy Henderson, Chief Executive Officer • Anita Curnow, Director City Infrastructure • Eamonn Fennessy, Director Community • Pene Winslade, Director Place and Environment • Sue Vujcevic, Director Business Transformation • Caden McCarthy, Manager City Design and Economy • Zoe McMaster, Acting Unit Manager Transport Planning • Matthew Diemer, Strategic Transport Lead • Indivar Dhakal, Manager Capital Works Planning and Delivery • Muhannad Alasali, Principal Project Manager • Amy Carson, Unit Manager Children's Services • Barry Hahn, Manager Early Years and Youth • Victoria Hart, Manager Sustainability and Climate • Michaela Skett, Unit Manager Sustainable Communities	
External participants	Nil.	

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

Items discussed		Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1	**Draft Moving Around Merri-bek Action Plan**	-	
2	**Harding Street Bridge Project Update**	1 Cr Liz Irvin 2. Material 3. Nature of the conflict: **Employer involved in the project**	Yes
3	**Confidential Matter**	-	
4	**Climate Emergency Action Plan, Circular Economy Strategy and Integrated Water Management Plan**	-	

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: 22 September 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 Adam Pulford	Cr Helen Politis, Deputy Mayor
	Cr Liz Irvin	Cr Jay Iwasaki
	Cr Ella Svensson	Cr Sue Bolton
	Cr Nat Abboud	Cr Katerine Theodosis
Apologies	Cr Oscar Yildiz	
Council Staff (name and position)	• Cathy Henderson, Chief Executive Officer • Anita Curnow, Director City Infrastructure • Eamonn Fennessy, Director Community • Pene Winslade, Director Place and Environment • Sue Vujcevic, Director Business Transformation • Jemma Wightman, Chief Financial Officer • Peter Sagar, Program Director Central Coburg • Mark Hughes, Unit Manager Urban Planning • Phil Priest, Group Manager City Development	
External participants	Bridge 42 Per capita	

Items discussed		**Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature**	**Left meeting**
1	Budget Process Options	-	
2	Central Coburg Update - Social and Affordable Housing	-	
3	Latest statutory planning reforms	-	

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: 29 September 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 Adam Pulford	Cr Helen Politis, Deputy Mayor
	Cr Liz Irvin	Cr Jay Iwasaki
	Cr Ella Svensson	Cr Katerine Theodosis
	Cr Nat Abboud	
Apologies	Cr Oscar Yildiz	Cr Sue Bolton
Council Staff (name and position)	• Cathy Henderson, Chief Executive Officer • Indivar Dakhal, Acting Director City Infrastructure • Eamonn Fennessy, Director Community • Pene Winslade, Director Place and Environment • Sue Vujcevic, Director Business Transformation • Peter Sagar, Program Director Central Coburg • Alayna Chapman, Unit Manager Strategic Planning • Caden McCarthy, Manager City Design & Economy • Simon Van Wijnen, Principal Urban Designer • Leanne Giardina, Manager Aged and Community Support • Anthony Smith, Specialist Governance Advisor • Sophie Barrison, Unit Manager Integrity Risk and Resilience	
External participants	Nil.	

Items discussed		**Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature**	**Left meeting**
1	Central Coburg Update	-	
2	State Government Activity Centres Program	-	
3	Park Close to Home – 568 Sydney Road	-	
4	Aged Care Reforms Update	-	
5	Advisory Committees – Appointment of Members	-	

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
5	CEO Employment Matters (confidential)	-	

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.

Merri-bek Civic Centre
90 Bell Street
Coburg Victoria 3058
T: (03) 9240 1111

Postal Address
Locked Bag 10
Brunswick Victoria 3056

merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Ref: D25/415077
Doc. No D25/506802
Enq: Sophie Barison
Tel: 9240 1111

Aaron Moon
Via email: [redacted]

Dear Aaron

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME ON NOTICE RESPONSE FROM AUGUST 2025 COUNCIL MEETING

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

Question

Would Council consider amending its Governance Rules so that all votes are automatically taken as a division, in order to improve transparency and avoid unnecessary conflict?

Answer

Divisions are currently called at the discretion of Councillors under the current Governance Rules.

That said, we are awaiting the release of the Model Governance Rules from Local Government Victoria, which is anticipated to be in December 2025.

These may change the process relating to voting and the use of divisions. Once available, Council will consider the model rules and any advice from Local Government Victoria.

Thank you for your interest and feedback on Council meetings.

I trust this answers your questions, however, if you require any further information, please don't hesitate to contact Sophie Barison, Unit Manager Risk and Resilience on 9240 1111.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Sue Vujcevic
DIRECTOR BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION
25/9/2025

[redacted]

XRef. D25/75273
Doc. No. D25/502803
Enq: L.Dempster
Tel: [redacted]

Kerry Davies
[redacted]

Dear Kerry

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME ON NOTICE RESPONSE

I write to you in response to your questions submitted to the 13 August 2025 Council meeting, as follows:

Question One;

My name is Kerry, and I am a Merri-bek resident. My questions relate to the Risks of Unstaffed libraries and concern about the current community consultation process being undertaken as part of the Library Strategy Plan. In a recent survey to the public, a question included “would it be easier if access to the libraries were earlier in the morning and later in the evening”. This question raises concerns that Council is exploring the introduction of unstaffed library models, and workers and the public are worried about the serious implications this has for job security, public safety, and the future of equitable, professional library services in our community.

From my perspective, the consultation appears to lack transparency and genuine engagement with both workers and community members. Many frontline staff are worried about the low community awareness of the consequences if the Council were to introduce unstaffed library hours.
Unstaffed library models, while often framed as “innovative” or “cost-effective,” raise significant concerns.

Removing trained staff from public libraries undermines the vital role they play—not just in managing collections, but in supporting literacy, digital inclusion, mental health, safety, and social cohesion. Staff presence helps to prevent antisocial behavior, support vulnerable patrons, and maintain welcoming, inclusive spaces for all.

Is Council exploring the unstaffed library model as the recent survey to the public implies?

Question Two:

Any such proposal poses a direct threat to:
- Job Security of Merri-bek Library staff: Reducing staffing levels or replacing hours with unstaffed access will inevitably lead to job losses or precarious, insecure roles. We know that in the UK, the

introduction and normalisation of unstaffed libraries has led to devastation of the libraries sector. The BBC reports that more than 180 council-run libraries have either closed or been handed over to volunteer groups since 2016. Over 2,000 jobs have been lost as a result. Whilst the trend is gentler in Victoria, it does trend in the same direction.

- Safety and Accessibility: Unstaffed libraries raise serious concerns around patron safety, especially for children, seniors, people with disabilities, and those experiencing homelessness or distress.
- Service Quality and Equity: Libraries without staff are not equivalent to libraries with staff. I fear that this model will deepen inequalities in service access and degrade the community trust built over decades.

Council has capital works funding for libraries across Merri-bek, are any of those funds going towards the costs of installation and technology needed to introduce unstaffed library access?

Thank you for your interest in community engagement and public participation. Our recent library community consultation included general questions about how best to align our services to meet the needs of our diverse communities.

While a number of Victorian public libraries provide increased library access by allowing community members to access their libraries outside of the usual staffed hours, Merri-bek Libraries are not currently planning to introduce this service.

We do excitingly have upcoming capital works planned for several of our libraries. Now we are in scoping and early concept design phases for two of these projects, with a general budget applied to each project only.

Merri-bek recognises and values the skills of our library staff.

I trust this answers your questions, however if you require any further information, please don't hesitate to contact Lisa Dempster on [redacted] or ldempster@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Eamonn Fennessy
DIRECTOR COMMUNITY

25 / 09 / 2025

Merri-bek Civic Centre
Woi-wurrung Country
90 Bell Street, Coburg 3058
T: (03) 9240 1111

Postal Address
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Locked Bag 10, Brunswick 3056

merri-bek.vic.gov.au

XRef: D25/475616
Doc. No. D25/478485
Enq: Greg Rodwell
Tel: 9240 1111

Laura Black
[redacted]

Dear Laura

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:

Given the conditions at Tate Reserve with the fence, including gates being glued shut, fence panels going up and down and no signage to inform locals about the trial and how to give feedback. This is despite efforts from locals to reinstate fence panels and direct locals to the council's feedback forum.

How will the pilot work given dogs are still able to enter the area and baseline data was not collected prior to commencement of the pilot?

Response:

The 6-month pilot of the new dog off lead area and the dog prohibited area has commenced. When we undertake a pilot, part of it is to understand what is working and what is not. The fact that the fence has been knocked down, the gates glued shut and the signs indicating the dog prohibited area removed every time they are put up is part of the pilot learning, and all of these instances are being logged.

Council is planning an increased presence and education of people using the space about the new designations, and this will include enforcement of the Council Order at times. We are also proposing some on site engagement pop ups and activities during the pilot period to discuss the trial which will provide an opportunity to listen and learn as well as contribute towards the review.

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**

तपाईको 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**

Question 2:

Can council facilitate a Roundtable meeting with local dog walkers, FoMC and MCMC so we can all hear each other out and come to a solution as the trial is not working? And can councillors visit the site and understand how it works before making decision that affect the space?

Response:

Thank you for your suggestion of holding a roundtable. At this point in time, based on the sentiment from those who are supportive and not supportive of the dog walking designations, it is not clear that parties would be willing to meet face to face, or if they did, that this would be beneficial. Council will continue to liaise with stakeholders and consider the option of a Roundtable if circumstances change.

I trust this answers your questions however, if you require any further information, please don't hesitate to contact myself or Greg Rodwell, Manager Open Space and Environment on 9240 1111.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Anita Curnow
DIRECTOR CITY INFRASTRUCTURE

15 / 09 / 2025

Committee:	Audit and Risk Committee (Established in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020)*
Meeting Date:	Tuesday 2 September 2025
Representatives:	Councillor members – Mayor Cr Helen Davidson, Deputy Mayor Cr Helen Politis and Cr Ella Stevensson Independent members - John Watson (Chair), Marilyn Kearney, Lisa Tripodi and Jeff Rigby

The Audit and Risk Committee is chaired by Independent Chair, John Watson. The following business was conducted:

1. No conflicts of interest were declared.
2. The CEO advised the Committee that no issues relating to any impending legal action or known legislation breached or instances of fraud were noted.
3. The internal and external auditor reported that there had been no obstructions to the work of internal audit.
4. It was confirmed that the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting held on 3 June 2025 had been circulated and confirmed out of session**.**

BUSINESS ACTIONS REPORT

That the Audit and Risk Committee:

1. **RECEIVED and NOTED** the report and the extension was acknowledged**.**

Finding:

1. Management is progressing responses to Business Actions.

ELEVATE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM REPORT

That the Audit and Risk Committee:

1. **RECEIVED and NOTED** the status of the Elevate Transformation Program.

Finding:

1. The Elevate Transformation Program is currently in the procurement and planning phase.

ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT AND PERFORMANCE STATEMENT 2024-2025

That the Audit and Risk Committee:

In performing its duties and responsibilities of oversight of the external audit function as set down in its Charter and required under statute, the Audit and Risk Committee (Committee'):

1. informs Council that the Committee has received and considered:
    a. the Annual Financial Report (comprising audited Financial Statements) and the audited Performance Statement for the financial year ending 30 June 2025 ('Audited Statements');
    b. the External Auditor's Closing Report and Final Management Letter relating to the audit process for the Audited Statements;
    c. the Governance and Management Checklist completed by management that accompanies the final form of the Audited Statements in Council's 2024/25 Annual Report; and

d. the draft Management Representation Letter to be presented to the External Auditor;

2. assures Council that the Committee has raised and discussed with the External Auditor and management all matters it has identified as part of such consideration and is satisfied with clarifications and advice it has received from the External Auditor and management;
3. is satisfied from its enquiries that there are no incomplete or unresolved matters of a material nature pertaining to the audit that prevents the Committee from providing the following recommendations to Council;
4. based on the Committee's considerations and enquiries, recommends that Council pass a resolution:
    a. giving its approval in principle to the Audited Statements;
    b. authorising the Chief Executive Officer to submit the approved-in-principle Audited Statements to the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) for reporting on the audit;
    c. if any subsequent changes recommended or agreed by VAGO are to be made to the approved-in-principle Audited Statements[2], authorising Council's Principal Accounting Officer:
        i. to make any changes that are of a non-material nature; and
        ii. to make any changes that are of a material nature after first consulting with the Committee's Chairperson;
    d. requiring that Council's Principal Accounting Officer prepare a summary of any changes made to the approved-in-principle Audited Statements to enable them to be presented in their final form and provide this summary to both Council and the Committee for their noting;
    e. authorise the certification (signing) of the final form of the Audited Statements by the Mayor, another Councillor and the Chief Executive Officer;
5. The Committee expressed its thanks to the External Auditor and the Council staff involved in working with the External Auditor, and acknowledges the efforts involved to bring the external audit process for the financial year ending 30 June 2025 to a satisfactory conclusion and for the high standard of presentation.

Finding:

1. Council is monitoring and managing its financial position and key controls.

FINANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

That the Audit and Risk Committee:

1. **DISCUSSED and NOTED** the progress against the 3-year Financial Management Improvement Plan.
2. **DISCUSSED and NOTED** the monitoring and update on Council's controls for unusual transactions above acceptable risk.
3. **DISCUSSED and NOTED** there were no management disclosures of significant compliance issues.
4. **DISCUSSED and NOTED** Council's handling of accounting, internal accounting controls or auditing matters or other matters likely to affect the Council or its compliance with relevant legislation and regulations.
5. **DISCUSSED and NOTED** VAGO/RSD Audit fees associated with the financial audit.

Finding

1. Council is monitoring and managing its financial position and key controls.

MEMORANDUM OF AUDIT PLANNING AND AUDITS COMPLETED

That the Audit and Risk Committee:

1. **DISCUSSED, ACCEPTED** and **ENDORSED** the following Memorandums of Audit Planning for the

forthcoming audits:

- Strategic Planning Governance
- Customer Service and Complaints Handling.

2. **DISCUSSED, ACCEPTED and ENDORSED** the findings, recommendations, and management comments for the following audits:

   - Cyber Security
   - Climate Change.

3. **NOTED** the progress made to date on the 2025-26 internal audit program.

Findings

1. The Cyber Security audit identified nine findings and management comments have been provided against eleven recommendations.
2. The Climate Change audit identified five findings and management comments have been provided against five recommendations.
3. Sufficient progress has been made against the Internal Audit Plan.

