



Merri-bek
City Council

PROPOSED
Minutes of the Council Meeting

Held in Bunjil (Council Chamber), Merri-bek Civic Centre,
90 Bell Street, Coburg
on Wednesday 13 May 2026

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The Mayor opened the meeting at 6.33 pm and stated the Council meeting is being held on the traditional country of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people and acknowledged them as Traditional Owners. The Mayor paid respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging, and the Elders from other communities who may be here today.

Present	Time In	Time Out
Cr Nat Abboud, Mayor	6.33 pm	9.37 pm
Cr Helen Davidson, Deputy Mayor	6.33 pm	9.37 pm
Cr Sue Bolton	6.33 pm	9.37 pm
Cr Liz Irvin	6.33 pm	9.37 pm
Cr Dr Jay Iwasaki	6.33 pm	9.37 pm
Cr Chris Miles	6.33 pm	9.37 pm
Cr Helen Politis	Apology	
Cr Adam Pulford	6.33 pm	9.37 pm
Cr Ella Svensson	6.33 pm	9.37 pm
Cr Katerine Theodosis	6.33 pm	9.37 pm
Cr Oscar Yildiz JP	6.33 pm	9.37 pm

OFFICERS

Acting Chief Executive Officer – Sue Vujcevic
 Acting Director Business Transformation – Yvonne Callanan
 Acting Director City Infrastructure – Greg Rodwell
 Director Place and Environment – Pene Winslade
 Director Community – Eamonn Fennessy
 Acting Manager Governance and Strategy – Sophie Barison
 Acting Unit Manager Governance and Risk – Glen Moore

APOLOGIES/LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Cr Politis was an apology for the meeting.

DISCLOSURES OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Nil.

MINUTE CONFIRMATION

Resolution

Cr Theodosis moved, Cr Davidson seconded -

The minutes of the Council Meeting held on 8 April 2026 and the Special Council Meetings held 15 April and 22 April 2026 be confirmed.

Carried unanimously

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND OTHER MATTERS

Mayor, Cr Abboud observed during a recent bike ride along Sydney Road to Carlton the rainbow artwork being painted outside Michelle Guglielmo Park. The Mayor also highlighted another artwork at the Glenroy Hub, praising both pieces.

Cr Bolton

- Reported on a community meeting held in Fawkner at the end of March. Several key issues were raised by attendees, including a strong desire for the Fawkner Library to extend its hours to include Sundays and later Saturday openings, consistent with other Merri-bek libraries. A petition has been established in support of this request.

The meeting also included discussion about Council's consultation on transitioning to fortnightly waste collection. Some attendees expressed the view that greater incentives should be introduced to encourage the use of green bins before implementing such changes.

Traffic concerns, particularly along Bonwick Street, where increased visitation due to the area's growing reputation as a food destination has led to congestion and safety issues. Community members suggested the need for improved road design and traffic management to better organise flow and reduce hazards. Additional concerns were raised regarding inadequate lighting along the Upfield Shared Path, especially near the cemetery, and traffic safety issues on Anderson Road in Fawkner.

- Acknowledged her attendance at a recent Mother's Day event hosted by Wheel Sisters, a program that supports women in accessing cycling opportunities and building confidence, particularly in areas with limited public transport such as Fawkner.
- Formally advised Council her intention to stand as a candidate in the upcoming state election in November for the seat of Broadmeadows. Confirmed that the Acting Chief Executive Officer has been notified and that, upon formal nomination with the Electoral Commission, Cr Bolton will apply for a leave of absence from Council.

PETITIONS

5.1 PETITION REQUESTING COUNCIL NAMES THE DRIVEWAY BETWEEN BARKLY STREET AND WILSON AVENUE, BRUNSWICK

A petition (D26/178991) has been received containing 12 signatories requesting Council names the driveway between Barkly Street and Wilson Avenue, Brunswick.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Receives the petition, requesting Council names the driveway between Barkly Street and Wilson Avenue, Brunswick.
2. Refers the petition requesting Council names the driveway between Barkly Street and Wilson Avenue, Brunswick to the Director Place and Environment for consideration and response.

Resolution

Cr Bolton moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded -

That Council:

1. **Receives the petition, requesting Council names the driveway between Barkly Street and Wilson Avenue, Brunswick.**
2. **Refers the petition requesting Council names the driveway between Barkly Street and Wilson Avenue, Brunswick to the Director Place and Environment for consideration and response.**

Carried unanimously

6.45 pm *Cr Yildiz left the meeting.*

5.2 PETITION REQUESTING COUNCIL TO SAVE MERRI-BEK COMMUNITY FESTIVALS

A petition has been received containing 80 signatures requesting Council to save Merri-bek Community Festivals.

Resolution

Cr Bolton moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded –

That Council:

1. **Receives the petition, requesting Council to save Merri-bek Community Festivals.**
2. **Refers the petition requesting Council to save Merri-bek Community Festivals to the Director Community for consideration and response.**

Carried unanimously

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

A summary of questions and the responses provided, and items for which community statements were made is provided below. Questions submitted in writing and not asked are taken On Notice.

6.49 pm Cr Yildiz returned to the meeting.

Public Question Time commenced at 6.52 pm.

Report 7.1 Proposed Amendment C239mbek – Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres Heritage Project: Decision Gateway 1

Council received one statement, it was presented to Council:

Statement 1

Annely Aeuckens made the following statement:

I'm a local resident of 26 years standing, a trained historian and involved with the Coburg Historical Society for some years.

Having examined the report submitted by the consultants regarding the Brunswick and Coburg areas, it is my view that it fails to fulfil the brief regarding resolution two of the meeting of 12 July 2023, that is, an investigation into the heritage value of Coburg's shopfronts.

Many places simply have not been assessed at all. In a table in the document (PP 525 to 529) Attachment one, the terms below are repeated over and over again:

Not recommended for further investigation. Low architectural interest. Not enough historical evidence to warrant assessment.

The "not enough historical evidence to warrant assessment" is particularly worrying. In other words, the consultants didn't undertake an assessment of a large number of buildings based on what they determined to be insufficient "historical evidence", whatever this means. There is no obvious methodology applied, just a blanket determination.

"Low architectural interest" is also problematic for not all buildings are preserved for this reason - they may have significant economic, political or social aspects, which is presumably why the consultants nominated the Bob Hawke Community Centre or the RSL building. In addition, the definition of "architectural interest" is debatable and changes over time, for example, views of buildings constructed in the Brutalist style.

Overall, it appears that the amount of work undertaken on the "Coburg shops" was limited both in scope and depth, especially when compared to the Brunswick area.

The overall heritage value of the Coburg strip and surrounding streets (as opposed to single structures) has not been considered in the report, despite the fact that important historical elements remain.

The resolution sought answers about the "Coburg shops". I believe these have yet to be provided.

6.54 pm Cr Yildiz left the meeting.

6.54 pm Cr Yildiz returned to the meeting.

7.3 Festivals Program Refresh

Council received six statements, one was presented to Council. Council received two questions, one was taken on notice and one was presented to Council:

Statement

Ian Mack – Warden of the Anglican Parish of Will Will Rook made the following statement:

I write on behalf of the Parish to express our deep concern about the potential cancellation of festival events in Merri-Bek under agenda item 7.3 Festivals Program Refresh. Which states:

Council produces a large and successful festival program which requires a refresh to ensure that festivals and cultural programs are responsive to community needs and available more equitably across the municipality, while addressing challenges of increasing extreme weather conditions and condensed delivery timeframes in a financially responsible way.