COMMITTEE MANAGEMENT AND WORK PLAN REPORT

That the Audit and Risk Committee:

1. **NOTED** the schedule to review the Business Transformation polices overdue for review.
2. **ENDORSED** the 2024/25 annual Audit and Risk Committee Performance Report for presentation to Council.
3. **NOTED** the report on Councillor Expenses.
4. **NOTED** the Report on Interstate and Overseas Travel.
5. **NOTED** the CEO credit card transactions.
6. **NOTED** the report on Council's commercial interest.
7. **ADOPTED** the Audit and Risk committee meeting dates for 2026.
8. **ENDORSED** the Audit and Risk report for presentation to Council.
9. **ENDORSED** the reviewed Audit and Risk Committee Charter for presentation to Council.

Findings

1. Management has a plan in place to review overdue policies managed by the Business Transformation Directorate.
2. The assessment of the Audit and Risk Committee's performance against the Committee Charter was positive.
3. Councillor expenses have been recorded in accordance with policy.
4. The Interstate and Overseas Travel register is current and contains a record of travel by Councillors and Officers.
5. The Chief Financial Officer has reviewed credit card transactions and reimbursements for the CEO corporate credit card.
6. Council holds a commercial interest with one organisation.
7. The Audit and Risk Committee meeting dates for 2026 have been selected.
8. The Audit and Risk Report is endorsed and recommended for presentation to Council.
9. The Audit and Risk Committee Charter has been reviewed.

Forthcoming Meeting:

18 November 2025

Merri-bek City Council

Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee

Performance Report 2024 – 2025



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1. Introduction

The Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee (the Committee) has continued to undertake its role in providing independent advice to the Council and management of Merri-bek City Council (Council) throughout the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025 as covered by this report.

Pursuant to 53(2) of the Local Government Act 2020 (the Act), the Committee does not have any delegated powers, including executive powers, management functions, or delegated financial responsibility. The Committee's role is to advise the Council on how to best fulfil its responsibilities and facilitate decision making by providing a forum for improving communications between the Committee members and senior management, risk and finance managers, internal and external auditors.

The Committee assists Council with discharging its responsibilities under the Act including:

- Monitoring the compliance of Council policies and procedures with:
  - the overarching governance principles
  - the Act and the regulations and any Ministerial directions, and
  - other relevant laws and regulations
- Monitoring internal controls
- Monitoring Council financial and performance reporting
- Monitoring and provide advice on risk management and fraud prevention systems and controls
- Overseeing internal audit function
- Overseeing external audit functions, and
- Monitoring related party transactions.

To fulfil its role, some of the key activities undertaken by the Committee during this period were to:

- Review the draft Financial Statements and recommend their adoption to Council
- Review the Annual Performance Statement and recommend its adoption to Council
- Monitor compliance obligations and challenge the existence and effectiveness of accounting and financial systems and other systems of internal control and business risk management
- Review the audit plans, results, and effectiveness of the organisation through the Internal Audit Program.

Overall, through its work, the Committee's aim is to add to the credibility of Council by promoting ethical standards. Under the guidance of the Committee Chair, strategic and operational risk issues and mitigations were considered.

In fulfilling its responsibilities, the Committee has provided input and advice to internal audit plans by contracted Internal Auditors, Crowe Australasia (Crowe), for Council during the reporting period.

During the year, Crowe made an annual declaration of independence to the Committee, declaring that they had maintained and would continue to maintain their independence.

2. Audit and Risk Committee membership

The Committee is comprised of seven members appointed by Council, with three members being Councillors and four members being independent of Council. The membership of the Committee during the reporting period is set out below:

2.1 Council representatives

The following Councillors were members of the Audit and Risk Committee during 2024–25:
Councillor Adam Pulford (appointed December 2022)
Councillor Lambros Tapinos (appointed December 2022)
Councillor Monica Harte (appointed December 2022)
Councillor Helen Davidson (appointed December 2024)
Councillor Helen Politis (appointed December 2024)
Councillor Ella Svensson (appointed December 2024).

2.2 Independent members

Mr John Watson (Chairperson)
Ms Lisa Tripodi
Mr Jeff Rigby
Ms Marilyn Kearney.

3. Meetings and attendance

A total of four meetings were held during the reporting period. Committee member attendance throughout the year is shown in Table 1 below.

The four meetings were held on:

- 3 September 2024
- 17 December 2024
- 4 March 2025
- 3 June 2025.

A summary of committee attendance is displayed in table 1.

Table 1 – Membership, meeting dates and attendance

Member	Role	03/09/24	17/12/24	4/03/25	3/06/25
John Watson	Independent Chairperson	√	√	√	√
Lisa Tripodi	Independent Member	√	√	√	√
Jeff Rigby	Independent Member	√	√	√	√
Marilyn Kearney	Independent Member	√	√	√	√
Cr Adam Pulford	Council Member	√	O	O	O
Cr Lambros Tapinos	Council Member	X	O	O	O
Cr Monica Harte	Council Member	√	O	O	O
Cr Helen Davidson	Council Member	O	√	√	√
Cr Helen Politis	Council Member	O	√	√	√
Cr Ella Svensson	Council Member	O	√	√	X

Key
✔ = In attendance, X = Apology, O = not required / no longer a committee member on meeting date/ had not yet commenced.

Representatives for the Victorian Auditor General's Office (External Auditors), RSD Audit, attended 3 of the 4 meetings.

Representatives from Crowe, the internal audit contractor for the period, attended all four meetings.

Senior management representatives from Council also attended each Committee meeting. These included the Chief Executive Officer, Director Business Transformation, Chief Financial Officer and Manager Governance and Strategy. In addition, there was attendance by other Directors when there were Directorate related items on the agenda. A summary attendance by regular attendees is shown in table 2.

Table 2 – Regular Attendees, meeting dates and attendance

Regular Attendee	Role	3/09/24	17/12/24	4/3/25	3/6/25
Josh Porker	Principal, RSD Audit	√	X	√	√
Blessing Muncan	Team leader RSD Audit	√	O	O	O
Cranos Moyo	Team leader RSD Audit	O	O	√	√
Andrew Zavitsanos	Partner, Crowe	√	√	√	√
Cathy Henderson	Chief Executive Officer	√	√	√	√
Anita Curnow	Director City Infrastructure	√	√	√	√
Sue Vujcevic	Director Business Transformation	√	√	√	√
Eamonn Fennessy	Director Community	√	√	√	√
Pene Winslade	Director Place and Environment	√	√	√	√
Bernie McMullen	Program Director Transformation	√	√	√	O
Yvonne Callanan	Manager Governance and Strategy	√	√	√	√
Jemma Wightman	Chief Financial Officer	√	√	√	√
Robert Raiskums	Manager Information Technology	√	√	√	√
Sophie Barison	Unit Manager Integrity Risk and Resilience	√	√	√	√
Colleen Seymour	Unit Manager Finance	√	O	O	O

Key

✔ = In attendance, X = Apology, O = not required / had not yet commenced working with Council.

4. Internal Audit

4.1 Internal audit contract

A key responsibility of the Committee is to monitor Council's internal audit program. The internal audit function of Council is supported by the engagement of independent Internal Audit professionals to provide analysis and recommendations aimed at improving Council's governance, risk, and management controls. Representatives from Crowe attended each Committee meeting and presented the audit results for each audit undertaken during the reporting period, responded to questions, and provided and welcomed advice from the Committee.
In July 2024, an extension option was deliberated and subsequently granted by Council to Crowe, thus reaffirming their role as Council's internal auditor until September 2025.

4.2 Internal Audit plan 2024-25

The Annual Strategic Internal Audit Plan for the reporting period was presented to the Committee and adopted in March 2024. The eight audits scheduled for 2024-25 were:

1. Follow Up Review
2. Rates Management
3. Building's Maintenance – Essential Safety Measures
4. Trader Association Funding Agreements
5. Aged Care Services
6. Depot Operations
7. Privacy and Third Party Management
8. Human Resources – Recruitment and Selection.

The timetable for the eight internal audits is shown below.

Table 3 – 2024 - 25 Internal audit timetable

No	Internal audit project	Jul. 24	Aug. 24	Sept. 24	Oct. 24	Nov. 24	Dec. 24	Jan. 25	Feb. 25	Mar. 25	Apr. 25	May 25	Jun. 25
	Annual Internal Audit Program												
1	Follow Up Review	■		▲									
2	Rates Management,		■	■		▲							
3	Building's Maintenance - Essential Safety Measures			■	■	▲							
4	Special Rate Charge – Funding Agreements					■	■			▲			
5	Aged Care Service					■	■			▲			
6	Depot Operations								■	■			▲
7	Privacy and Third-Party Management								■	■			▲
8	Human Resources – Recruitment & Selection									■	■		▲

Key

■ Audit field work and report writing

▲ Committee meeting at which the Audit Report was presented.

Final internal audit reports were reviewed and discussed by the Committee at each of the four meetings. The status of Internal and External audit recommendations was reported to the Committee at each committee meeting and off-track audit actions were explained and extensions requested.

4.3 Internal audit reports reviewed

At the conclusion of each internal audit, Crowe issue an Audit Report. The report contains an unbiased assessment of the effectiveness of Council's processes, existing controls, and compliance measures. Each report includes an overall audit rating, audit findings, and a list of recommendations.

A total of nine internal audits reports were presented to the Audit and Risk Committee during 2024-25. This included an additional unplanned audit titled Management of Contract Variations - Hosken Reserve commissioned by Council in September 2024 and presented at the 17 December 2024 committee meeting.

Table 4 – 2024/25 Internal Audits and summary of findings

Title of Audit and Date of Presentation to Committee		Summary of Findings
1	Follow up Review September 2024	The Follow-Up Review confirmed that 47 out of a total of 50 audit recommendations have been implemented. Three partially implemented recommendations have been reopened and will be monitored until finalised.
2	Rates Management December 2024	The auditor identified opportunities to strengthen the current controls. The findings relate to the following areas: - Governance Framework - Management of Conflict-of-Interest - Management Oversight - Management Reporting - Rates Database Controls - Data Analytics.
3	Management of Contract Variations - Hosken Reserve December 2024	The auditor identified opportunities to strengthen the current controls. The findings relate to the following areas: - Initiating the variations approval process - Approvals within the Finance System - Functioning of Hosken Reserve Project Control Board.
4	Buildings maintenance - Essential Safety Measures	The auditor identified opportunities to strengthen the current controls. The findings relate to the following areas: - Governance Framework

	Title of Audit and Date of Presentation to Committee	Summary of Findings
	December 2024	- Essential Safety Measure Database - Management Reporting - Status of Annual ESM Reports - Database Completeness - Management of Occupancy Permit / Maintenance Determination - Management of Leased Facilities - IT System Limitations.
5	Special Rate Charge – Funding Agreements March 2025	The auditor identified opportunities to strengthen the current controls. The findings relate to the following areas: - Governance Framework – Operating Procedures - Carryover of Unspent Funds - Fraud Risk Assessment and Conflict of Interest Considerations - Outstanding Special Rates - Management Reporting - Monitoring Funding Agreement Requirements.
6	Aged Care Service March 2025	The auditor identified opportunities to strengthen the current controls. The findings relate to the following areas: - Service Delivery - Mandatory Training - Mandatory checks - record retention - Aged Care Debtor Management - Management reporting.
7	Depot Operations June 2025	The auditor identified opportunities to strengthen the current controls. The findings relate to the following areas: - Stock takes - Process to manage small plant and equipment - Disposal of assets - Managing bulk consumables - Site Security - Physical key management - Record of training and licenses - Outside employment declarations - Fraud and corruption training.
8	Privacy & Third-Party Management Operations June 2025	The auditor identified opportunities to strengthen the current controls. The findings relate to the following areas: - Information Privacy and Health Records Policy - Information Asset Register and Privacy Risk Assessments - Privacy Impact Assessments - Privacy Information Statement - Social Media Platforms

	Title of Audit and Date of Presentation to Committee	Summary of Findings
		- Transborder Data Flows and Sensitive Information - Third-Party Information Security Risk Management and Compliance - Third Party Contracts.
9	Human Resources – Recruitment & Selection Operations June 2025	The auditor identified opportunities to strengthen the current controls. The findings relate to the following areas: - Operating framework - Pre-employment checks - Credentials validation - Temporary Agency Contractors - Fraud and corruption - Child safety management.

4.4 Implementation of audit recommendations

The Committee continued to encourage management to implement all internal audit recommendations in a timely manner to ensure that better practices and controls in Council's services are achieved.

To monitor progress of audit actions, an Audit Actions progress report is provided to the Committee at each meeting. The report records the recommendations from Internal Audits completed by Crowe as well any External Audits completed by VAGO. The report outlines the number of open, closed and off-track actions. In most cases management was able to implement audit actions in a timely manner. Any exceptions were highlighted and explained to the committee in the quarterly Audit Actions progress report.

5. External Audit

In August 2021 the Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) appointed RSD Audit for external audits of Merri-bek City Council.

Josh Porker is the current Principal at RSD Audit for the Audit and Risk Committee meetings. RSD Audit's approach focuses on key financial reporting risks. This involves understanding of significant financial reporting processes and a combination of internal control testing and substantive audit procedures to assess the residual risk of material error.

The VAGO Closing Report 30 June 2024 and Final Management Letter 2023/24 were presented to the Committee at its meeting of 3 September 2024.

6. Oversight of annual financial reports

The Audit and Risk Committee considered the accounts for the year ended 30 June 2024 in the meeting held 3 September 2024. This work was undertaken by the Committee in a timely manner so that final clearance of all financial statements was received within the deadline set under the Local Government Act.

7. Duties and responsibilities

Review of Audit and Risk Committee Charter

The Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan stipulates that the Audit and Risk Committee Charter be reviewed biennially. As it was last reviewed in 2023-24 there was no requirement for it to be reviewed in 2024-25. The next review of the Charter is scheduled for September 2025.

Audit and Risk Committee Performance Evaluation

In accordance with the Audit and Risk Committee Charter 2023 an Audit and Risk Committee performance evaluation is completed every two years through a survey. The most recent survey was completed in June 2024, the next survey is scheduled for June 2026.

Annual Assessment against the Committee Charter

The Audit and Risk Committee works to its Charter, supported by the annual Committee Work Plan.

The Committee is required to undertake an annual assessment of its performance against the Audit and Risk Committee Charter and incorporate this into the annual Committee Performance Report in accordance with the Charter and section 54(4a) of the Local Government Act 2020.

The Committee Work Plan is aligned to the Audit and Risk Committee Charter, to ensure visibility that Charter requirements have been fulfilled as shown in Appendix 1.

The Committee dealt with most matters scheduled for consideration in the Work Plan in the reporting period with the following exceptions:

- Committee members will complete Personal Interest Returns.
  This task was not completed as the returns were finalised in January 2024 and are not due again until January 2026. The inclusion of this item in the Work Plan was an error.
- Assurance that the Disaster Recovery Plan is in place, current and active.
  Due to an oversight, the plan was presented at the December 2024 meeting instead of September 2024.

Overall assessment of Merri-bek City Council's risk, control and compliance framework

The Committee's overall assessment is that Council has continued to maintain a strong internal control environment and its management of strategic, operational, financial, and compliance risks is effective. Council and management has continued to work well with the Audit and Risk Committee and has demonstrated a high level of commitment to being open to audit findings, genuine in addressing any issues or improvement opportunities, and consistent in the fulfilment of its commitments.

It is the independent view of the Committee that the governance culture of Merri-bek City Council is supporting the development of a robust risk, control and compliance framework which continues to strengthen and adapt to changes in Merri-bek City Council's operations.

Appendix 1

Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan 2024-25

Action	Frequency	Audit and Risk Committee Charter Reference/ VAGO Report title	Title of Report / Section of Agenda where action is addressed	3 September 2024	17 December 2024	4 March 2025	3 June 2025
Assess Council's policy framework and procedures to ensure: · the embedding of the governance principles · the strengthening of Council's policy framework · policies are reviewed as per schedule	Quarterly	4.1.2	Committee Management and Work Plan				
Business Transformation				☑			
City Infrastructure					☑		
Community						☑	
Place and Environment							☑
Monitor Council processes for compliance of Council policies and procedures	Quarterly	4.1	Committee Management and Work Plan	☑	☑	☑	☑
Review Register of Delegations	Annually	4.1.2	Committee Management and Work Plan				☑
Review report on Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality	Biannually	4.1.2	Committee Management and Work Plan		☑		☑
Review report on Councillor Expenses	Biannually	4.1.2	Committee Management and Work Plan	☑		☑	
Review Report on Interstate and Overseas Travel	Biannually	4.1.2	Committee Management and Work Plan	☑		☑	
Review CEO credit card transactions	Biannually	4.1.2	Committee Management and Work Plan	☑		☑	

Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan 2024-25

Action	Frequency	Audit and Risk Committee Charter Reference/ VAGO Report title	Title of Report / Section of Agenda where action is addressed	3 September 2024	17 December 2024	4 March 2025	3 June 2025
Review the Procurement Framework (with a focus on probity and transparency of policies, processes, and procedures)	Annually	4.1.1	Procurement Framework			☑	
Monitor improvements in financial management through the 3-year Financial Management Improvement Plan	Quarterly	4.1.3	Financial Management	☑	☑	☑	☑
Review the CEO Employment Matters Policy and Terms of Reference for CEO Employment Matters Advisory Committee and ensure compliance with the Act	Annually	4.1.2	Committee Management and Work Plan	☑			
Monitor work by the Council to mitigate and plan for climate change risk	Biannually	4.1.4	Climate Risk & Resilience	☑		☑	
Monitor Council's controls for unusual transactions above acceptable risk	Quarterly	4.2.2	Financial Management	☑	☑	☑	☑
Monitor Council's commercial interests including compliance with relevant laws and regulations	Annually	4.3	Committee Management and Work Plan	☑			
Review management reports on any breakdowns in key controls	Quarterly	4.2.1	Risk Management	☑	☑	☑	☑
Review systems and controls implemented to monitor compliance with legislation and regulations through internal audit and external audit reporting	Quarterly	4.3.1, 4.3.2	Memorandums of Audit Planning and Audits Completed	☑	☑	☑	☑
Review Council's procedures to receive, retain and treat complaints through a report on: Complaints Handling framework and performance Public Interest Disclosure framework and handling	Annually	4.3.3	Risk Management				☑

Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan 2024-25

Action	Frequency	Audit and Risk Committee Charter Reference/ VAGO Report title	Title of Report / Section of Agenda where action is addressed	3 September 2024	17 December 2024	4 March 2025	3 June 2025
An overview of Council's handling of complaints and public interest disclosures	Quarterly	4.3.3	Risk Management	☑	☑	☑	☑
An overview of Council's handling of accounting, internal accounting controls or auditing matters or other matters likely to affect the Council or its compliance with relevant legislation and regulations	Quarterly	4.3.3	Financial Management	☑	☑	☑	☑
Obtain assurance that adverse trends are identified and review management's plans to deal with these	Quarterly	4.3.4	Recent Reports and Publications	☑	☑	☑	☑
Monitor actions arising from Audit and Risk Committee meetings and the Recent Reports and Publications report	Quarterly	4.3.6	Business Actions Progress	☑	☑	☑	☑
Review management disclosures in financial reports on the effect of significant compliance issues	Quarterly	4.3.5	Financial Management	☑	☑	☑	☑
Committee members will complete Personal Interest Returns	Biennially	4.3.6	Committee Management and Work Plan		☑		
Committee members will confirm understanding of their obligations following the biennial review of the Committee Charter	Biennially	4.3.6	Committee Management and Work Plan	A review of the Audit and Risk Committee charter was completed in 2023/24 and the committee confirmed their understanding of their obligations.			
Receive assurance that Council has appropriate systems and procedures in place for collecting and analysing information and data to measure performance against	Annually	4.4.1	Council Plan Implementation		☑		

Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan 2024-25

Action	Frequency	Audit and Risk Committee Charter Reference/ VAGO Report title	Title of Report / Section of Agenda where action is addressed	3 September 2024	17 December 2024	4 March 2025	3 June 2025
the Council Plan through a report on annual Council Plan implementation							
Review the process for the management and governance of the use of data, information, and knowledge through a report from the Chief Information Officer. This includes the controls covering the public release of information	Annually	4.4.2; 4.4.8	Committee Management and Work Plan		☑		
Review any changes in accounting policies and procedures and the methods of applying them ensuring they are in accordance with the stated financial reporting framework disclosures with management	Annually	4.4.3	Financial Management		☑		
Review the mid-year and end of year VAGO report: · assess significant estimates and judgements in financial reports by asking management and VAGO about the processes used in making material estimates and judgements and the basis for these · Review the appropriateness of accounting policies and disclosures to present a true and fair view · Review the process for the consolidation of financial information of Council related entities into the financial reports of the Council · Assess whether a comprehensive process has been established for the purposes of legislative disclosure reporting requirements · Seek the external auditor's independent opinion on	Biannually	4.4.4; 4.4.6; 4.4.7; 4.4.8; 4.4.10	VAGO	☑		☑	

Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan 2024-25

Action	Frequency	Audit and Risk Committee Charter Reference/ VAGO Report title	Title of Report / Section of Agenda where action is addressed	3 September 2024	17 December 2024	4 March 2025	3 June 2025
management's technical compliance with accounting standards; proper application of the accounting principles; clarity in financial disclosure practices as used or proposed in the financial report							
Recommend to the Council whether the financial report including the performance statement should be approved based on the Committee's assessment of them	Annually	4.4.9	Annual Financial Report and Performance Statement	☑			
Monitor Management Financial and performance reporting	Quarterly	4.4	Financial Management	☑	☑	☑	☑
Monitor improvement in risk management through a 3-year Risk Management Improvement Plan	Quarterly	4.5.1	Risk Management	☑	☑	☑	☑
Receive an annual risk report, which provides: · the risk profile for Council · an overview of the Enterprise Risk Management Framework and implementation strategy · an overview of the processes for identification and control of risks in accordance with risk appetite · an overview of management of each strategic risk · An overview of key risks, the status and the effectiveness of the risk management systems, to ensure that identified risks are monitored and new risks are identified, mitigated and reported · Seek assurance that the Business Continuity Plan is in place, current and active (through testing)	Annually	4.5.2; 4.5.3; 4.5.4. 4.5.5	Risk Management		☑		
Report on significant litigation and claims	Quarterly	4.5.5	Risk Management	☑	☑	☑	☑

Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan 2024-25

Action	Frequency	Audit and Risk Committee Charter Reference/ VAGO Report title	Title of Report / Section of Agenda where action is addressed	3 September 2024	17 December 2024	4 March 2025	3 June 2025
Report on Occupational Health and Safety	Annually	4.5.5	Risk Management		☑		
Assess adequacy of Council process to manage insurable risks	Annually	4.5.6	Risk Management	☑			
Seek assurance that the Business Continuity Plan is in place, current and active (through testing)	Annually	4.5.7	Risk Management				☑
Seek assurance that the Disaster Recovery Plan is in place, current and active (through testing)	Annually	4.5.7	Risk Management	☑			
Receive an annual Fraud Risk report, which provides: · an overview of fraud risks identified and the action to establish and implement treatment plans · the Fraud and Theft Incident Register (as an attachment) · Actions arising from Fraud Reviews · An overview of fraud prevention and detection activities undertaken	Annually	4.5.8; 4.5.9; 4.5.10; 4.5.11	Risk Management	☑			
CEO reporting to the Committee of all suspected and actual frauds, thefts, and material breaches of legislation	Quarterly	4.5.9	Section 3B of the agenda	☑	☑	☑	☑
To increase staff awareness of activities that amount to Fraud, report on completion rate of Fraud awareness training	Annually	4.5.11	Risk Management	☑			
Review of Internal Audit Contract & Contractor Performance	Annually	4.6.1	Committee Management and Work Plan			☑	

Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan 2024-25

Action	Frequency	Audit and Risk Committee Charter Reference/ VAGO Report title	Title of Report / Section of Agenda where action is addressed	3 September 2024	17 December 2024	4 March 2025	3 June 2025
Review strategic annual internal audit plan to ensure it addresses key risks through the Annual Internal Audit Plan report	Annually	4.6.3	Memorandums of Audit Planning and Audits Completed			☑	
At the commencement of each meeting, the Chair is to seek assurance that there have been no obstructions to the work by the internal auditor	Quarterly	4.6.2	Section 3B of the agenda	☑	☑	☑	☑
Review and approve Memorandum of Audit Planning	Quarterly	4.6.3	Memorandums of Audit Planning and Audits Completed	☑	☑	☑	☑
Provide the opportunity for audit committee members to meet with the internal auditors without management being present	Quarterly	4.6.4	Pre-meeting	☑	☑	☑	☑
Critically review internal audit reports completed since previous meeting	Quarterly	4.6.7	Memorandums of Audit Planning and Audits Completed	☑	☑	☑	☑
Review internal audit progress against Strategic Annual Internal Audit Plan	Quarterly	4.6.6	Memorandums of Audit Planning and Audits Completed	☑	☑	☑	☑
Review outstanding audit actions	Quarterly	4.6.8	Audit Action Progress Report	☑	☑	☑	☑
Follow up on past audit recommendations	Biennially	4.6.7	Memorandums of Audit Planning and Audits Completed	A Follow Up review is scheduled September 2024 and is next due in 2025/26			
External auditor to outline external audit plan, including proposed audit strategies and how they might relate to identified risk areas	Annually	4.7.1	VAGO			☑	
At the commencement of each meeting, the Chair is to seek assurance that there have been no obstructions to the work by the external auditor	Quarterly	4.6.2	Section 3B of the agenda	☑	☑	☑	☑

Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan 2024-25

Action	Frequency	Audit and Risk Committee Charter Reference/ VAGO Report title	Title of Report / Section of Agenda where action is addressed	3 September 2024	17 December 2024	4 March 2025	3 June 2025
Upon completion of external audit, confirm if there have been any significant resolved or unresolved disagreements with management	As required	4.7.1	VAGO				
Review outcomes of external audit, including findings and recommendations	Annually	4.7.3	VAGO				☑
Review external interim management letter	Annually	4.7.3	VAGO	☑			☑
Meet with external auditor in absence of management 15 minutes before each meeting (as required)	Quarterly	4.6.4	Pre-Meeting	☑	☑	☑	☑
Review other VAGO reports for impacts on Council through the Recent Reports and Publications Report	Quarterly	4.7.5	Recent Reports and Publications	☑	☑	☑	☑
Review the processes for the identification, nature, extent, and reasonableness of related-party transactions	Annually	4.8	Financial Management	☑			
Review of the Committee Charter	Biennially	14	Committee Management and Work Plan	A review of the Committee charter was completed in 2023/24 and is next scheduled in 2025/26.			
Set Committee Meeting schedule	Annually	8.8.1	Committee Management and Work Plan		☑		
Review Committee Work Plan	Annually	8.8.2	Committee Management and Work Plan				☑
Committee Member Induction	As required	13					
Assessment of Committee and Committee Member Performance through a survey	Biennially	6	Committee Management and Work Plan	An evaluation survey was completed in July 2024 and is next scheduled for 2025/26.			

Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan 2024-25

Action	Frequency	Audit and Risk Committee Charter Reference/ VAGO Report title	Title of Report / Section of Agenda where action is addressed	3 September 2024	17 December 2024	4 March 2025	3 June 2025
Performance of the Committee against its Charter.	Annually	4.3.8	Committee Management and Work Plan				☑
Prepare an Audit and Risk Report (describing activities and including findings and recommendations) and provide to the CEO for reporting to Council	Biannual	7	Committee Management and Work Plan	☑		☑	
Provide a Summary of Audit and Risk Committee Minutes to Council through the Governance Report – Cyclical Report	Quarterly	7	Governance Report – Cyclical Report	☑	☑	☑	☑
Prior to balance date, review the finance team's accounting paper.	Annually	VAGO Report: 'Results of the 2022/23 VAGO audits: Local Government	Financial Management				☑
After balance date and at the time of reviewing the draft financial report: - Determine whether there have been any changes to circumstances that would indicate that key assumptions behind the finance teams initial advice and key judgements no longer hold true. - assess the reasonableness of the valuation and fair value assessment outcomes.	Annually	VAGO Report: 'Results of the 2022/23 VAGO audits: Local Government	Annual Financial Report and Performance Statement	☑			

Audit and Risk Committee

Biannual Report

In accordance with Part 2, Division 8, clause 54 (5) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, the Audit and Risk Committee presents its biannual audit and risk report that describes the activities of the Audit and Risk Committee (Committee). This report is a consolidated submission which covers the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025 and includes the committee meetings that took place on 3 September 2024, 17 December 2024, 4 March 2025 and 3 June 2025. The Committee's activities for the reporting period are summarised below.