The refreshed Council program will change the scheduling of two major events, Sydney Road Street Party and Coburg Night Market to biennial, consolidating these resources to make a new festival in the north of the municipality. This new festival will run across multiple locations and days, will significantly increase Council's investment in the North, and will be informed by community consultation and participation.

We reference Council's Social Cohesion Plan, with its key elements of,

- Social and cultural connection
- Learning and economic participation
- Civic and political participation
- Inclusive places and spaces
- Diversity and discrimination

Respectfully we note that the decision to cancel appears to be made prior to extensive community consultation. Effectively putting the cart before the horse. We acknowledge that our northern "North of Bell St" is intended to be the beneficiary of this cancellation of Sydney Rd and Coburg Market events. However adaptation to climate change should not be at the expense of our inclusive spaces. Which both Sydney Rd Street Festival and the Coburg Night Markets personify.

Question

Julie Cini asked Council:

As this is such larger community conversation to be having, and to only be having within the Council Chamber – we question how the Council saw fit to not have this conversation as a proper Community Engagement process?

We understand that there may have been concerns around an us and them mentality, but regardless that is taking place here tonight as valued community members and stakeholders are likely presenting their case for their components of the festivals programming.

At the request of the Mayor, Director Community, Eamonn Fennessy responded:

We understand the interest in the refresh of our festivals program given the significant community participation over many years. As was outlined in our Council Plan 2025-29 there is a need to refresh our festivals program to offer more equitable access across the municipality to cater for our diverse and changing community needs whilst also retaining financial and environmental sustainability.

Given these very practical limitations (especially financial) we determined broad community consultation at this stage of the process would most likely become a divisive exercise. Council's decision tonight will determine the key parameters of our new festival program which will then allow Council officers to meaningfully engage with our respective communities on how we can bring the new festival program to life within these limitations.

Report 7.5 Evaluation Trial Road Closure - Barrow Street, Coburg

Council received one question and three statements, they were presented to Council:

Question

Rory Dickson, asked Council:

What is Council's plan to reduce overall vehicle trips in and around Coburg - not just shift them to other streets - and does Council agree that piecemeal closures won't be enough until there's a connected, safe cycling network that people of all ages and abilities can actually use, so residents have a genuine alternative to driving?

At the request of the Mayor, Director Place and Environment – Pene Winslade responded:

Council is committed to creating a safe and connected walking and riding network in Merri-bek which is detailed in important strategies like our Moving Around Merri-bek Strategy and Streets for People Plan. These plans have actions that Council will be implementing in the coming years to help create a safe, convenient and attractive network for people walking and riding.

The road closure trial at Barrow Street is intended to test an option that can help create a safer environment that protects our most vulnerable road users like school aged students and people on bikes. Officers intend to use the extended 12 months to develop additional measures on surrounding streets to help improve safety and amenity.

This trial is just one part of a much broader set of trials and actions we're working on which together will contribute towards the longer term goal of much better active transport connections through Merri-bek.

Statement 1

Yvette Zegenhagen OAM made the following statement:

I speak on behalf of several households at the bottom end of Coburg Street. We support safer streets, active transport and improved cycling infrastructure. But any long term decision about the Barrow Street closure must also fully account for the residents who are carrying the unintended consequences of this trial every hour of every day.

The central issue is this: the closure has not reduced traffic from the local area — it has redistributed it into narrower residential streets that were never designed to absorb it.

Council's own report acknowledges the importance of balancing safety, accessibility and neighbourhood amenity for all residents. At present, that balance has not been achieved for Coburg Street residents.

Since the Barrow Street closure, Coburg Street has experienced a significant increase in traffic volume, including larger vehicles using the street as a through route between Bell Street and Rennie Street. The result has been a measurable decline in safety, liveability and community wellbeing.

First, safety.

The end of Coburg Street (and the continuation of the road into Richards Street) are both narrow residential streets with limited visibility due to parked cars and constrained road width. Families with young children can no longer safely use driveways, nature strips or footpaths in the way they once could. Children crossing the street now face substantially greater risk because traffic volume and driver impatience have increased.

Importantly, the current arrangement appears to have simply transferred and increased risk rather than reduced it. A street previously used primarily by local residents is now functioning as a major traffic funnel.

Second, property damage and financial impact.

Residents have experienced bins being destroyed, vehicles being sideswiped, and repeated near misses as cars and larger vehicles attempt to pass through bottlenecks. Collectively, residents have incurred tens of thousands of dollars in vehicle damage since the trial began.

The road itself is also deteriorating under the increased load. Recent damage is clearly visible on either side of the traffic calming devices around numbers 7 and 8 and in front of numbers 9 and 12 as many drivers now simply accelerate between or over the humps also showing that mitigation measures aren't working.

Third, community wellbeing.

Council policies rightly speak about creating connected, healthy neighbourhoods. But the lived experience on Coburg Street is moving in the opposite direction.

Residents chose this street because it was quiet and family oriented. Children previously rode bikes, visited neighbours, played safely outside and families regularly interacted across the street. That sense of neighbourhood connection is now being eroded by constant traffic, noise and safety concerns.

There are also health impacts that are difficult to quantify but very real for families — such as regularly interrupted sleep for infants and young children due to constant noise from increased vehicle movements.

Importantly, this is not an argument against cycling infrastructure or safer cycling routes.

It is an argument for ensuring that one group of residents is not disproportionately burdened to solve a broader transport problem.

Before any permanent decision is made — or before the current trial is extended — we request that Council undertake a comparative trial involving the closure of Coburg Street instead of Barrow Street, so decisions can be based on evidence across both scenarios.

There are strong planning and safety reasons why Coburg Street may in fact be the more appropriate closure point.

Barrow Street is a continuous two lane road better suited to carrying vehicular traffic. Coburg Street and the connecting Richard Street (which runs between Harding and Bell Streets) are narrower, more constrained and less capable of safely accommodating diverted traffic.

In addition, the Harding Street crossing at Coburg and Richards Streets already contains pedestrian refuge infrastructure to support safer bicycle and pedestrian movement. Importantly, access to Bell Street bike and pedestrian crossings, public transport, Pentridge, Coburg High School and surrounding sporting facilities is also far safer via Richards Street, where dedicated pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure already exists. Why then, funnel far greater levels of traffic down these two narrow streets that helps connect non-car users to important areas of the neighbourhood, instead of a road better designed for cars?

A safer cycling network should not come at the expense of making another residential street demonstrably less safe, less liveable and less connected.

We urge Council not to make a permanent decision until comparative data between a Barrow Street and Coburg Street closure has been gathered and assessed, and considers the cumulative impacts on all affected streets and local residents, to land on a solution that improves safety and amenity for all.

Statement 2

Helen Kratzmann made the following statement:

I am asking Councillor's to support extending the modal filter trial on Barrow Street.

Our community experience increased traffic volumes in local streets like Barrow, because motorists are trying to avoid arterials like Nicholson Street. These traffic volumes are supported by navigation apps, and grid connectivity through the section of Coburg encapsulated by Nicholson, Moreland, Sydney Road and Harding Street. We have a rat running problem. These motorists create a disproportionate level of risk for other road users. It is Council's responsibility to see this issue is resolved. This road closure is the first step.

A resident of Coburg Street told me that their neighbours cars have been side swiped by motorists using the street. Council officers are working to further mitigate these impacts. I couldn't help but think about the inability for motorist's to drive in the road lane without crashing into other objects, and how fortunate that the damage was to property and not small humans travelling to school.

Barrow Street feeds into several schools, including Coburg High which has an 80% active transport rate, and Merri-bek Primary where up to 70% of children use active travel. That's a lot of children on the road moving about with impatient motorists and the dangerous ever-rising height of their car bonnets.

Children have a very low chance of survival if driven into, both because of the speed of the motorist and because of their increasingly large vehicles that strike people who walk and ride in the head, neck or chest, the locus of many vital organs. Studies have found that children involved in a fatal crash are eight times more likely to have been struck by an SUV than a standard car.

Council's Human Rights Policy states that Council is committed to being a Child-Friendly City and Community where children and young people's rights are upheld, and initiatives and practices support their participation in civic life. Yet, children and their families contend with rat running, speeding motorists when trying to cross or travel on Barrow Street to get to school. Parents have been struck by motorists at roundabouts. Residents have had motorists crash across the footpath, through their fences and into their houses.

This modal filter is the first step to give our children freedom to travel independently. So they can walk or ride to school safely, or to the movies, or to visit a friend. Barrow Street is a Council controlled road. It is within your power to keep this local street safer for the large number of children who use it. Tonight I ask that you support the officer's recommendation to extend the trial.

I would like to thank Council officers for their work on the new crossings on Blair Street at Barrow Street.

This work has seen Coburg's southern end of Barrow Street closed for about 8 weeks which highlighted the sheer volume of motorists that use Barrow Street to rat run.

The crossings will make the area safer for children who attend Merri-bek Primary School - up to 70% of whom use active travel to get to school.

Statement 3

Nic Dolby made the following statement:

There has been a 4000 car reduction in traffic around the Barrow Street closure. Over a time of increased car use throughout Melbourne, we saw in this area a 4000 car reduction.

Report 7.7 Merri-bek Community Awards

Council received one statement, it was presented to Council:

Alicia Liley, Director of Climate Action Merri-bek made the following statement:

I live in Merlynston and speak on behalf of C.A.M., Climate Action Merri-bek.

I refer to Agenda item 7.7 of the recommendation from a Council Officer for a general revision of the award categories. Eamonn Fennessy, Director of Community Wellbeing endorsed the revised Merri-bek Community award categories for 2026. We are very appreciative of this change. This was in order for the Merri-bek Community Awards to be strategically streamlined to Council Plan 2025-2029, aligning to the following key themes.

In particular, due to the community award changed to item d) the Environmental Sustainability Award in recognition of John Englart.

John lived, oozing his pores of the 1st key theme of the new award categories:

Care for Nature and Climate Resilience.

John Englart was an integral member of CAM, and was the convener for approximately ten years.

John supported key themes of the changed Community Awards' categories:

Health and Inclusive Communities - Beautiful and Liveable City - John had such a love for his suburb, Fawkner, he influenced my move here.

Thriving Economy and Culture - John was a prolific citizen journalist and supporter of SOUL, the production company I founded in 1993. He strongly viewed culture as a fervent form of communication about important social issues, passionately aligning to a thriving culture.

And of course, as you are all aware, on the theme, Engaging a Responsible Council, John was always faithfully present for every entire Council meeting.

Until he died in July 2025.

We miss his constant presence, in the gallery here, and at CAM. I had immense respect for this marvellous man!

John Englart took responsibilities within CAM in order to take action on Climate Change at all levels of government, including internationally, attending several COP events.

We come together out of concern about the lack of meaningful political action on Climate Change, and a recognition that we need to take responsibility for our future. We need a rapid transition to a zero carbon society to prevent severe Climate Change that will have a devastating effect on our lives and those of future generations.

One of John's last campaigns that John worked on and brought to our attention was No Waste Incinerator Wollert or Stop The Wollert Incinerator for Protecting our health, air, land, water and families.

This 760,000 tonnes per year of waste burned impacts us, right here!

There will be Cancer causing dioxins released into our air; Asthma-inducing fine particulates; Airborne heavy metals in the air

Each kg. of plastic equals 3 kg. of CO2 (increasing global warming impacts);

Children and Pregnant Women are most vulnerable, and there is a childcare centre nearby the proposal;

It would be close to new housing, schools and aged care;

And what confounds me the most is that a similar incinerator was banned in NSW, ACT, California and Wales.

Why are the Northern suburbs of Melbourne singled out and discriminated against?

It is pleasing to know that this council of Merri-Bek is supportive of our campaign, as while the incinerator is not in this municipality, the plumes of smoke and toxic particles will affect us all in Merri-Bek. This campaign is vital, because it is an abuse of social justice and the rights of citizens' health.

This was one of the campaigns John fought for. We of CAM remain fighting to continue his legacy and invite anyone to join John Englart's brilliant work!

Question Time Extension

Resolution

Cr Irvin moved, Cr Bolton seconded -

That Public Question Time be extended by 30 minutes at 7.22 pm.

Carried

7.24 pm Cr Theodosius left the meeting.

Report 7.12 Friends of Aileu Annual Report 2025

Council received one statement, it was presented to Council:

Glenyys Romanes AM made the following statement:

Thank you for the opportunity to say a few words about the Friends of Aileu's 2025 Annual Report which is on your agenda for tonight's meeting.

Annual Reports are typically tedious documents but they are important expressions of accountability and, if you dip into this one, you will see it tells the story of the wide range of activities of the Friends of Aileu Partnership. This partnership reflects the strong commitment of Merri-bek and Hume Councils, and their respective communities, which began in 2000 when Xanana Gusmao delivered the Maurice Blackburn Oration in Coburg Town Hall and challenged us to walk with the Timorese people to meet the challenges ahead.

This happened only a few months after the Indonesians had left East Timor with a trail of devastation, and the new country was embarking on the path to Independence.

Councillors Andy Ingham from then Moreland Council and Gary Jungwirth from Hume, led the move to form a community response to Xanana's call to support their next struggle along the difficult path of development and nurturing democracy.

Friends of Aileu became part of a movement of friendship groups which continued to grow out of the involvement of local governments and their communities across Australia.

Friends of Aileu has been active in Merri-bek and Hume since then, raising funds for student scholarships through the annual Trivia Night, funds for oral health projects through the Giving Circle dinner, and funds for youth projects through the Grassroots Gathering organised by a group of young people, keen to encourage their peers to get involved.

The group has worked tirelessly with the Timorese Association in Victoria, other Friendship Groups here in Australia and our Council staff to strengthen ties with Timor-Leste. Our Project Officer helped organise last year's Friendship Conference in Dili bringing together Australians and Timorese from NGOs, municipal administrations, and Government officials from the Ministry of State Administration to address the topic Building and Empowering Communities Through Partnerships.

More recently, we've enlisted the support of some well experienced dentists and public health experts to embark on a new ambitious program to influence and promote good oral health outcomes, not only in Aileu, but across Timor-Leste.

Timor-Leste is still a very poor country. Friends of Aileu has continued to fund the Aileu community's Resource and Training Centre, youth permaculture activities and small projects.

New initiatives at home have included two Library Talks on Timor-Leste, attendance at the growing number of festivals in Merri-bek and Hume and increasing our focus on involving young people.

Last August, President Jose Ramos Horta awarded the Medal of the Order of Timor-Leste to Friends of Aileu and 16 other friendship groups, in recognition of their years of service and friendship.

None of this would have been possible without the ongoing support for the Friends of Aileu Partnership from Merri-bek and Hume Councils.

For 26 years this Council, along with Hume, has kept the faith, has looked outward from this municipality beyond our own local needs, and honoured its commitment to Xanana.

Council, we are thankful to you for that; I commend the Aileu 2025 Annual Report to you.

Notice of Motion 8.1 Footbridge across Merri-Creek in southern Fawkner

Council received two statements, they were presented to Council:

Statement 1

Andrea Bunting made the following statement:

Last year, Climate Action Merri-bek lost our convenor, John Englart. John was a Fawkner resident, and is being remembered tonight by having the Environmental Sustainability award named after him. John campaigned for better public and active transport, particularly for Fawkner.