Focus Area	Outcome
Compliance and Legislative Requirements	
Policy	An update on the review of the status of Council policies was presented at the following committee meetings: • Business Transformation Directorate - 3 September 2024 • City Infrastructure Directorate -17 December 2024 • Community Directorate - 4 March 2025 • Place and Environment - 3 June 2025 The Committee noted the reports.
Councillor Expenses	The Committee received a report on Councillor expenses on 3 September 2024 and 4 March 2025 which listed Councillor expenses between July 2024 – December 2024. The reports included a table of the following information: • Accommodation • Conferences, Seminars and Professional Development • IT, Mobile and Data • Refreshments • Subscriptions • Travel and Mileage. The Committee noted the reports.
Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality	The Committee received a report on 17 December 2024 which outlined the gifts offered and received between July - November 2024. A second report was received on 3 June 2025 which outlined gifts received between November 2024 - April 2025. The report included a table of the following information: • Date of offer/receipt • Recipient of gift/offer • Department • Approximate value of offer/gift • Description of the offer/gift • Who was the offer/gift received from? • Reason • At what setting was the gift/offer received? • What, if any, is the relationship with the service provider? • Who approved? • Declined or retained by recipient?

<table>
<tr><td></td><td>The Committee noted the reports.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Interstate and Overseas Travel</td><td>The Committee received reports on 3 September 2024 and 4 March 2025 which listed the Interstate and Overseas travel completed by Councillors and Staff. The report included a table of the following information:
Name and position
Purpose of Travel
Dates of Travel
Cost (Accommodation, Transport, Meals, Other).
The Committee noted the reports.</td></tr>
<tr><td>CEO Credit Card Transactions</td><td>The Committee received reports on 3 September 2024, 4 March 2025 and 3 June 2025 which listed the CEO's credit card transactions. The report included a table of the following information:
Posting Date
Transaction Date
Description
Amount
The Committee noted the reports.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Disaster Recovery Testing and Implementation</td><td>The Committee received a report on 3 September 2024 which outlined the planned exercise along with proposed timelines.
The Committee noted the report.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Audit Actions and Business Actions Report</td><td>The Committee received reports on 3 September, 17 December 2024, 4 March and 3 June 2025. The reports detailed the business actions and audit actions to be completed and implemented by Council staff.
The Committee noted the progress toward completion of outstanding actions.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Audit Actions Progress Overview 2024-25</td><td><table><tr><th colspan="4">Audit Actions Progress Overview 2024-25</th></tr><tr><td>Audit Actions at start of 2024-25</td><td>Actions added 2024-25</td><td>Actions closed 2024-25</td><td>Actions remaining at end of 2024-25</td></tr><tr><td>67</td><td>80</td><td>112</td><td>35</td></tr></table></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Council Financial and Performance Reporting</td></tr>
<tr><td>Council Plan</td><td>The Committee received a report on 17 December 2024 which outlined the fourth-year implementation of the Council Plan 2021-25.
The Committee noted the strategic indicators update achieved against the Council Plan 2021-25, the outcomes achieved against the Council Action Plan 2022-23, and progress towards completion of delayed actions and the status of these actions.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Financial Report</td><td>The Committee received reports on 3 September 2024, 17 December 2024, 4 March 2025 and 3 June 2025.
The Committee noted the reports.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Annual Financial Report and Performance Statement 2023/24</td><td>The Annual Financial Report and Performance Statement 2023/24 was presented to the Committee for feedback at the 3 September 2024 meeting.
The Committee recommended that Council record its approval 'in principle' to the draft Annual Financial Report and draft Performance Statement (the statements) for the year ended 30 June 2024; and that subject to the review of the draft version of the Annual Financial Report and the Performance Statement, Council authorise the:</td></tr>
</table>

	• Chief Executive Officer, the Mayor and a Councillor to certify the final version of the statements for the year ended 30 June 2024; • Chief Executive Officer to send the statements to the Auditor-General; • Chief Financial Officer to implement any non-material changes to the statement as recommended by the Auditor-General and provide a summary of any such changes to the Audit and Risk Committee at its next meeting; and • Chief Financial Officer to make any material changes requested by VAGO after discussion with the Chair of the Committee and that they be reported to Council as soon as possible. • Acknowledge the work by the staff involved in bringing the year end 30 June Financial Report and Performance Statement to a satisfactory completion and presentation at a high standard. The Committee: • Noted the VAGO Closing Report and Final Management Letter for the financial year ending 30 June 2024 • Noted the report by the Chief Financial Officer, the Governance and Management Checklist, the Annual Financial Report 2023/2024, and the Performance Statement 2023/2024 and noting the verbal assurance by the External Auditors that they are not aware of any matters that would prevent the Committee providing its advice as follows to the Council.
Risk Management, Business Continuity and Fraud Prevention	
Risk Management Improvement Plan 2023-2026	The Committee received reports on 3 September, 17 December 2024, 4 March and 3 June 2025 which outlined the progress of the actions in the plan. The Committee noted the reports.
Annual Fraud Risk Report	The Committee received a report on the 3 September 2024 which included: • Overview of fraud risks identified and the action to establish and implement treatment plans • The Fraud and Theft Incident Register • Actions arising from Fraud Reviews • An overview of fraud prevention and detection activities undertaken • Increase staff awareness of activities that amount to Fraud, report on completion rate of Fraud awareness training. The Committee noted the report.
Annual Risk Report	The Committee received a report at the 17 December 2024. The report included an overview of: • Council's Risk Profile • Enterprise Risk Management Framework and implementation strategy • Processes for identification and control of risks • Management of Strategic Risks • Key risks, status, and effectiveness of risk management systems. The Committee noted the report.
Business Continuity	The Committee received a report on 17 December 2024. The report confirmed: • A Business Continuity Exercise was undertaken in October 2024

	• 28 critical function Sub-Plans were reviewed and updated in 2024. • All staff with business continuity responsibilities have completed a Business Continuity Awareness online training module. The Committee received a report on 3 June 2025. The report confirmed: • An updated Business Continuity Plan was presented to the Executive on 28 May 2025. • A business Impact Analysis was completed in April 2024. • Business Continuity related risks have been flagged on Council's risk register. • 98% of staff assigned to complete a Business Continuity Management Awareness online module have completed it. The Committee noted the report.
Internal Audit	
Audit Reports	**Project Management and Follow Up review** The Committee received and noted the audit report and review on 3 September 2024 **Hosken Reserve, Rates Management and Building Maintenance** The Committee received and noted the three audit reports on 17 December 2024 **Special Rates Charge – Funding Agreements, Aged Care Service** The Committee received and noted the two audit reports on 4 March 2025. **Depot Operations, Privacy & Third-Party Management, Human Resources – Recruitment and Selection** The Committee received and noted the three audit reports on 3 June 2025.
Memorandum of Audit Planning (MAP)	**Special Rates Charge – Funding Agreements** The Committee received and endorsed the MAP on 3 September 2024 **Aged Care Service** The Committee received and endorsed the MAP on 3 September 2024 **Depot Operations** The Committee received and endorsed the MAP on 17 December 2024 **Privacy & Third-Party Management** The Committee received and endorsed the MAP on 17 December 2024 **Human Resources – Recruitment and Selection** The Committee received and endorsed the MAP on 17 December 2024 **Cyber Security** The Committee received and endorsed the MAP on 3 June 2025 **Climate Change** The Committee received the MAP on 3 June 2025 **Library Services** The Committee received the MAP on 3 June 2025 **OHS Depot Employees** The Committee received and endorsed the MAP on 3 June 2025
Recent Reports and Publications	The Committee received the Curious Eyes publication on 3 September 2024, 17 December 2024, 4 March 2025 and 3 June 2025 and noted the reports and management comments.
External Audit	

Final Management Letter	The committee received the Final Management Letter at the 3 September 2024 meeting. The Committee noted the report.			
Audit and Risk Committee Attendance				
Committee Member	3 September 2024	17 December 2024	4 March 2025	3 June 2025
John Watson (Chair)	√	√	√	√
Jeff Rigby	√	√	√	√
Lisa Tripodi	√	√	√	√
Marilyn Kearney	√	√	√	√
Mayor Adam Pulford	√	O	O	√
Cr Angelica Panopoulos	O	O	O	O
Cr Mark Riley	O	O	O	O
Cr Monica Hart	√	O	O	O
Cr Lambros Tapinos	X	O	O	O
Cr Helen Davidson	O	√	√	√
Cr Helen Politis	O	√	√	√
Cr Ella Svensson	O	√	√	x
Key √ In attendance X Apology O No requirement to attend meeting as was not an appointed member				

Committee Member Terms		
Committee Member	Appointment / Extension	Term end
John Watson (Chair)	15 May 2023	15 May 2026
Jeff Rigby	1 July 2021	30 June 2027
Lisa Tripodi	1 January 2023	31 December 2025
Marilyn Kearney	1 July 2022	30 June 2028
Mayor Adam Pulford	December 2021	December 2024
Cr Angelica Panopoulos	December 2021	December 2023
Cr Mark Riley	December 2019	December 2023
Cr Monica Harte	December 2023	December 2024
Cr Lambros Tapinos	December 2023	December 2024
Cr Helen Davidson	December 2024	December 2025
Cr Helen Politis	December 2024	December 2025
Cr Ella Svensson	December 2024	December 2025

Audit and Risk Committee Charter 2025

Merri-bek City Council



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1 Purpose

Merri-bek City Council has established an Audit and Risk Committee (the Committee) in accordance with section 53 of the Local Government Act 2020 (the Act).

This charter is prepared and approved by Council in accordance with section 54 (1) of the Act.

The Committee serves as an advisory committee to Council, providing independent oversight and advice on Council's financial reporting, risk management, internal control, compliance, and assurance activities.

The Committee assists the Council to discharge its responsibilities under the Act, specifically to:

- monitor the compliance of Council policies and procedures with:
  - the overarching governance principles
  - the Act and the regulations and Ministerial directions; and
  - other relevant laws and regulations
- monitor internal controls, financial and performance reporting
- monitor and provide advice on risk management and fraud prevention systems and controls
- oversee internal and external audit functions
- monitor related party transactions.

The Committee operates to advise the Council on how to best fulfil its responsibilities and facilitate decision making by providing a forum for improving communication between Council members, senior management, finance, risk and compliance managers, internal and external auditors.

The Committee will engage with management in a constructive and professional manner in discharging its responsibilities and formulating its advice to Council.

2 Authority

Pursuant to section 53(2) of the Act, the Committee is an advisory committee and does not have delegated powers, including executive powers, management functions, or delegated financial responsibility.

The Council authorises the Committee, within its responsibilities, to:

- obtain information it requires from any official or external party (subject to any legal obligation to protect information)
- discuss matters with the Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO), or other external parties (subject to confidentiality considerations)
- request the attendance of any official, including Councillors and Council Officers, at Committee meetings
- obtain legal or other professional advice at the Council's expense, as considered necessary to meet its responsibilities
- seek resolution on any disagreements between management and the external auditors on financial reporting
- seek resolution of any disagreement between management and the internal auditors on internal

audit recommendations.

All recommendations of the Committee shall be referred to the Council for approval, other than the

- Strategic Annual Internal Audit Plan
- Memorandums of Audit Planning (MAP) that do not require the approval of the Council; and
- Management responses to audit recommendations arising from Internal Audit Reports.

The Committee has the authority to review the Annual Financial Statements and Performance Statement and provide advice to Council. The Committee can recommend to Council its approval in principle the certification and signing of the Annual Financial Statements and Performance Statement.

3 Membership

3.1 The Committee comprises of seven members (three Councillors and four independent and external members), appointed by Council. In accordance with the Act the Members must:

- include Councillors of the Council
- consist of a majority of members who are not Councillors of the Council and who collectively have expertise in financial management and reporting, risk management and experience in public sector management not be a member of Council staff

The Council will appoint the Chair of the Committee, who must not be a Councillor nor a member of Council staff.

3.2 The Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer, Manager Information Technology, Manager Governance and Strategy may attend meetings as advisers or observers but will not be members of the committee. Directors will be invited to all meetings and Managers will be invited to attend if an audit report central to their area of responsibility is presented.

3.3 The Committee reserves the right to meet at any time without non-members or with invited non-members only.

3.4 A representative(s) of the VAGO will be invited to attend meetings of the committee, to present reports and observe. The representative will be required to act in accordance with the governance principles in addition to the obligations of confidentiality and conflict of interest as outlined within this Charter and the Act.

3.5 A representative(s) of the internal audit contractor will be invited to attend committee meetings to present internal audit reports. The representative will be required to act in accordance with the governance principles in addition to the obligations of confidentiality and conflict of interest as outlined within the Act.

3.6 Councillor members will be appointed for a one-year term of office.

3.7 The initial appointment of independent Committee members shall be for a three-year term. An independent member may serve no more than two full terms in any one position, after which the position must be publicly advertised. This does not preclude existing members from being re-appointed through a competitive process.

Council will pay a fee to independent committee members. This fee will be calculated on a per meeting basis as determined by the CEO and will be indexed in alignment with the rate

cap percentage effective each 1 July. Payment will be made following each meeting upon receipt of a Tax Invoice.

Council's periodic review of the remuneration paid to independent Members will be benchmarked once each Council term against five comparable peer Councils.

3.8 The Council will indemnify and keep indemnified each external independent member of the Committee against all actions or claims whether arising during or after their term of appointment has concluded in respect of anything necessarily done or reasonably done or omitted to be done in good faith:

- in the performance of a duty or function or the exercise of an any matter under the Act, regulations, a local law or this charter; or
- in the reasonable belief that the act or omission was in the performance of a duty or a function or the exercise of a matter under the Act, regulations, a local law or this charter.

4 Functions and Responsibilities

In accordance with section 54(2) of the Act, the functions and responsibilities of the Committee include:

4.1 Monitor the compliance of Council policies and procedures with the overarching governance principles and the Act, regulations, and any ministerial directions (Section 54(2a)).

4.1.1 Assess the Council's procurement framework with a focus on the probity and transparency of policies and procedures/processes.

4.1.2 Assess the Council's policy framework and procedures to ensure the embedding of the governance principles.

4.1.3 Monitor the implementation of a three-year financial management improvement plan and report progress at each meeting.

4.1.4 Monitor work by the council to mitigate and plan for climate change risk.

4.2 Monitor internal controls.

4.2.1 Review the effectiveness of the Council's internal control system with management and the internal and external auditors.

4.2.2 Assess whether management has controls in place for unusual types of transactions and/or any potential transactions that might carry more than an acceptable degree of risk.

4.2.3 Should the need arise, meet periodically with key management, internal and external auditors, and compliance staff, to understand and discuss any changes in the Council's control environment.

4.3 Monitor the Council's commercial interests, especially where these have been established under sections 110-111 of the Local Government Act 2020. Monitor compliance with relevant laws and regulations.

4.3.1 Monitor Council's processes regarding compliance with legislation and regulations.

4.3.2 Stay informed about how management is monitoring the effectiveness of its compliance and ethics program and making recommendations for change as necessary.

4.3.3 Review whether the Council has procedures for it to receive, retain and treat complaints, including confidential and anonymous employee complaints under the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012* and section 1317AA of the *Corporations Act 2001 (Commonwealth)*, dealing with an accounting, internal accounting controls or auditing matters or other matters likely to affect the Council or its compliance with relevant legislation and regulations.

4.3.4 Obtain assurance that adverse trends are identified and review management's plans to deal with these.

4.3.5 Review management disclosures in financial reports of the effect of significant compliance issues.

4.3.6 Comply with legislative and regulatory requirements imposed on audit committee members, including not misusing their position (Section 123 of the Act) to gain an advantage for themselves or another or to cause detriment to the Council and disclosing conflicts of interest (Section 125 of the Act).

4.4 Monitor Council financial and performance reporting (Section 54(2b)

4.4.1 Receive assurance that Council has appropriate systems and procedures in place for collecting and analysing information and data for the purposes of measuring the performance of individual programs and activities (as identified in the Council Plan.)

4.4.2 Review the process for the management and governance of the use of data, information and knowledge.

4.4.3 Review any changes to Council's accounting policies and procedures and the methods of applying them, with the input of management, external and internal auditors, ensuring that they are in accordance with the stated financial reporting framework.

4.4.4 Assess significant estimates and judgements in financial reports by enquiring into the financial reports of the Council.

4.4.5 Assess whether a comprehensive process has been established for the purposes of legislative disclosure reporting requirements.

4.4.6 Assess information from internal and external auditors that affects the quality of financial reports. For example, actual and potential material audit adjustments, financial report disclosures, non-compliance with legislation and regulations, internal control issues.

4.4.7 Seek the external auditor for an independent opinion on management's:

- technical compliance with accounting standards
- proper application of the accounting principles

clarity in financial disclosure practices as used or proposed in the financial report of the Council.

4.4.8 Assess internal control systems covering the public release of information.

4.4.9 Recommend to the Council whether the annual financial report and performance statement should be approved in principle based on the Committee's assessment of them.

4.4.10 Review the financial reporting provided to Council and monitor the financial performance and sustainability of Council.

4.5 Monitor and provide advice on risk management and fraud prevention systems and controls. (Section 54(2c))

4.5.1 Review and recommend enhancements to Council's policy for the oversight and management of business risks.

4.5.2 Review management's overall risk profile, risk management framework and implementation strategy and advise Council of any concerns regarding the appropriate resourcing of the required actions.

4.5.3 Receive regular risk reports, which:

- provide an overview of management of each strategic risk by strategic risk owners; and
- identify key risks, the status and the effectiveness of the risk management systems, to ensure that identified risks are monitored and new risks are identified, mitigated and reported.

4.5.4 Assess Council processes for management's identification and control of material risks, including business, financial and legal compliance risks in accordance with Council's identified tolerance for risk particularly in the following areas:

- potential non-compliance with legislation, regulations and standards and Council's policies
- important accounting judgements or estimates that prove to be wrong
- litigation and claims
- fraud and theft – significant business risks, recognising that responsibility for general or specific risk areas, for example, environmental risk, occupational health and safety, and how they are managed by the Council.

4.5.5 Assess adequacy of Council process to manage insurable risks.

4.5.6 Review whether the Council has a current and active Business Continuity Plan and Disaster Recovery Plan which are tested periodically.

4.5.7 Ascertain whether fraud risks have been:

- identified, analysed, evaluated, have an appropriate treatment plan which has been implemented, communicated, monitored and there is regular reporting and ongoing management of fraud risks.

4.5.8 Receive summary reports from management on all suspected and actual frauds, thefts and material breaches of legislation, ensuring reporting to the Council and/or relevant authorities.

4.5.9 Monitor the Council's fraud prevention and detection framework, including any action taken with respect to actual and suspected instances of fraud.

4.5.10 Monitor management's efforts to create and maintain a strong internal control environment, including the design and implementation of anti-fraud strategies and programs, attendance of fraud awareness seminars and/or completion of training courses to increase staff awareness fraud.

4.6 Oversee internal audit function (Section 54(2d))

4.6.1 Review the Strategic Annual Internal Audit Plan, against Council's Audit Universe, 3-year

Audit Plan, Assurance MAP and Council's strategic risks.

4.6.2 Assess if there has been any obstruction to the work completed by the internal auditor.

4.6.3 Review and approve the memorandum of planning (MAP) for each internal audit to ensure that the audit objectives and scope are fit for purpose.

4.6.4 Provide the opportunity for audit committee members to meet with the internal auditors without management being present.

4.6.5 Review the reporting on completed internal audits, seeking clarification through critical analysis to assure the Committee that management is responding adequately to the findings and that key risks are mitigated.

4.6.6 Approve the annual strategic internal audit plan, monitor the progress of the strategic internal audit plan and the committee work plan and consider the implications of internal audit findings for the control and operating environment.

4.6.7 Monitor the implementation of internal audit recommendations.

4.6.8 Require Internal Audit contractor to conduct periodic reviews to confirm whether audit actions reported as completed by management have been effectively implemented.

4.7 Oversee external audit function (Section 54(2d))

4.7.1 At the appropriate meeting, ask the external auditor to outline the external audit plan including proposed audit strategies and how they relate to identified risk areas; discuss audit results; consider the implications of the external audit findings for the control environment. Ask the external auditor if there have been any significant resolved or unresolved disagreements with management.

4.7.2 Monitor and critique management's response to the external auditor's findings and recommendations.

4.7.3 Sight all representation letters signed by management and consider the completeness and appropriateness of the information provided.

4.7.4 Provide the opportunity for committee members to meet with the external auditor as the need arises without management being present.

4.7.5 Maintain an awareness of local government performance audits undertaken by the VAGO (through the VAGO Status report) and ensure recommendations are brought to the attention of the Council for action/implementation where appropriate.

5 Engagement with the Victorian Auditor-General's Office

The committee will engage with the VAGO (or their representative), as the entity's external auditor, in relation to the VAGO's financial statement and performance audit coverage. In particular, the committee will:

- Invite a representative from the VAGO to attend Committee meetings and encourage a positive working relationship
- Provide feedback to the VAGO on draft strategies, reports and opportunities for improvements: and
- Provide advice to management on action to be taken on significant issues raised in relevant VAGO reports or better practice guides.

6 Evaluating Performance

The Committee will undertake an annual assessment of its performance against the Audit and Risk Committee Charter in accordance with section 54(4a) of the Act.

Every two years, Management will assist the Committee to complete an Audit and Risk Committee Performance evaluation through a survey. The survey will invite input from each Committee member, senior management, the internal auditor, the VAGO (or representative), and any other stakeholders. The results of the survey will be reported in the Annual Committee Performance Report.

The Chair, in conjunction with the Director Business Transformation will undertake a formal review of the performance a of independent committee members before reappointing them for additional terms.

7 Reporting

The Committee will prepare an Annual Committee Performance Report that includes an annual assessment of Committee performance against the Audit and Risk Committee Charter it. This report will be provided to the Chief Executive Officer for presentation to Council. This report will be published on Council's website.

The Committee will prepare a biannual audit and risk report that describes the activities of the Audit and Risk Committee and includes the Committee findings and recommendations in accordance with section 54(5a) of the Act, along with the agreed actions. The biannual report covers two six-month reporting periods from July to December and January to June. This report will be provided to the Chief Executive Officer for reporting to Council.

In alignment with the Governance Rules 2023, Public Transparency principles and Governance principles in the Act, summary minutes from each Committee meeting will be presented to Council through the Governance Report - Cyclical report summarising progress, matters discussed and any issues the Committee wishes to share with all Councillors.

Internal audit reports and external audit reports shall not be made public.

Pursuant to section 54(6b) of the Act, the Chief Executive Officer is required to table reports upon request by the Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Committee.

8 Administrative Arrangements

8.1 Meetings

The committee will meet at least four times per year. One or more special meetings may be held to review the Council's annual financial statements and performance statement, or to meet other responsibilities of the committee.

All committee members are expected to attend each meeting, in person or via tele-or-video conference. Failure to attend a meeting will result in non-payment of members fees for the associated meeting.

The Chair is required to call a meeting if asked to do so by the Council and decide if a meeting is required if requested by another member, internal audit or the VAGO.

8.2 Planning

8.2.1 At each September Committee meeting a forward meeting schedule that includes the dates and location for each meeting for the forthcoming year will be presented.

8.2.2 In accordance with section 54(3) of the Act the Committee will develop an annual work program that includes the timing of reporting for all of the responsibilities outlined in this charter.

8.3 Quorum

A quorum will consist of two independent members and one Councillor. The quorum must be in attendance at all times during the meeting.

8.4 Secretariat

In accordance with section 54(6a) of the Act, the CEO will appoint a Council Officer to provide secretariat support to the Committee. The secretariat will:

- ensure the agenda for each meeting is approved by the Chief Executive Officer and Committee Chair
- the agenda and supporting papers are circulated at least ten days prior to the meeting
- Minutes must be reviewed by the Director Business Transformation and Committee Chair and circulated within three weeks of the meeting to each member and committee observers, as appropriate. Minutes to include relevant elements of the Committee's discussion.

9 Conflicts of Interest

Committee recommendations must be transparent and accountable, to protect the public interest, maintain the integrity of the Committee and Council and enable the public to be confident that the Committee is performing its duties properly. If a conflict of interest exists, it must be declared and managed. Committee members are required to provide written declarations, through the Chair, to the Council declaring any material personal interest they may have in relation to their responsibilities.

Division 2 of Part 6 of the Local Government Act 2020 applies to Independent Members, as if the

members were a member of a delegated Committee. An independent member has a conflict of interest if they have:

(a) a general conflict of interest within the meaning of section 127 of the Act

(b) a material conflict of interest within the meaning of section 128 of the Act.

Members of the Committee will provide declarations in accordance with statutory requirements.

Independent members should consider past employment, consultancy arrangements and related party issues in making these declarations and the Council, in consultation with the Chair, should be satisfied that there are sufficient processes in place to manage any real or perceived conflict.

At the beginning of each committee meeting, members are required to declare any material personal interests that may apply to specific matters on the meeting agenda. Where required by the Chair, the member will be excused from the meeting or from the committee's consideration of the relevant agenda item(s). The Chair is also responsible for deciding if he/she should excuse themselves from the meeting or from the committee's consideration of the relevant agenda item(s).

Details of material personal interests declared by the Chair and other members, and actions taken, Committee recommendations must be transparent and accountable, to protect the public interest, maintain the integrity of the Committee and Council and enable the public to be confident that the Committee is performing its duties properly. Committee members are required to provide written declarations, through the Chair, to the Council declaring any material personal interests they may have in relation to their responsibilities. Details of material personal interests declared by the Chair and other members, and actions taken, will be appropriately recorded in the minutes.

10 Misuse of Position

Section 123 of the Local Government Act 2020 applies to Independent Members, as if the member were a member of a delegated Committee. The Independent Member must not intentionally misuse their position -

(a) to gain or attempt to gain, directly or indirectly, an advantage for themselves or for any other person; or

(b) to cause, or attempt to cause, detriment to the Council or another person.

11 Confidential Information

Section 125 of the Local Government Act 2020 applies to Independent Members, as if the member were a member of a delegated Committee. The requirements include:

(1) Unless subsection (2) or (3) applies, a person who is, or has been, an Independent Member must not intentionally or recklessly disclose information that the person knows, or should reasonably know, is confidential information.

(2) Subsection (1) does not apply if the information that is disclosed is information that the Council has determined should be publicly available.

(3) A person who is, or has been, an Independent Member may disclose information that the person knows or should reasonably know, is confidential information in the following circumstances—

(a) for the purposes of any legal proceedings arising out of this Act

(b) to a court or tribunal in the course of legal proceedings

(c) pursuant to an order of a court or tribunal

(d) in the course of an internal arbitration and for the purposes of the internal arbitration process

(e) in the course of a Councillor Conduct Panel hearing and for the purposes of the hearing

(f) to a Municipal Monitor to the extent reasonably required by the Municipal Monitor

(g) to the Chief Municipal Inspector to the extent reasonably required by the Chief Municipal Inspector:

(h) to a Commission of Inquiry to the extent reasonably required by the Commission of Inquiry.

(i) to the extent reasonably required by a law enforcement agency.

12 Recruitment and Induction

A position description for independent members is established and maintained for each of the four independent member positions. The position description includes a committee skills matrix that identifies the blend of skills and experience required for the role.

Independent members will be recruited via a job recruitment website and appointed by Council on the recommendation of a selection panel comprised of the Audit and Risk Committee Chair, Director Business Transformation and Manager Governance and Strategy.

Where an independent member resigns mid-term, a new independent member will be recruited and appointed for a one year, and no more than a three-year term.

New members will be provided with appropriate induction material and briefings upon their appointment to support them in understanding the Committee's responsibilities and effectively fulfilling their roles.

13 Review of the Committee Charter

The Committee charter will be reviewed every 3 years.

Any substantive changes to the charter will be recommended by the Committee and must be formally approved by the Council.

14 Artificial Intelligence Usage

Members are requested not to use artificial intelligence (AI) tools or systems to review, analyse, or process Audit and Risk Committee papers or related documents

7.17 CONTRACT AWARD: RFT 2025-36 ELECTRIFICATION PROJECT OAK PARK SPORTS AND AQUATIC PRECINCT

Director Community, Eamonn Fennessy

Community Wellbeing

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to:
    a) Make a formal offer to **Entire Service & Maintenance Pty Ltd** (**Contractor**) to award contract **RFT-2025-36** for the **Electrification of Oak Park Sports and Aquatic Precinct** (**Contract**) on the following terms and otherwise subject to and in accordance with paragraph 1(b) of this Resolution:
        i. For the maximum lump sum of $1,947,820.00 (excluding GST) plus provisional sums totaling $50,000 (excluding GST), totaling $1,997,820.00 (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; RFT-2025-36
    b) Advises all tenderers of Council's decision in relation to the Contract.
3. Refers the remaining budget shortfall of $386,392 to the relevant quarterly budget review.