CAM wants to continue the campaign for better public transport for Fawkner. Council has also identified “Improving bus services in Fawkner” as a core advocacy item. We know that Fawkner residents have poor access to public transport. But this is not just about improving the Upfield Line. Some residents want to head east, through Reservoir. So they need to cross the Merri Creek.

The proposal for a new footbridge in the south of Fawkner will improve residents’ access to public transport. Of course there are many other benefits. But I would like to focus on how this new footbridge would allow residents to more readily access the buses that go along Newlands Road.

There are two bus routes along Newlands Road. The most important is the 561 bus. This route is fairly new, and has a reasonably good service level – nearly as good as the Upfield Line train. It has become an important east-west bus route for Merri-bek and Darebin. It provides access to four train lines, and La Trobe University. It also allows access to RMIT Bundoora and Melbourne Polytechnic campuses in Preston, Heidelberg and Epping. So this bus route is very important for young people. Furthermore the 561 bus provides access to more than half of the top 10 destinations in the Northern Metropolitan Region, which were identified in the Northern Region Transport Study (2022).

Clearly, bus services in Fawkner will need improving to ensure that residents can readily access the proposed footbridge. But Council has already committed to advocating for better bus services within Fawkner. We hope that Council will do a more complete job and enable Fawkner residents to access public transport services to the east as well as the west.

Statement 2

Daniel Mobilio made the following statement:

Good evening, Councillors and thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Daniel; I’m a resident of Fawkner and am here to support the motion for a footbridge across Merri-Creek in Southern Fawkner

For Fawkner South residents, the closest accessible foot bridges by walking distance are approximately 25 mins/ 2km to the baker street bridge in Coburg North and the BT Connor Reserve bridge in Fawkner North. This makes accessibility difficult by foot to access amenities on both sides of the creek.

There seem to be two possible locations for a footbridge in Fawkner South, Option A for Queens Parade Merri Creek Trail to Dairy Drive and Option B for Lorne Street Merri Creek Trail to Edwardes Street.

I am requesting Council to assess the most suitable option and provide a timeline for implementation. Both options support the community benefits outlined by Sue's motion. It will provide a direct and safe way to reach the Merri creek trail and amenities like the 561 bus route on either side of the creek. Commencing with Option A for Queens Parade Merri Creek Trail to Dairy Drive, I see as the practical, lower-cost win within councils municipality. It will allow us to gather data and insights on utilisation, to continue further planning for the cross-municipality Option B for Lorne Street Merri Creek Trail to Edwardes Street.

Community interest in improved Merri Creek connectivity is strong and measurable. My recent Facebook posts in the Fawkner Community Hub received 145 reactions of support, while in the Reservoir 3073 group we reached 187 reactions of support and 2 shares. Both posts received over 45 comments each of discussion amongst the community, which I can share with Council Officers for feedback. These numbers show that support extends well beyond one suburb — it's a community priority which aligns with Merri-bek's commitments in the latest annual report. Active transport expansion, Climate-friendly travel options, Improved access to open space, Health and wellbeing outcomes and Reducing car dependency between suburbs.

This opportunity will have a big impact. Our community is ready for it, and the engagement numbers show it. So let's build a bridge and get over it.

7.33 pm *Cr Theodosis returned to the meeting.*

7.35 pm *Cr Pulford left the meeting.*

Notice of Motion 8.3 Open Fawkner Outdoor Pool Year-Round

Council received one question, it was presented to Council:

Clare Kentmann asked Council:

Re-deciding opening hours we are also interested to understand how these decisions are made, and if they are related to usage how this is measured? What would success look like? And how can Council better support awareness of the facility and encourage usage?

At the request of the Mayor, Director Community, Eamonn Fennessy responded:

Thank you for your question and for advocating for increased access to outdoor pool lap swimming. Council considers opening hours and seasonal operations across its six aquatic and leisure centres, balancing community demand, usage patterns, safety requirements, and operational costs such as staffing, heating, utilities, and maintenance.

Usage is monitored through attendance data and membership trends to help inform these decisions and determine what constitutes a sustainable level of service.

In response to this request, Council officers will prepare a report that explores the impacts of extending the operating season or introducing expanded hours, including early morning access, across relevant centres. As part of this process, officers will also review participation trends and consider what constitutes a successful and sustainable level of use for extended operations, consistent with the approach applied across all six of Council's aquatic and leisure centres.

The findings of the review, including operational and financial implications, will be presented to Council to support informed decision-making.

Notice of Motion 8.4 Place-Based Community Development Program for Fawkner

Council received three statements, one was taken on notice and two were presented to Council:

Statement 1

Zavi Fatima made the following statement

I'm speaking on behalf of deeply concerned community members about the council's decision to not further fund the place-based community outreach program after June 2026 and we want the council to reconsider the decision and keep the program going until the results are achieved.

Over the period of time, I've been engaged with council and Holestep health on various projects in a volunteering capacity. Now I truly understand that not all the projects can go on for long period of time due to various reasons its either budgeting constraints or poorly organised and managed project or lack of community interest or rarely when the actual motive or goal is achieved. However, I've never bothered to stand in front of respected members of the council to request them to reconsider council's decisions.

The rationale behind the request to overturn the decision is as below

1. As you all are well aware that our council is aiming towards achieving zero carbon in future. This can only be achieved if council engages community leaders to help educate community members, help council spread the word about ongoing subsidies. The community in the north is culturally and linguistically highly diverse and isolated in comparison to other areas of the council. To bridge this big gap between the council , its policies and the community members the sustainability community working group has played a vital role so far as this is the only group that's been working in this capacity so far. Now we as the community members wonder how is council going to achieve zero carbon / zero waste/ electrification of homes by producing clean energy if there will be no working group like this in the future to bridge the gap between the council and community members??
2. With the efforts of place-based community outreach program the members of the group have been able to spread the word in the community about solar subsidy, heat pump subsidy, home insulation subsidy, compost subsidy. The respected members of council can go on council's website and see the videos that were made by the help of this group's members to educate community members about the benefits of electrification, importance of less carbon footprint, zero waste and rebates on solar and batteries.
3. This project provides leadership opportunities as in last June we arranged to celebrate environment day which was a huge success and it is vital to celebrate such events as it helps multicultural communities to engage and take local climate action.

I was in the panel and later I was approached by Kirsty the director of zero waste Victoria.

I was invited to speak in a panel discussion at the Federation square.

To my disappointment (I could be wrong here and I wish I'm proven wrong. At least as long as I was present there) none from our very council was there to represent Merri-bek council on the state and national environment day celebration at the Fed square where thousands of people had attended the venue. I highly doubt council takes this very issue seriously in general. Which is evident from the decision to not further fund such valuable and long-lasting impactful program.

We want the council to overturn the previous decision and keep this project continue as there is still a lot to do in our communities to change the behaviour around sustainability.

7.41 pm *Cr Pulford returned to the meeting.*

Statement 2

Maryam Sarrafzadeh made the following statement:

I am speaking on behalf of a group of community members who are deeply concerned about Council's decision to end the Place-Based Community Outreach project in June this year.

We come before you tonight not simply to object, but to ask you to reconsider — and to share with you what this program has genuinely meant to the people it served.

The Place-Based Community Outreach project has been one of the most impactful community initiatives many of us have ever participated in. For residents from multicultural backgrounds in particular — people who have often felt disconnected from local government — this program was a first point of genuine connection. It spoke to us in ways we could understand, in places where we already felt at home, about things that directly affect our daily lives.