REPORT

Executive Summary

Oak Park Sports and Aquatic Centre (OPSAC) closed at the conclusion of the 2017 summer season for redevelopment following an extensive planning period. The precinct including the Aquatic and Leisure Centre and Sports Pavilion reopened in November 2018.

This project will be the next stage, transitioning the site to near net zero by removing sole reliance on gas boilers for pool water heating. Electric heat pumps were initially installed for the domestic hot water for the aquatic and leisure center, new plant will be installed and commissioned to provide the primary source of pool heating while the existing gas boilers for the pool will remain only as a back-up measure in case of equipment failure and extreme climate events. The sports pavilion’s existing gas cooktop will also be replaced with an electric equivalent.

With electricity backed by certificates from the Crowlands Windfarm, the project will significantly reduce Council's carbon emissions.

By retrofitting an aquatic centre to all-electric and sharing lessons learnt, we will encourage other councils to do the same.

The infrastructure works need to be delivered in the winter season commencing May 2026 to limit service impact on the Oak Park Sports and Aquatic Precinct and to be acquitted by October 2026.

Council was successful in obtaining $740,000 through the Community Energy Upgrade Fund and has budgeted an additional $1,110,150 for the delivery of the project and services associated with the project deliverables.

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

Previous Council Decisions

Phasing out gas use in Council's Aquatic and Leisure centres - 12 March 2025

That Council:

1. *Notes the status of Merri-bek's aquatic and leisure centres (swimming pools) which are currently heated by gas how much gas they use.*
2. *Notes the proposed plans, cost estimates, timelines, complexity and recommended approach involved in shifting Council's aquatic and leisure centres away from gas and to renewable energy for heating.*
3. *Resolves that the electrification of aquatic and leisure centres will be coordinated with other significant scheduled building renewal and service improvements to maximise community benefits, cost-efficiencies, and energy efficiency.*
4. *That when the Aquatic and Leisure Centre Strategy comes up for review in 2025, consider bringing forward the installation of infrastructure for electrification of the Coburg Leisure Centre.*

Notice of Motion - Phase out Gas in Council's Pools – 11 December 2024

That Council receives a report in March which outlines a plan to shift Council's swimming pools away from gas and to renewable energy for heating. The report would outline which pools still use gas for heating, how much they use, and a timeline for shifting these pools off gas to renewable energy.

Zero Carbon Moreland - 2030 Targets Review - 8 December 2021

That Council:

1. *Notes the summary of updated climate science and the advice regarding the extent of emissions reductions required by 2030 to keep the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5C (above pre-industrial levels), alive.*
2. *Notes that the Zero Carbon Moreland (ZCM) 2040 Framework (ZCM Framework) and associated 5-year ZCM Climate Emergency Action Plan (endorsed in November 2019) are providing a solid foundation for Council to continue demonstrating local government leadership in responding to the climate crisis through:*
    a) *progressively eliminating emissions from Council's own operations*
    b) *inspiring and enabling community and businesses to reduce emissions, with a focus on ensuring equity and co-benefits such as community health and resilience*
    c) *facilitating collective advocacy calling for urgent and effective action by state and federal government.*
3. *Endorses interim and aspirational ZCM targets for the Moreland community:*
    a) *75 per cent emissions reduction by 2030*
    b) *Net zero by 2035*
    c) *Drawdown ('negative emissions') by 2040*

4. *Call on our community, businesses, state and federal governments to join Council in collective action towards these community targets and the safe and fair future that success would help to achieve.*

5. *Endorses the additional highly ambitious ZCM 'target range' for Council (corporate/ operational) emissions:*

    - *80 – 100 per cent emissions reduction by 2030 (precluding offsets, against 2011/12 baseline). Note: Council has taken significant actions to reduce its operational emissions by 70 per cent from the 2011/12 baseline and that Council has been certified as 'carbon neutral' (or 'net zero') since 2012 under the national Climate Active scheme, whereby Council annually purchases carbon offsets for all its remaining emissions.*

6. *Note the following conditions related to achievement of corporate emissions target:*

    a) *Achievement of 80 per cent emissions reduction by 2030 is contingent on additional funding allocation and re-scoped capital works forward plan (to bring forward a transition of Council's light fleet to zero emissions and converting approximately 27 Council buildings to 'all electric'). High-level cost estimate to deliver these actions may be up to $16M over the 9 years to 2030.*

    b) *Progress beyond 80 per cent, towards 100 per cent reduction (the upper end of the target range) is also contingent on commercialisation and availability before 2030 of suitable new or emerging technologies (that is, zero emissions waste trucks and construction materials).*

7. *Pending adoption of corporate ZCM target range, develop business cases for referral to the 2022/23 budget process and consideration within Council's long term financial plan (i.e., to enable accelerated transition to zero emissions light feet and accelerated transition off gas in Council buildings)*

8. *Endorse revisions to the ZCM Framework and Climate Emergency Action Plan as necessary to reflect the newly endorsed targets.*

9. *Acknowledges and thanks all community members, including those involved in the Moreland Climate Coalition, that are acting and advocating for the many local and regional and national systems changes required to ensure a safe, fair and resilient Moreland into the future.*

Fawkner Leisure Centre Project - Concept for Consultation - 13 October 2021

That Council:

1. *Endorses for the purposes of community consultation the scope of works and staged delivery model for the Fawkner Leisure Centre Project as attached to the report, to include:*

    a) *Stage 1: Outdoor aquatic area including a 50 metre outdoor pool; new outdoor childrens leisure pool; landscaping works and BBQ area; indoor dry area redevelopment including new gym, program room, cycle studio, café and first aid room; refurbished change rooms; minor refurbishment to indoor aquatics including new spa, steam room and sauna; transition to **all-electric facility**;*

    b) *Stage 2: Warm water program pool, family change village and remaining refurbishment/alteration works.*

Petition – Stop Using Gas to Heat Moreland's Pools – 14 July 2021

That Council:

1. *Receives the petition, requesting Council stop using gas to heat Moreland's pools.*

2. *Refers the petition requesting Council stop using gas to heat Moreland's pools to the Director Community Development for consideration and response.*

Notice of Motion - Fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty – 12 May 2021

That Council:

1. *Endorses the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty campaign that is calling on national governments to negotiate and ratify a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty to stop the expansion and begin phase out of fossil fuels and ensure a global just transition for all.*
2. *Writes to the Australian Foreign Minister and the Federal Member for Wills advising of this action and calling on the Commonwealth Government to support, negotiate and, eventually, ratify this treaty.*

Zero Carbon Moreland Action Plan 2020/21 – 2024/25 - Adoption – 13 November 2019

That Council:

1. *Notes the Zero Carbon Moreland – Community and Stakeholder Consultation – Outcomes Report at Attachment 1 to this report.*
2. *Adopts the Zero Carbon Moreland Climate Emergency Action Plan 2020/21 – 2024/25 at Attachment 2 to this report.*

   Subject to the following amendments:

   a) *On Page 26, under heading Waste a Circular Economy – That the Australian Government: Amend second dot point to read: "Expand the product stewardship scheme to include more products. For example, Packaging, making goods so that they can be repaired."*

   b) *On Page 26, under heading Waste & Circular Economy – That the Victorian Government: Add an additional dot point:*

      "Build a publicly-owned recycling facility to ensure the sustainability, the accountability and the safe operation of such a facility"
3. *Refers the resources outlined in the Zero Carbon Moreland Climate Emergency Action Plan 2020/21 – 2024/25 to the 2020/21 budget process.*
4. *Acknowledges and thanks all involved in the development of the Zero Carbon Moreland Action Plan 2020/21 – 2024/25, which will contributes to the transition to a zero carbon city.*

Notice of Motion - Phasing out gas in leisure centres – 10 July 2019

That Council:

1. *Notes that the draft Zero Carbon Moreland – Action Plan 2020/21 – 2024/25 which includes an initiative to investigate the feasibility and timing of a planned 'phase out' of fossil gas from Council facilities (including aquatic centres) and replace it with renewable energy sources. Following the completion of the current community consultation process the Action Plan will be reported to the November 2019 Council Meeting.*
2. *Resolves that the Council Report and draft Zero Carbon Moreland – Action Plan 2020/21 – 2024/25 Action Plan include the investigation and feasibility of a planned 'phase out' of fossil gas and replacement with renewable energy sources in time for the redevelopment of the Fawkner Leisure Centre.*

1. Policy Context

This report is in keeping with Council's commitment to accountability and sound financial management. It also addresses the requirement under section 109(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* which requires Council to conduct a public tender for goods, services and works where once-off or ongoing cumulative spend over the life of the contract is expected to exceed $350,000 (incl GST) as well as the policy commitments contained in the Procurement Policy.

2. Background

Officers developed a written project specification with specialist external review and input that outlined Council's requirements for the electrification of OPSAC. The tender documentation was released as a performance specification to encourage market design innovation.

The specification was developed to ensure the requirements of the Federal Grant received by Council were adhered to.

The project scope largely consists of swapping the pool heating capacity of existing gas boilers with new, energy efficient, electric heat pumps. The specification sizes the heat pump output to allow winter heating of the outdoor 50m pool. This added capability will provide Council with the ability to provide future year-round aquatic facilities at OPSAP should Council decide to expand the service offering at this facility.

Existing gas boilers that are only 7 years old, will be preserved to provide back-up heating capacity in the event of new heat pump system failures and extreme weather events. This will provide an extra layer of operational certainty to the aquatic facilities.

Furthermore, the existing gas cooktop located in the sports pavilion will be replaced with an electric equivalent.

Council initially undertook an expression of interest process to gauge market interest. Following evaluation of submissions, it was decided to proceed to an open market request for tender.

An advertisement was placed in *The Age* newspaper on 05/07/2025 inviting tenders via the e-tender portal. The request for tender closed on 15/08/2025 and 2 tenders were received and deemed as conforming submissions.

It is understood that at the time of tender, the industry was quite busy with the release of other Community Energy Upgrade Fund projects.

Tenderers Name	**ABN**
Entire Service & Maintenance Pty Ltd	36 083 650 695
Hirotec Maintenance Pty Ltd	84 075 569 541

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

Tender Evaluation

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

Criteria	**Weighting**
Capability (Experience)	10%
Capacity (Resourcing)	10%
Methodology and Task Appreciation	10%
Tender Program	5%
Design and Technical Review	10%
Social, Environmental, and Economic Sustainability	10%
Value Adds	5%
Cost	40%
Total	**100%**

The membership of the tender evaluation panel was as follows.

Title and/or company	Project Mgr/ Generalist or Nominated Speciality	Full Voting / Advisory Member
Unit Manager Aquatic and Leisure Services	Generalist	Full
Zero Carbon Merri-bek Technical Lead	Generalist	Full
Senior Project Manager Aquatics	Generalist	Full
Sustainable Buildings Officer	Generalist	Advisory
Senior Project Manager – Donald Cant Watts Corke	Project Manager	Full
Associate Mechanical Engineer - Bridgeford Group	Speciality – Services consultant	Advisory
Senior Procurement Partner	Procurement	Advisory

The evaluation process identified Entire Service & Maintenance Pty Ltd as the preferred tenderer based on the results of the evaluation matrix. Further details of tender evaluation are shown in the Tender Recommendation Report (**Confidential Attachment 1**).

3. Issues

Officers elected to proceed with an amended AS4300 Design and Construct contract. The form of tender documentation, being a performance specification without a preliminary design, required tenderers to exhibit sufficient understanding and experience in design development and Principal Project Requirement delivery. The project team wanted to ensure innovative, industry leading design solutions were presented at tender rather than releasing a completed design to the market for pricing. The AS4300 contract places the design responsibility on the Contractor while the performance specification ensures Council's minimum project expectations are met

Collaboration

Note that section 109(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires that any report to the Council that recommends entering into a procurement agreement must include information in relation to any opportunities for collaboration with other councils or public bodies which may be available.

Under this contract there are no opportunities to collaborate with other Councils or public bodies because it is a local stand-alone construction project with specific timing requirements.

Interviews

No interviews were held because all post tender clarifications raised were closed.

Social / Environmental / Local Implications

Entire Service & Maintenance function under a social procurement policy. They partner with RAW, an Indigenous employment organisation, to support and train Indigenous apprentices, actively employing RAW staff on projects. They are also involved with the AMCA's Women in Construction body.

The tenderer has an environmental management policy and an Environmental Management System (EMS) certified and audited by an external authority

The tenderer is committed to providing products and services consistent with ecological sustainable development and circular economy principles, including reducing waste, recycling, and efficient resource use

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

Aquatic and Leisure Services as the leading service unit for this tender process consulted Sustainable Building Department and Industry Specialist Bridgeford Group and Introba on best practice solutions for the Electrification of Oak Park Sports and Aquatic Centre. Based on industry learnings from other all-electric aquatic projects, the project team has decided to retain the existing gas boilers as a backup heating system for the pools. These learnings highlighted that heat pumps can fail to operate effectively during extreme weather events—such as temperatures below 3 degrees or periods of high humidity—which can cause the units to freeze and the pools to lose temperature. Furthermore, heat pumps involve more moving parts than traditional gas boilers, resulting in increased maintenance requirements and a higher risk of operational failure. The gas boilers will only be used when the heat pumps are not functioning to ensure pool temperatures are maintained and community impact is minimised.

5. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council Officers, external consultants and all other parties involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

6. Financial and Resources Implications

The current total budget available for the delivery of this project is $1,850,000 (excluding GST). The table below shows the estimated overall expenditure for the project, including funds spent to date.

Item	**Amount (excluding GST)**
2024-25 forecast (less EOFY carry forwards)	$37,484.00
2025-26 adopted budget	$1,750,000.00
2025-26 additional EOFY carry forwards (endorsed at September Council meeting)	$62,516.00
Total allocated budget	**$1,850,000.00**
Less	
2024-25 actuals	$37,484.00
2025-26 actuals (YTD August)	$5,000.00
Recommended contract amount RFT-2025-36 *(Electrification of Oak Park Sports and Aquatic Centre)*	$1,997,820.00
Provision for latent conditions or unforeseen costs	$99,891.00
Estimated additional project expenditure including other costs outside of contract award)	$96,197.00
Total project shortfall	$386,392.00
Estimated Total Project Cost	**$2,236,392.00**

The contract tender prices for the main works contract have come in higher than originally budgeted for. This is due to the fact that project scoping and initial cost estimates were completed two years prior to tender, during which time there has been significant cost escalation across the construction sector. In addition, contractor availability has been constrained, and the release of substantial federal funding through the Community Energy Upgrade Fund has increased competition for resources, further driving up costs.

As a result, additional budget of approximately $386,392.00 (excluding GST) is required to complete the project.

It is also noted that despite the proposed allocation of additional budget, projects of this nature will often require further contract variations due to latent conditions or unexpected costs outside of Council's and the Contractor's control. Should these circumstances arise, it will be dealt with in accordance with Council's procurement and budget protocols.

7. Implementation and Timeline

This report is seeking a Council decision to authorise the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to execute the contract and any other required documentation.

Upon approval by Council of this report, a contract between the Contractor and Council is estimated to be executed in October 2025.

The contract will commence as soon as possible following Council endorsement.

It is estimated that the works will take 9 months and there will subsequently be a 52 weeks defects liability period under the Contract.

Attachment/s

1 Tender Recommendation Report - Oak Park Sports & Aquatic Precinct Electrification D25/530222

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

7.18 CONTRACT VARIATION: EXE-2023-546 PATHWAY AND EPATHWAY SOFTWARE MAINTENANCE AND SUPPORT

Director Business Transformation, Sue Vujcevic

Information Technology

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Approves an increase to the maximum additional spend for EXE-2023-546 Infor Software Maintenance and Support from $960,021 to $1,050,000 (excluding GST) under the 3-year extension options;
2. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to approve the contract exemption and related documentation as identified in point one above.

REPORT

Executive Summary

Council awarded an extension on 14 May 2025 for three years for the existing contract EXE-2023-546 which expired on 30 June 2025 for Software maintenance and support for Infor Global Solutions, the provider of the Pathway and ePathway platforms. These platforms support core functions, including property management, regulatory management (i.e. planning and building), and revenue management.

The extension specified a maximum additional spend of $960,021 (excluding GST). By granting approval for up to 3-years of exemptions allowed for an orderly transition to the new Enterprise Resourcing Planning (ERP) system.

Following this decision, Council has been in negotiations with the vendor for the extension. The purpose of this report is to obtain Council approval for a contract variation for an additional maximum allowable spend of $1,050,000 (excluding GST) which is an increase of $89,979.

Previous Council Decisions

Contract extension: EXE-2023-546 Pathway and ePathway Software Maintenance and Support – 14 May 2025

That Council:

1. *Approves a procurement exemption under section 6.1.4.2 (a) of the procurement policy for EXE-2023-546 Info Software Maintenance and Support for:*
    a) *Additional maximum spend of up to $960,021 (excluding GST) under this extension;*
    b) *For a term of three (3) one-year extension options commencing 1 July 2025 at the discretion of Council.*
2. *Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to approve the contract exemption and related documentation as identified in point one above.*

Elevate Customer and Digital Transformation Program – 12 March 2025

That Council:

1. *Notes that Council's current core business systems are reaching end of their useful lives and need to be modernised to improve customer experience and advance integration between systems and cyber security.*

…

6. Commences the procurement tender process for the Enterprise Resource Planning system and

a) Notes that the contract award will be subject to a Council resolution.

b) Notes that the tender process may result in amendments to the forward financial projections outlined in Confidential Attachment 1.

1. Policy Context

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

2. Background

On 12 March 2025, Council resolved as a part of the Elevate customer and digital transformation program, to commence the procurement tender process for an Enterprise Resourcing Planning (ERP) System. This procurement process is currently underway.

This contract extension is allowed under section 6.1.4.2 (a) of the Procurement Policy which states:

The following circumstances are exempt from the general publicly advertised tender, quotation and expression of interest requirements.

Extension of contracts while Council is at market – this allows Council to extend an existing contract where the procurement process to replace the contract has commenced… This exemption may be used when the establishment of an interim short-term arrangement with an alternative supplier is considered not to be in the public interest, as it may be cost prohibitive and/or present a risk in the delivery of the critical public services to the municipality.

In May 2025, Council resolved to extend the current contract for software and maintenance support for Pathway and ePathway for a period of three-years. The extension was for three (3) one-year extension options commencing 1 July 2025 at the discretion of Council for a maximum additional spend of $960,021 (excluding GST). By granting approval for up to 3-years of exemptions allowed for an orderly transition to the new Enterprise Resourcing Planning System.

Following this decision, officers have been negotiating with the supplier on the extension.

This report is seeking an additional $89,979 which would bring the total maximum spend under the extension options to $1,050,000 (excluding GST).

3. Issues

Infor Global Solutions presented Council the option for signing a 3-year SaaS agreement to the value of $1,050,000 (excluding GST) to ensure we maintain access to support and new version upgrades as needed. This is essential to ensure there is no disruption of operational services to the community and also to allow time for an orderly transition to the new Enterprise Resourcing Planning (ERP) system.

Community impact

The ePathway product is our electronic services portal, used by the community for online transactions with Councils. It is imperative that there is no disruption to these services while we consider other platforms.

Collaboration

Section 109(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires that any report to the Council that recommends entering into a procurement agreement must include information in relation to any opportunities for collaboration with other councils or public bodies which may be available.

Under this contract there are no opportunities to collaborate with other Councils or public bodies because of lack of alignment with contract requirements.

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 is not required as the Pathway and ePathway platforms are already being utilised.

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 Information Technology - Applications Unit is responsible for the software budget and contract management.

The amended maximum spend within the extension is proposed to be $1,050,000 (excluding GST) for 3-years and is within the existing IT budget. No additional resourcing is required to implement this extension. If Council were to go to market for a short-term interim solution, while the Elevate customer and digital transformation program is being undertaken, additional resourcing would be required.

7. Implementation

Subject to Council's decision, the next step would be entering into a contract extension to ensure continuity of Council's Pathway/ePathway system whilst Council works towards implementing the Enterprise Resourcing Planning (ERP) System.

Attachment/s

There are no attachments for this report.

8. NOTICES OF MOTION

8.1 HAROLD STEVENS ATHLETICS TRACK

Cr Helen Politis

Motion

That Council receives a report reviewing the management model, inclusive of the lease arrangements, of the Harold Stevens Athletics Track.

1. Background

Cr Polits's background:

The Harold Stevens Athletics Track is a local iconic track that has served the northern community since 1896. It has produced two Olympians and hundreds of other local athletes. It is inclusive and offers programs for children, seniors and women only events. Every year approximately 15 thousand school children participate in track and field events.

The track is managed by the Coburg Athletics Ground Management Committee who are all volunteers that maintain the site and hire it for use to schools and community groups. Urban density and the growth of community sports is likely to increase demands for track access and usage.

To ensure the long-term viability and investment in the track, a review of the current management model should be undertaken with a view towards:

- Maintaining the track for use by Coburg athletics and the Harriers club
- Developing the track and the field to meet both safety and international standards
- Future proofing the centre to meet the growing needs of the sport, school and local communities.

2. Policy Context

This Notice of Motion aligns with a range of Merri-bek strategies and policies, including the Council Plan 2025–29, the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2020, the Allocation and Use of Sporting Facilities, Grounds and Pavilions Policy (2023), and the Community Infrastructure Plan. Together, these frameworks emphasise equitable access to quality community facilities, support sustainable management of sporting assets, and prioritise investment in infrastructure that meets current and future community needs.

A review of the Harold Stevens Athletics Track management model is therefore consistent with Council's broader commitment to inclusive, sustainable and place-based community infrastructure.

3. Financial Implications

A review can be completed within existing budget allocations.

4. Resources Implications

A review and subsequent report can be completed with current resources.

8.2 COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCE AT ALGA CONFERENCES

Cr Ella Svensson

Council at its meeting on 10 September 2025 resolved that the matter be deferred to the meeting to be held on 8 October 2025.

Motion

That Council:

1. Notes in accordance with the Councillor Support, Expenses and Resources Policy an annual budget allocation for attendance at seminars, conferences and training and community events, including for attendance at the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly, which is an important forum for local government advocacy.
2. Notes the costs associated with Councillors attending ALGA multiple times in a single Council term can be significant, and that Council must balance professional development opportunities with responsible use of public funds.
3. Requests a report that reviews Council's Councillor Support, Expenses and Resources Policy regarding Councillor attendance at the ALGA National General Assembly.
4. Explores options for limiting paid councillor attendance such that each Councillor may only attend one National General Assembly at Council expense per Council term.
5. Considers necessary exceptions, such as where a Councillor is elected to a national local government body or holds a representative role that requires ongoing attendance.

1. Background

Cr Svensson's background:

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly is the peak annual gathering of local governments in Australia. It provides Councillors with an opportunity to learn from experts, connect with interstate colleagues, and to advocate for issues that matter to our community on a national stage.

Nevertheless, attending the conference isn't free. Registration, travel and accommodation add up, and when multiple councillors attend more than once in a term, the expense becomes significant. In the midst of a cost of living crisis, where residents are struggling and councils are asked to do more with less, it's reasonable to consider how we can limit costs and ensure that opportunities are shared fairly.

Currently, our policy allows Councillors to attend the ALGA conference more than once per term at Council's expense. In practice, that means that some councillors might attend repeatedly, whilst others never do. Putting a cap of one funded trip per councillor, per term, levels the playing field and helps keep costs under control. There will be exceptions where multiple paid attendances are justified, particularly for the Mayor, or if a Councillor is elected to the ALGA board or another representative role that requires their presence.

By seeking a report this will allow us to compare options, weigh up costs, and adopt a policy that balances professional development with fairness and fiscal responsibility.

2. Policy Context

Officer's comments:

The Councillor Support, Expenses and Resources Policy establish the facilities, resources and support necessary or appropriate to provide to Councillors in the performance of their duties as elected representatives, this includes Councillor entitlements to paid professional development.

The Councillor Support, Expenses and Resources Policy sets out the processes for ensuring that the costs of resourcing and supporting Councillors, and the value of any expenses reimbursed, are reported to the community quarterly to promote good governance, transparency and accountability.

The Councillor Support, Expenses and Resources Policy includes that individual professional development expenditure should be tested against the following criteria:

- is it in the interest of the Merri-bek community,
- does it meet the budget determined by Council,
- does it clearly offer and promote public benefit, as distinguished from private benefit,
- is it directly relevant to the Councillor's role, and
- does it take place and is it able to be utilised during the Councillor's term of office.

Council at its meeting held 12 August 2020, in adopting the Councillor Support, Expenses and Resources Policy, included the additional wording at Section 5.4 Professional Development as follows: "The cost of training and development programs for each Councillor during their term of office will be capped at $10,000.00 and a resolution of Council will be required to exceed this cap. Any individual training activity that exceeds $1,500.00 (excluding GST) will require approval by resolution of Council".

In addition to the above, the Councillor Support, Expenses and Resources Policy also sets out that Council will also provide access to professional development programs/initiatives that is not included in the capped amount of $10,000, including with the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA), ALGA, Australian Local Government Women's Association ALGWA etc.

3. Financial Implications

Officer's comments:

There are no financial resource implications arising from a review of the Councillor Support, Expenses and Resources Policy.

4. Resources Implications

Officer's comments:

Addressing this motion can be delivered within existing staff resources.

8.3 BUS SHELTER PROGRAM IN MERRI-BEK

Cr Sue Bolton

Motion

That Council:

1. Recognises the vital importance of increasing the number of bus shelters in Merri-bek, particularly in key locations.
2. Receives a report by February 2026 which includes information on:
    - the estimated proportion of bus stops which have bus shelters or bus seats
    - the progress towards increasing the number of bus shelters and/or bus seats
    - recommendations on how to speed up the number bus shelters installed each year.

1. Background

Cr Bolton's background:

Buses are an important part of the public transport network. A huge part of the Merri-bek community doesn't live within walking distance of a train station or a tram line. One thing which deters people from catching buses is the lack of bus shelters, and particularly bus seats. There are many people who are elderly, or frail, or can't stand for long periods while waiting for a bus. The lack of shelter from the heat and from rain also deters people from catching buses unless they have no other choice.

2. Policy context

Officer's comments:

There are almost 700 bus stops located within Merri-bek, it is estimated that roughly 40% of these have a waiting area (a seat or a shelter) for bus passengers supplied by a mix of entities.

- Merri-bek City Council manages several bus shelters and has installed seats at bus stops around Merri-bek. These facilities are exclusively managed by council.
- Outdoor advertising company ooHMedia provides, owns, and maintains shelters at bus stops installed before 2003 on behalf of the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP), under the Bus Shelter Agreement licence.
- Outdoor advertising company JC Decaux provides, owns, and maintains bus shelters at 100 bus stops installed between 2003 and 2007 on behalf of Merri-bek Council under the '*Purchase agreement JC Decaux Australia Pty Ltd Contract No 1066*' licence agreement.

If the motion is supported, council Officers can ensure data on bus stops is current, assess the proportion of bus stops with facilities, and advise which agency manages each facility. The report can assess recent progress and provide options and analysis for improving the provision of bus stop shelters and other facilities across Merri-bek.

3. Financial implications

Officer's comments:

A report can be prepared with staff resources allocated in the existing council budget for 2025-26.

4. Resources Implications

Officer's comments:

The motion can be delivered within existing council resources.

8.4 PROCUREMENT POLICY AND SUBMINIMUM WAGES FOR DISABLED PEOPLE IN SEGREGATED WORKPLACES

Cr Sue Bolton

Motion

That Council investigates the implications of not procuring from organisations such as prison industries and businesses which use the Supported Wage System such as Australian Disability Enterprises for future contracts and provides a report back to Council by December 2025.

1. Background

Cr Bolton's background:

Merri-bek Council's Procurement Policy has a section on Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) Procurement Considerations. This section of the policy (4.16) includes Social Sustainability which aims to elevate the inherent social value of doing business, by Increasing employment opportunities for people experiencing social and economic exclusion or disadvantage, including but not limited to a disability, refugees, disadvantaged people and long term unemployed. The policy also includes a minimum evaluation weighting 10 per cent for sustainability will apply to all public tender procurement activities.

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability final report, in 2023, made 222 recommendations.

Recommendation 7.31 relates to raising subminimum wages, and includes that the Australian Government takes a phased approach to introduce a scheme to ensure that employees with a disability are paid at least half the minimum wage by 2034; further that this scheme is reviewed after five years of operation and use the results of the review to develop a pathway to lift minimum wages payable to employees with a disability to 100% of the minimum wage by 2034.