Through this project, community members learned about council-supported programs like solar panel subsidies and home insulation assistance — practical, tangible support that many families would never have discovered otherwise. It also introduced us to local organisations like Climate Action Merri-bek and Merri Food Hub, building lasting relationships between residents and the broader environmental community.

For many people in our group, this was the first time they felt that Council was truly working with them — not just for them in the abstract, but alongside them, in their neighbourhood, on issues they care about.

When this project ends in June, that connection ends too.

Councillors, I want to be direct: without this program, there is simply no equivalent engagement happening in suburbs like Fawkner and Glenroy on sustainability issues. These are communities that face real cost-of-living pressures, that stand to benefit enormously from environmental support programs — and that are currently underserved when it comes to climate and sustainability outreach. Ending this project does not just pause that work. It creates a gap that, based on our experience, nothing else is currently positioned to fill.

We understand that Council must make difficult budget decisions. We do not take that lightly. But we would ask you to weigh those decisions against the outcomes this program has delivered — outcomes that align directly with Council's own stated commitments to equity, inclusion, and environmental sustainability.

We are asking Council to reconsider this decision and to commit to the continuation of the Place-Based Community Outreach project beyond June. If funding is a constraint, we would welcome the opportunity to work with Council to explore alternatives — whether through grant funding, partnerships, or a revised model — because we believe this work is too important to lose.

The communities of Fawkner, Glenroy, and beyond are engaged, motivated, and ready to act on sustainability — but they need a bridge to do so. This project is that bridge.

Thank you for your time, and we hope you will hear our call to keep this vital program alive.

Notice of Motion 8.5 Climate Advocacy

Council received one statement, it was presented to Council.

Valerie Kay and Ruben made the following statement:

I am here as a member of Merri-Bek for Climate Compensation. We are part of a broader movement which is looking to make big polluters pay for the costs of climate change caused by products they profit from, such as fossil fuels and fossil fuel products. Several councils in Victoria and Australia have already acted on this.

At present costs are disproportionately borne by local communities and local councils. For example, here in Merri-Bek the council is doing a great deal to reduce emissions in community and council, but also has to bear the costs of building adaptation and resilience, and responding to extreme climate events.

Northern parts of Merri-Bek are particularly vulnerable to heat so Council is trying to build resilience in these areas. People whose first language is not English are at particular risk because accessing information and support is more challenging. Council has employed an outreach officer to reach these groups but it appears this position can no longer be funded – one example of an important resilience and adaptation role being lost due to lack of money.

Other groups at risk include people in poor quality housing or those who are homeless, and those with chronic conditions and mental health issues, particularly if heat exacerbates their conditions. Libraries and community centres can offer refuges, but they have to be staffed, including for extended hours if needed, and infrastructure such as air conditioning has to be in good order. Staff may even need training when centres are used by many people at risk, for example on how to recognise signs of impending heat stroke and when to call an ambulance. All this costs money.

We have young people with us today. Young people will bear the brunt of increasing climate change, but there are already particular issues for them. How can we ensure that children have safe outdoor play in periods of extended heat? This is surely a basic right. Improving and extending green space, parks and shaded playgrounds, providing shaded play areas and possibly using misters at community centres, are some things that can be done by councils – but again it all costs money.

Young people often have a strong and clear sense of fairness. They can see it is not right that big companies profit from products causing climate change while local communities and local councils bear the costs. We look forward to the further action and reports from this motion.

7.49 pm *Cr Yildiz left the meeting.*

NON-AGENDA ITEMS - QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Council received a further question that was taken on notice relating to:

- Waste Collection and Industrial Action

Public Question Time concluded at 7.53 pm.

ALTER THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

With the agreement of Council, the order of business was altered so that Notice of Motion Report 8.5 was brought forward for consideration as the first item.

NOTICE OF MOTION

8.5 CLIMATE ADVOCACY

Motion

That Council:

1. Notes:
 - a) That people all around Australia, including Merri-bek, are experiencing increasing impacts of climate change, including heatwaves and extreme storms, placing pressure on local infrastructure, services and community wellbeing.
 - b) The financial and social impacts of these climate events on households, businesses, and community organisations, already experiencing a cost-of-living crisis
 - c) The rising costs to Council budgets as a result of climate change, including costs associated with disaster response, infrastructure repair and resilience upgrades;
 - d) The existing constraints on local government budgets and shortfalls in existing government grants, meaning councils are ill-equipped to support residents and businesses without significantly compromising budget and resources.
2. Writes to the Federal Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Minister for Local government, and Treasurer, and the Victorian Local Government Minister and Treasurer, advocating for more action and resources to help communities, households, and local governments tackle the intense challenges of climate change and a just transition in the community.
3. Receives a report scoping a project to develop options to ensure adequate funding to manage the increasing costs of extreme weather events and other climate impacts on our communities, including appropriate means of liaising with and advocating to other tiers of government around funding options.

Resolution

Cr Svensson moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded -

That Council:

1. Notes:
 - a) **That people all around Australia, including Merri-bek, are experiencing increasing impacts of climate change, including heatwaves and extreme storms, placing pressure on local infrastructure, services and community wellbeing.**
 - b) **The financial and social impacts of these climate events on households, businesses, and community organisations, already experiencing a cost-of-living crisis**
 - c) **The rising costs to Council budgets as a result of climate change, including costs associated with disaster response, infrastructure repair and resilience upgrades;**

- d) **The existing constraints on local government budgets and shortfalls in existing government grants, meaning councils are ill-equipped to support residents and businesses without significantly compromising budget and resources.**
2. **Writes to the Federal Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Minister for Local government, and Treasurer, and the Victorian Local Government Minister and Treasurer, advocating for more action and resources to help communities, households, and local governments tackle the intense challenges of climate change and a just transition in the community.**
3. **Receives a report scoping a project to develop options to ensure adequate funding to manage the increasing costs of extreme weather events and other climate impacts on our communities, including appropriate means of liaising with and advocating to other tiers of government around funding options.**

7.57 pm Cr Yildiz returned to the meeting during the debate.

Carried unanimously

COUNCIL REPORTS

7.1 PROPOSED AMENDMENT C239MBEK – BRUNSWICK AND COBURG ACTIVITY CENTRES HERITAGE PROJECT: DECISION GATEWAY 1

Executive summary

The Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres contain a mix of commercial shopfronts, civic and community buildings, former industrial buildings, and residential development ranging from the nineteenth century to the present day. As key Activity Centres, both centres have seen (and will continue to see), significant change and development.

Following two Council resolutions, Council engaged independent consultants, GML Heritage, in 2024 to provide technical heritage expertise for the project, as a single study covering the scope of both resolutions at the same time. The work was delivered in two stages:

- **Stage 1:** Preliminary heritage assessment of *all* properties within the Brunswick and Coburg activity centre boundaries. Stage 1 is not addressed in this report.
- **Stage 2:** Detailed heritage investigation and recommendations for places identified in Stage 1.

Council received GML Heritage's final report, *Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centre Heritage Study – Stage 2 Final Report* (Stage 2 Report), in June 2025. The Stage 2 Report is provided at Attachment 1. On significant heritage studies Council often undertakes an independent peer review to ensure a thorough process. In this case an independent peer review was completed in October 2025 by Lovell Chen Heritage Consultants (see Attachment 2).

Based on this work, officers recommend that Council adopt the Stage 2 Report as the strategic basis for Amendment C239mbek to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme and seek authorisation from the Minister for Planning to prepare and exhibit the Amendment.

The proposed Amendment will ensure the Heritage Overlay is current and accurate, including the identification of places of heritage significance in areas undergoing change. Specifically, the Amendment would:

- Apply the Heritage Overlay to six individually significant places.
- Apply the Heritage Overlay to one new heritage precinct.