Recommendation 7.32 relates to ending segregated employment by 2034. This recommendation calls for government to develop a roadmap to transform Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) and eliminate subminimum wages for people with disability by 2034; it also includes that this recommendation (7.32), would operate in advance of recommendation 7.31 to raise all subminimum wages to the full minimum wages by 2034.

In November 2024, The UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, Professor Tomoya Obokata, reported on his official visit to Australia. In his report after the visit, Obokata stated: "In Australia, persons with disabilities can be employed in sheltered workshops, referred to as Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs), where they engage in manual labour work, such as warehousing, 'picking and packing', cleaning and laundry services, sometimes against their will. Disturbingly, they are paid a sub-minimum wage as low as $3 per hour for their work when the national minimum wage not covered industrial awards and registered agreement is $24.10."

Although ADEs are supposed to be transitional arrangements into the open market, the Special Rapporteur was informed that many are stuck with segregated employment for a long time. Furthermore, the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability noted that persons with disability who work in segregated workplaces may be at heightened risk of violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The Special Rapporteur regards the ADEs to be discriminatory and therefore they should be abolished.

Currently, under the Fair Work Act, employees with disability have the same minimum wage entitlements as other employees except when the Supported Wage System covers them. Employees eligible for a supported wage, under Schedule D of the Supported Employment Award, are entitlement to a minimum supported wage that is calculated differently to other awards. Employees are entitled to a percentage of the relevant minimum pay rate for their classification. The percentage applied is the higher of:

- the employee's assessed work capacity, rounded to the nearest whole percentage, or
- $3.12 per hour.

In most awards, employees eligible for a supported wage can't be paid less than $109 per week. This also applies to casuals, and junior employees. People with Disability Australia (PWDA) announced that it supports the Special Rapporteur's recommendation to abolish ADEs, where workers with disability are often paid as little as $3 an hour.

2. Policy Context

Officer's comments:

The Procurement Policy is made under Section 108 of the *Local Government Act 2020*. The Act requires each council to:

- Prepare and adopt a procurement policy which specifies the principles, processes and procedures applying in respect of the purchase of goods and services and carrying out of works by the Council.
- Review its Procurement Policy at least once during each 4-year term of the Council.

The procurement policy was reviewed and adopted by Council on 11 June 2025.

Section 4.16 of the policy states *Merri-bek City Council aims to use procurement processes to drive sustainability, using our buying power to make a difference beyond the financial value of the goods and services we purchase. We aim to contribute to a fair, inclusive, economically, environmentally and socially sustainable community for all, via our suppliers and supply chain, supporting the targets and measures established by Council.*

Social Sustainability - aiming to elevate the inherent social value of doing business, by:

- *Increasing employment opportunities for First Nations people and businesses to address inequity and strengthen their role in the Victoria economy*
- *Increasing employment opportunities for people experiencing social and economic exclusion or disadvantage, including but not limited to a disability, refugees, disadvantaged people and long term unemployed*
- *Promotion of equity, diversity and equal opportunity*
- *Ensuring suppliers do not exploit workers and provide fair wages, including business practices*
- *Respect for human rights, and the rule of law and international norms of behaviour*

3. Financial Implications

Officer's comments:

The cost of preparing a report and (potentially) amendment to the procurement policy can be undertaken within existing resources/budget.

4. Resources Implications

Officer's comments:

Preparing a report and investigating the implications of not procuring from organisations such as prison industries and businesses which use the Supported Wage System (such as Australian Disability Enterprises) for future contracts can be done with existing resources.

8.5 METROPOLITAN TRANSPORT FORUMS

Cr Sue Bolton

Motion

That Council proposes to the Metropolitan Transport Forum that the forum that is organised in Merri-bek in the lead up to the 2026 State election occur in the north of Merri-bek near the Upfield Line, with subsequent forums rotating around different parts of Merri-bek.

1. Background

Cr Bolton's background:

The Metropolitan Transport Forum comprises the representatives of 26 metropolitan local councils in Melbourne.

Its aim is to work towards effective, efficient and equitable transport in metropolitan Melbourne. In the lead up to each state election, the Metropolitan Transport Forum organises candidate forums in a number of local council areas in the lead up to state elections so that communities can raise transport issues in their areas.

The last three or four such forums have all been held in Brunswick. It is possible that all such forums have only been held in Brunswick. This has meant that the candidates don't get to hear the transport issues effecting different parts of Merri-bek. The lack of having such a forum in the north of Merri-bek, means that candidates don't hear about the distress caused by the high number of trains on the Upfield train line being cancelled as a result of the single track at the end of the Upfield line.

There is a need to rotate these forums around different parts of Merri-bek to allow candidates to hear about the different transport needs in different parts of Merri-bek.

2. Policy context

Officer's comments:

Merri-bek City Council is a member council of the Metropolitan Transport Forum along with 25 other metropolitan local governments. The forum advocates for urban transport issues impacting metropolitan Melbourne.

The MTF's current advocacy priorities include:

- *Active Transport*: Making it easier and safer to walk and ride. Safer cycling, safer walking and supporting active travel to school.
- *Buses*: More frequent, direct and reliable bus services across Melbourne.
- *Choices*: Good transport planning that provides more choices for how people move around.

Since 2014, the Metropolitan Transport Forum has hosted town hall candidate forums on transport issues during state government election campaigns. During the 2022 election campaign, the MTF hosted forums with state government representatives and candidates across the Melbourne metropolitan area. This included a forum at Brunswick Town Hall on 4 October 2022.

Should the MTF determine to host similar events ahead of the 2026 state election, Council can request that a forum be held in Merri-bek, including the north of the local government area near the Upfield line. Should the motion be passed, council can propose this item be discussed at the next meeting of the Metropolitan Transport Forum.

3. Financial implications

Officer's comments:

The motion can be delivered within the existing council budget.

4. Resources implications

Officer's comments:

The motion can be delivered with existing council resources.

8.6 AIR CONDITIONING IN THE BARKLY ST TOWERS

Cr Helen Politis

Motion

That Council write to Homes Victoria requesting that given the age and vulnerability of the residents, that the installation of air conditioning units is prioritised with the aim of completion by the end of 2025.

1. Background

Cr Politis's background:

The Barkly St towers house approximately 120 residents, aged 55 or older. The towers are being refurbished to allow residents to live there comfortably for at least another 25 years.

Recently residents have been notified by homes Victoria of upgrade works to prepare to install air conditioning in the building in 2026. This is good news, however many residents have health issues and are very concerned about another summer without sufficient cooling in their homes.

2. Policy context

Officers' comments:

This motion is consistent with existing Council policy. This includes:

Climate Risk Strategy 2022-2030

5.2.1 Council advocates to and influences other levels of government and service providers to improve the provision of services that support climate resilience of the community, and particularly to vulnerable community members.

Affordable Housing Action Plan 2022-26

3.3 Promote the accelerated roll-out of thermal comfort / energy efficiency upgrades for public and community housing

The Barkly St Public Housing towers consist of two conjoined 11 storey blocks completed in 1972. All residents are over 55 with many living with significant health vulnerabilities. The Victorian Government announced in 2023 that Homes Victoria would invest $141m in cooling high-rise public housing sites but Barkly St was not included in the first tranche of installations. The Victorian Government also has the Energy Efficiency in Social Housing Program (EESHP) which is jointly funded with the Commonwealth investing $209.4 million to improve the energy efficiency and liveability of social housing properties across Victoria.

Officers are able to write to Homes Victoria requesting the installation of air conditioning as soon as possible.

3. Financial implications

Officers' comments:

The cost of implementing this motion can be undertaken within existing operational budgets.

4. Resources implications

Officer's comments:

Implementation of this motion can be undertaken within existing resource allocations.

8.7 SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM PERMIT REQUIREMENTS IN A HERITAGE OVERLAY

Cr Liz Irvin

Motion

That Council receives a report on commencing the process of reviewing the Merri-bek Planning Scheme to “switch off” permit requirements for visible solar energy systems within a heritage overlay, as permitted by VC226. This review can either be done as a standalone priority review, or as part of a broader review of the entire Planning Scheme.

1. Background

Cr Irvin’s background:

Merri-bek Council declared a climate emergency on 12 September 2018, which included a commitment to urgent action to respond to this emergency. This declaration included support for action on this issue by all levels of government, and an invitation for everyone in the community to get involved and do their part.

Council has several strategic directions to help us achieve our climate action goals, including sustainable transport, waste and consumption, and energy transition. Our strategic direction aims to:

- 'green the electricity grid' by replacing use of fossil fuels with 100% renewables plus storage
- switch households and businesses to become 'all electric' (avoiding fossil fuels)
- account for impacts at the community level and incentivise sustainability across the municipality, not just from the council directly. We have made significant progress to achieve these aims as part of our 2020-2025 Zero Carbon Merri-bek Action Plan.

This action plan included a target of 44MW of rooftop solar by 2025. Thanks to the efforts and investment of 10,300 homes and 660 businesses and organisations, we exceeded this goal, and by December 2024 our community has 77.57MW of rooftop solar, which is around 220,000 solar panels.

But there is still a long way to go. In Victoria this year, 62% of all electricity generated was from burning brown coal, and only 10% came from rooftop solar panels (1). This is why Merri-bek continues to increase our targets for rooftop solar and energy storage - now aiming to reach 250MW by 2030. We also want to see at least 25% of Merri-bek households (up from 13.5%) and 20% of businesses (up from 11%) have rooftop solar systems. We will only get there with the help of our community.

We know Merri-bek residents and business owners are supportive of and enthusiastic about climate action and the transition to renewables. However, this enthusiasm is hindered in areas of our municipality that are covered by a heritage overlay. The current Merri-bek Planning Scheme states that a planning permit is required for visible solar energy systems (including solar panels) in a heritage overlay. This adds cost and complexity to the process of installing solar systems, and in some cases leads to demands that solar panels be repositioned or removed to reduce visibility. Each time this happens, our ability to produce our own renewable energy is decreased.

In 2022, the State Government recognised the impact that heritage overlays have on the ability to install solar energy systems. They introduced an amendment to the Victorian Planning Provisions that allows councils to provide exemptions from permit requirements for visible solar energy systems. This means council would have the ability to specify whether a place in a heritage overlay is subject to or exempt from visible solar energy system controls.

This motion calls for a review of the relevant Merri-bek Planning Scheme to start the process to remove the permit requirements for solar energy systems in areas impacted by a heritage overlay. 1. Open Electricity https://explore.openelectricity.org.au/energy/vic1/. Accessed 24/9/2025

2. Policy context

Officers' comments:

The Notice of Motion requests a report on the process to remove planning permit requirements for solar energy systems in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay. A report addressing this request can be prepared. A brief outline of the policy context is provided below.

Policy context

Planning Policy Framework

The Merri-bek Planning Scheme includes several policy objectives and strategies relevant to this matter:

- **Clause 13.01 – Climate change impacts:** Support adaptation and mitigation actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Clause 15.01 – Environmentally sustainable development:** Supports energy efficiency and solar energy generation.
- **Clause 15.03 – Heritage:** Ensure development respects and conserves heritage values, with alterations designed to be visually recessive and not dominate heritage places.

Heritage Overlay (HO)

Places included in the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) have been identified as having cultural heritage significance. The Overlay seeks to ensure that development does not adversely affect this significance.

The Heritage Overlay does not prohibit solar energy systems. However, under the Merri-bek Planning Scheme, a planning permit is required for solar energy systems unless an exemption applies. This requirement is intended to balance heritage protection with environmentally sustainable development objectives during assessment. Where solar panels are the sole trigger for a permit, applications are processed through Council's Fast Track planning process to minimise delays.

In 2022, the State Government introduced Amendment VC266, which amended Clause 43.01 to allow councils to include exemptions in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay for visible solar energy systems. This provision effectively enables councils to "switch off" the permit requirement. Merri-bek has not adopted this exemption.

Council's review pathways

Should Council wish to progress this matter, it could be considered either as:

- a stand-**alone** review, or
- part of the upcoming Planning Scheme Review under Section 12B of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

A review would assess whether removing the permit requirement is consistent with the broader strategic objectives of the Merri-bek Planning Scheme and would provide the necessary strategic justification for any change.

Planning Scheme amendment

To remove permit requirements for visible solar energy systems, a Planning Scheme amendment would be required under Section 8A of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. This is a formal statutory process that requires the support of both Council and the Minister for Planning, as well as periods of public exhibition – and can take two to three years to complete.

3. Financial implications

Officer's comments:

This Notice of Motion has no direct financial implications. The work can be supported through existing strategic planning functions.

4. Resources implications

Officer's comments:

This Notice of Motion can be delivered within existing staff resources.

8.8 PRESERVING MERRI-BEK'S PROUD MIGRANT HISTORY THROUGH ART AND STORYTELLING

Cr Katerine Theodosis

Motion

That Council investigates options for building upon previous materials and resources to collect and record migrant stories and history across Merri-bek, including those relating to residents, people, community clubs, buildings and other places and things with a migrant connection. That Council explores how it can curate those stories through an arts program and share them through our libraries.

1. Background

Cr Theodosis's background:

Merri-bek has a long and proud migrant history. For generations, people from across the globe have moved to Merri-bek to build a better life for themselves and their families. They have worked hard, across our factories, our restaurants, our medical centres, our schools, our local businesses, and so much more to build the vibrant community we are lucky to call home. As our community continues to evolve, Council should lead an initiative that celebrates, shares and preserves our rich migrant story through art and our libraries.

2. Policy Context

Officer's comments:

Merri-bek is committed to preserving, sharing and celebrating our diverse local history, and works closely with community groups to engage residents in matters of history and heritage. Council's library service and local history initiatives are currently digitising a number of migrant oral histories captured on tape in the 1970's and 80's. From time-to-time art commissions have also captured migrant history. Key policies that guide this work include:

Council Plan 2025-2029

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

Merri-bek Heritage Action Plan 2017 - 2032

- Objective 4: Communicating: To celebrate, connect with and enjoy our heritage places. Strategy: Create opportunities to raise awareness and appreciation of the heritage of our City.

Library Services Strategy 2019

- Key Priority 4: Learning. Supporting lifelong learning for community and staff.

Merri-bek Arts & Culture Strategy 2023 - 2030

- Priority 2: Connection. We will foster connections between artists, audiences and community.

3. Financial Implications

Officer's comments:

Exploratory and investigative work proposed by this motion can be accommodated within existing budgets.

Commissioning or presentation of new works as an outcome of exploration and investigation may require future budget considerations.

4. Resources Implications

Officer's comments:

This motion can be supported with existing resource allocations.