- Amend four existing Heritage Overlay precincts.
- Correct mapping errors affecting HO170 and HO600.

If Council endorses the Stage 2 report to proceed to the next stages, it will be exhibited for community feedback. Community feedback will then be considered before a final amendment is presented to Council.

The Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres Heritage Project: Summary of findings and officer recommendations report is at Attachment 3.

Officer recommendation

That Council:

1. Adopts the *Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centre Heritage Study: Stage 2 Final Report* (GML Heritage, 2025) at Attachment 1 as the general basis for Amendment C239mbek to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme (Amendment).
2. Notes the *Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres Heritage Study Peer Review* (Lovell Chen, 2025) at Attachment 2 and the *Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centre Heritage Project: Summary of findings and officer recommendations* report at Attachment 3.
3. As the planning authority, applies to the Minister for Planning (Minister) under section 8A of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (Vic) (Act), for authorisation to prepare the Amendment.
4. If authorisation is received:
 - a) Authorises the Director Place and Environment to make changes to the draft Amendment documentation at Attachment 5 as required prior to exhibition of the Amendment to correct any administrative errors and to meet any conditions the Minister imposes through authorisation.
 - b) Endorses, for the purpose of exhibition, the draft Amendment documentation at Attachment 5, subject to any changes required under (4)(a) above.
 - c) Exhibits the Amendment in accordance with sections 17, 18 and 19 of the Act.

Resolution

Cr Theodosis moved, Cr Yildiz seconded -

That Council:

1. **Adopts the Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centre Heritage Study: Stage 2 Final Report (GML Heritage, 2025) at Attachment 1 as the general basis for Amendment C239mbek to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme (Amendment).**
2. **Notes the Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres Heritage Study Peer Review (Lovell Chen, 2025) at Attachment 2 and the Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centre Heritage Project: Summary of findings and officer recommendations report at Attachment 3.**
3. **As the planning authority, applies to the Minister for Planning (Minister) under section 8A of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 (Vic) (Act), for authorisation to prepare the Amendment.**
4. **If authorisation is received:**
 - a) **Authorises the Director Place and Environment to make changes to the draft Amendment documentation at Attachment 5 as required prior to exhibition of the Amendment to correct any administrative errors and to meet any conditions the Minister imposes through authorisation.**

- b) **Endorses, for the purpose of exhibition, the draft Amendment documentation at Attachment 5, subject to any changes required under (4)(a) above.**
- c) **Exhibits the Amendment in accordance with sections 17, 18 and 19 of the Act.**

Carried

Cr Bolton abstained

7.2 COMMUNITY GRANT PROGRAM ANNUAL ROUND RECOMMENDATIONS 2026

Executive Summary

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

This round of applications opened for a period of over 9 weeks from 1 January for groups to apply for funding to support the delivery of projects between 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027 and support of new organisational between 1 July 2026 – 30 June 2029. Applications for this round support one-off project implementation, the development and delivery of facility improvements, and new organisations that benefit and engages the Merri-bek community through community led initiatives.

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

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

For the 2026 annual program:

- Twenty-six (26) applications, to the value of \$170,786 were received under the Community Strengthening Grant category. Seventeen submissions were eligible for assessment; the community assessment panel is recommending to fund thirteen (13) projects to the value of \$84,948.
- Three (3) applications to the value of \$26,000 per year were received under the Organisational Support Grant category. Two (2) applications were eligible for assessment; the community assessment panel is recommending to fund both new organisations to the value of \$18,000 per year totalling in \$48,000 over 3 years.
- Twenty-five (25) applications requesting \$547,204 were received for Facility Improvement Grant funding program. Twenty-one (21) submissions were eligible for assessment; the community assessment panel is recommending to fund fifteen (15) projects to the value of \$317,074.50.

Following Council endorsement, all successful applicants will be notified of the outcome of their applications, and the necessary funding arrangements will be implemented.

Unsuccessful, withdrawn, and incomplete applicants will be provided with feedback and relevant advice to help strengthen future applications.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Allocates Community Strengthening Grants to the value of \$84,948 for projects to be delivered in FY 2026/27
 - a) Australian Greek Welfare Society Ltd (trading as PRONIA) - \$5,700
 - b) Blind Sports Victoria Inc - \$7,000
 - c) Colour Them Safe - \$7,000
 - d) Friends of Merri Creek - \$6,248.00
 - e) Jesuit Social Services - \$7,000
 - f) Merri Community Health Services TA Holstep Health - \$7,000
 - g) Merri Maker Mums (auspice by Fawkner Neighbourhood House) - \$7,000
 - h) Off The List Records Inc - \$7,000
 - i) Open Table Inc - \$7,000
 - j) Pink Ember Studio Co-operative Ltd - \$5,000
 - k) Schoolhouse Studios Inc - \$2,500
 - l) The Onemda Association Inc - \$7,000
 - m) Uniting Vic Tas - \$4,000
 - n) Women`s Housing LTD - \$5,500
2. Allocates Organisational Establishment Grants to the value of \$16,000 per year for 3 years (\$48,000 over 3 years): 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29.
 - a) KindSugi Upcycling Inc - \$10,000 per year for 3 years (\$30,000 over 3 years)
 - b) Merri-bek Robotics Club Inc - \$6,000 per year for 3 years (\$18,000 over 3 years)
3. Allocates Facility Improvement Grants to the value of \$326,477.00 for projects to be delivered in 2026/27; two types recommended under this category:

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

 - a) Fawkner Neighbourhood House Inc - \$9,696
 - b) Merri-bek Community Gardening Inc - \$9,975
 - c) Mulberry Community Kitchen Garden Glenroy Inc - \$10,000
 - d) North Coburg Rebels Baseball Club Inc - \$10,000
 - e) Shirley Robertson Children's Centre - \$10,000
 - f) St Matthews Anglican Church Glenroy Hadfield with St Linus Merlynston - \$7,854

Larger Facility Improvement Grants up to \$40,000 per project,

 - a) Brunswick Juventus Football Club Inc - \$40,000
 - b) Carinya Society - \$40,000
 - c) Coburg Cricket Club Inc - \$24,945
 - d) Dawson Street Child Care Co-operative Ltd - \$22,495.50
 - e) Hadfield Tennis Club Inc - \$15,084
 - f) Moomba Park Tennis Club Inc - \$30,000

- g) Next Wave Festival Inc - \$16,427.25
- h) The Bicycle Recycle Shed Inc - \$40,000
- i) West Brunswick Tennis Club Inc - \$40,000

Resolution

Cr Svensson moved, Cr Pulford seconded -

That Council:

- 1. Allocates Community Strengthening Grants to the value of \$84,948 for projects to be delivered in FY 2026/27**
 - a) Australian Greek Welfare Society Ltd (trading as PRONIA) - \$5,700
 - b) Blind Sports Victoria Inc - \$7,000
 - c) Colour Them Safe - \$7,000
 - d) Friends of Merri Creek - \$6,248.00
 - e) Jesuit Social Services - \$7,000
 - f) Merri Community Health Services TA Holstep Health - \$7,000
 - g) Merri Maker Mums (auspice by Fawkner Neighbourhood House) - \$7,000
 - h) Off The List Records Inc - \$7,000
 - i) Open Table Inc - \$7,000
 - j) Pink Ember Studio Co-operative Ltd - \$5,000
 - k) Schoolhouse Studios Inc - \$2,500
 - l) The Onemda Association Inc - \$7,000
 - m) Uniting Vic Tas - \$4,000
 - n) Women`s Housing LTD - \$5,500
- 2. Allocates Organisational Establishment Grants to the value of \$16,000 per year for 3 years (\$48,000 over 3 years): 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29.**
 - a) KindSugi Upcycling Inc - \$10,000 per year for 3 years (\$30,000 over 3 years)
 - b) Merri-bek Robotics Club Inc - \$6,000 per year for 3 years (\$18,000 over 3 years)
- 3. Allocates Facility Improvement Grants to the value of \$326,477.00 for projects to be delivered in 2026/27; two types recommended under this category:**

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

 - a) Fawkner Neighbourhood House Inc - \$9,696
 - b) Merri-bek Community Gardening Inc - \$9,975
 - c) Mulberry Community Kitchen Garden Glenroy Inc - \$10,000
 - d) North Coburg Rebels Baseball Club Inc - \$10,000
 - e) Shirley Robertson Children's Centre - \$10,000
 - f) St Matthews Anglican Church Glenroy Hadfield with St Linus Merlynston - \$7,854

Larger Facility Improvement Grants up to \$40,000 per project,

 - a) Brunswick Juventus Football Club Inc - \$40,000

- b) Carinya Society - \$40,000
- c) Coburg Cricket Club Inc - \$24,945
- d) Dawson Street Child Care Co-operative Ltd - \$22,495.50
- e) Hadfield Tennis Club Inc - \$15,084
- f) Moomba Park Tennis Club Inc - \$30,000
- g) Next Wave Festival Inc - \$16,427.25
- h) The Bicycle Recycle Shed Inc - \$40,000
- i) West Brunswick Tennis Club Inc - \$40,000

Carried unanimously

7.3 FESTIVALS PROGRAM REFRESH

Executive Summary

Council produces a large and successful festival program which requires a refresh to ensure that festivals and cultural programs are responsive to community needs and available more equitably across the municipality, while addressing challenges of increasing extreme weather conditions and condensed delivery timeframes in a financially responsible way.

The refreshed Council program will change the scheduling of two major events, Sydney Road Street Party and Coburg Night Market to biennial, consolidating these resources to make a new festival in the north of the municipality. This new festival will run across multiple locations and days, will significantly increase Council's investment in the North, and will be informed by community consultation and participation. The new festival will include a broad range of artforms and events, and the existing Glenroy Festival and Fawkner Festa would be retained and incorporated into the new festival.

Carols by the Lake and Brunswick Music Festival will continue annually, ensuring ongoing programming in Coburg and Brunswick. In addition, establishment of a small community event funding pool will be investigated to support more community-led events to take place across the municipality.

The community will be informed of the changes to the festival program in mid-May. Following this, community engagement is planned for late May to consult community on what they would like to see, and how they would like to participate in the new Northern festival.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Note the challenges that the current festival program is experiencing and the community's desire for increased cultural activities and events in the north of the municipality;
2. Endorse the following actions in response to those challenges:
 - a) The shift of Sydney Road Street Party and Coburg Night Market from annual to biennial events, from 2026/2027.
 - b) The reallocation of the above-mentioned festival resources into a new, multi-day festival in the northern parts of the municipality, which would retain and incorporate Fawkner Festa and Glenroy Festival;

- c) The retention of Carols by the Lake and Brunswick Music Festival as annual events; and
 - d) An exploration into supporting community events through the development of a targeted funding pool.
3. Undertake community consultation to inform the development of a new multi-day festival in the northern parts of the municipality.

Motion

Cr Bolton moved, Cr Pulford seconded -

That Council:

1. Note the challenges that the current festival program is experiencing and the community's desire for increased cultural activities and events in the north of the municipality;
2. Endorse the following actions in response to those challenges:
 - a) The shift of Coburg Night Market from an annual to a biennial event, from 2026/27.
 - b) Sydney Road Street Party to remain an annual event with the next Sydney Road Street Party to occur in 2027.
 - c) The reallocation of the above-mentioned festival resources into a new, multi-day festival in the northern parts of the municipality, which would retain and incorporate Fawkner Festa and Glenroy Festival; In addition, an effort would be made to attract local community groups and local traders to participate in the Fawkner Festa and the Glenroy Festival.;
 - d) The retention of Carols by the Lake and Brunswick Music Festival as annual events; and
 - e) An exploration into supporting community events through the development of a targeted funding pool.
3. Undertake community consultation to inform the development of a new multi-day festival in the northern parts of the municipality.
4. Acknowledge the generous support of Yarra Trams in the annual closure of Sydney Road to trams for the Sydney Road Street Party, including waiving of fees.
5. Request that the Mayor write to the Minister for Public and Active Transport, The Hon. Gabrielle Williams MP, seeking ongoing support and waiving of fees for the Sydney Road Street Party road closure.

Motion

Cr Abboud moved, Cr Davidson seconded -

That Council defer the Festivals Program Refresh report until the February 2027 Council meeting for the purposes of seeking further information and consultation where required.

Lost

Resolution

Cr Theodosis moved, Cr Yildiz seconded -

That Council defer the Festivals Program Refresh report until the September 2026 Council meeting for the purposes of seeking further information and consultation where required.

Cr Pulford called for a division.

For	Against	Abstain
Cr Bolton		Cr Abboud
Cr Davidson		
Cr Yildiz		
Cr Pulford		
Cr Miles		
Cr Svensson		
Cr Iwasaki		
Cr Irvin		
Cr Theodosis		
Total For (9)	Total Against (0)	Total Against (1)
		Carried

8.34 pm Cr Bolton left the meeting.

7.4 POWER POLE-MOUNTED ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGERS

Executive summary

In June 2023, Council resolved to ‘continue to encourage Council’s electricity distributors (Jemena and CitiPower) to trial pole-mounted chargers in the municipality to give options for those without off-street parking’. Since that time work has been ongoing seeking to implement this resolution – and it has recently become possible to progress.

The increase in uptake of Electric Vehicles (EVs) demonstrates the growing pressure on the EV charging network and the need to continue to expand the portfolio of chargers with a broad range of fast and slow charges, in a range of locations and settings. This has been exacerbated by the recent fuel crisis and has also accelerated EV sales.

Council regularly receives requests from residents who wish to charge an electric vehicle (EV) at home, but do not have off-street parking. While Council provides 26 public chargers across the municipality, charging at home is more convenient. This is challenging in some areas, particularly for those without off-street parking. A larger portion of the housing stock does not have off-street parking in the southern suburbs in Merri-bek.

Power pole-mounted chargers are one approach in the broader portfolio of charging solutions responding to the increasing need for EV charging infrastructure. The pole mounted approach caters to those residents who do not have off-street parking.

Council is currently also trialling a ‘home-to-street’ charging, where trial participants receive approval to run a charging cable overhead on a retractable boom from their property to their EV parked on the road.

A community engagement sought feedback on a proposed trial of pole-mounted electric vehicle (EV) chargers across Merri-bek in February 2026. These chargers attach to existing power poles, are owned and operated by Charge Point Operators (CPOs) and provide a practical way to expand charging access, particularly for residents who do not have off-street parking. Some of this infrastructure rollout is funded as part of the Victorian Government’s Zero Emissions Vehicle Emerging Technologies (ZEVET) program.

Potential locations have been identified in collaboration with charging providers, electricity distribution businesses and Council teams, and residents will be invited to give feedback on individual sites through a [Conversations Merri-bek](#) page. Engagement outcomes have informed the recommendations to Council on where chargers should be installed.

This trial supports delivery of the Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025–2030 and Council’s goal to expand EV charging across the municipality.

Officers are now seeking to implement the suitable sites in two phases:

- Phase 1: the installation of 8 chargers and associated infrastructure that have been supported through the community engagement process.
- Phase 2: for the installation of a further 20 chargers over the coming years, where there is sufficient public support.

Community engagement was undertaken between 19 February – 3 April.

Pending approval, under delegation, negotiations will be undertaken with the companies who will own and operate the pole-mounted chargers to lease or license their operations, before the chargers are installed and become operational.

Officer recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes that work has been ongoing to explore opportunities to support people without off-street parking to access electric vehicle charging at home, which has included power pole-mounted electric vehicle chargers.
2. Acknowledges and thanks the community for engagement and feedback on preliminary sites for pole-mounted chargers identified.
3. Endorses the implementation of phase one of a trial street power pole-mounted electric vehicle charging proceeding at 8 selected sites.
4. Endorses phase two of a trial to proceed, including community engagement, for the installation of up to 20 further pole-mounted chargers over coming years, at sites which have been requested by community members, and reviewed and confirmed as appropriate by council officers and distribution network service providers.
5. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer in 2026 to negotiate a licence or lease with selected companies who will own and operate the pole-mounted chargers from phase one and phase two to proceed and install and operate the chargers.

Resolution

Cr Pulford moved, Cr Irvin seconded -

That Council:

1. **Notes that work has been ongoing to explore opportunities to support people without off-street parking to access electric vehicle charging at home, which has included power pole-mounted electric vehicle chargers.**
2. **Acknowledges and thanks the community for engagement and feedback on preliminary sites for pole-mounted chargers identified.**
3. **Endorses the implementation of phase one of a trial street power pole-mounted electric vehicle charging proceeding at 8 selected sites.**
4. **Endorses phase two of a trial to proceed, including community engagement, for the installation of up to 20 further pole-mounted chargers over coming years, at sites which have been requested by community members, and reviewed and confirmed as appropriate by council officers and distribution network service providers.**
5. **Authorises the Chief Executive Officer in 2026 to negotiate a licence or lease with selected companies who will own and operate the pole-mounted chargers from phase one and phase two to proceed and install and operate the chargers.**

Carried unanimously

7.5 EVALUATION TRIAL ROAD CLOSURE - BARROW STREET, COBURG

Executive summary

Council endorsed a 12-month trial closure of Barrow Street, following community engagement and a Hearing of Submissions. In January 2025 a trial road closure on Barrow Street commenced with the installation of four bollards and yellow line marking on the southern part of the Barrow Street/Harding Street intersection (image in Figure 1).

Traffic counts from before (March 2024) and after (March 2026) the trial road closure show a significant reduction in traffic on Barrow Street, and an increase on surrounding streets.

While daily vehicle volumes on all streets in the trial area remain well within the capacity of a local street (3,000 vehicles on average per day), Coburg Street has had a significant increase (from 1,168 to 1,790 vehicles on an average weekday). Over the past year, residents have raised concerns about vehicle volumes, speeds and noise on Coburg Street. Speed cushions were installed in mid-2025 to help mitigate this issue.

A smaller increase in traffic occurred on Patterson Street from 489 to 766 vehicles (on an average weekday). Some of this relates to St. Bernard's Primary School pick-up and drop-off traffic which has been diverted from Barrow Street. School staff have raised bus parking and traffic during peak school times as a concern. Council officers can further work with the school to address this issue.

During the trial, vehicle speeds have generally decreased across the area, making it safer for all road users. The only exception is the section of Barrow Street between Harding Street and Bell Street where speed increased from 41 km/h to 50 km/h, significantly exceeding the posted speed limit of 40 km/h. While it is likely this increase is primarily attributable to recent renewal of the road surface, the elevated speeds present a safety concern that warrants action.

The trial has cost \$19,680 so far including traffic counts, traffic management, infrastructure and construction costs. No further costs are expected at this stage.

Council officers recommend extending the road closure trial for 12 months. This would allow for further community engagement and to consider treatments for the Coburg Street/Harding Street and Patterson Street/Harding Street intersections that could reduce vehicle volumes on both streets.

Officer recommendation

That Council:

1. Continues the Barrow Street road closure trial for a further 12 months to allow further development and community engagement on the Harding Street (Streets for People) concept design to address the impacts of the road closure trial on surrounding streets.
2. Implements safety modifications to the Coburg Street/Sheffield Street (Coburg) intersection.

Resolution

Cr Irvin moved, Cr Abboud seconded -

That Council:

1. **Continues the Barrow Street road closure trial for a further 12 months to allow further development and community engagement on the Harding Street (Streets for People) concept design to address the impacts of the road closure trial on surrounding streets.**

- 2. Implements safety modifications to the Coburg Street/Sheffield Street (Coburg) intersection. In addition, ensures that traffic counting is undertaken at the narrower southern end of Coburg Street in addition to other parts of Coburg St, and assess if any traffic calming measures are needed at the southern end.**

8.40 pm *Cr Bolton returned to the meeting during the debate.*
8.41 pm *Cr Pulford left the meeting during the debate.*
8.43 pm *Cr Pulford returned to the meeting during the debate.*
8.43 pm *Cr Yildiz left the meeting during the debate.*
8.45 pm *Cr Yildiz returned to the meeting during the debate.*

Carried

7.6 PROPOSED SALE OF LAND - REAR OF 436-442 SYDNEY ROAD, COBURG - FINAL DECISION

Executive Summary

At its meeting on 11 March 2026, Council declared the property at the rear of 436-442 Sydney Rd, Coburg, as surplus to its needs and, in accordance with Section 114 of the Local Government Act, authorised a public notice be given of its intention to sell the site and invite feedback from the community.

Consultation was undertaken in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy 2024 from 23 March 2026 until 21 April 2026.

Nine respondents provided written feedback during the consultation period, anonymised copies of which are attached at Attachment 1.

Feedback varied, with the majority supporting the sale and some objecting to the sale of Council assets.

Based on the feedback received, officers are recommending that Council proceed with the sale, noting that the circumstances of this property mean limited opportunity to sell and no alternative uses are available which would benefit Council and/or the community.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the feedback received in relation to the proposed sale of Council land at the rear of 436-442 Sydney Rd, Coburg.
2. Endorses the proposed sale of the land by private treaty to the owner of the neighbouring properties at 436-442 Sydney Rd, Coburg.
3. Writes to all those who provided feedback thanking them for their feedback and informing them of Council's decision.
4. Authorises the CEO or their delegate to do all things necessary to effect the sale.

Resolution

Cr Svensson moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded -

That Council:

- 1. Notes the feedback received in relation to the proposed sale of Council land at the rear of 436-442 Sydney Rd, Coburg.**
- 2. Endorses the proposed sale of the land by private treaty to the owner of the neighbouring properties at 436-442 Sydney Rd, Coburg.**

3. **Writes to all those who provided feedback thanking them for their feedback and informing them of Council's decision.**
4. **Authorises the CEO or their delegate to do all things necessary to effect the sale.**

Carried unanimously

7.7 MERRI-BEK COMMUNITY AWARDS

Executive Summary

The Merri-bek Community Awards are an annual awards program designed to recognise and celebrate individuals, groups and organisations who have made significant contributions to the Merri-bek community over the previous 12 months. Over the years the award categories have formed with no synergy to the strategic direction of Council. It is recommended that the award categories are streamlined and aligned to the Council Plan 2025-2029 key themes:

- Care for nature and climate resilience
- Healthy and inclusive communities
- Beautiful and liveable city
- Thriving economy and culture
- Engaging and responsible Council

Officer Recommendation

That Council

1. Endorses the revised Merri-bek Community Award categories for 2026 as follows:
 - a) Arts and Creative Expression
 - b) Community Initiative of the Year
 - c) Diversity and Inclusion
 - d) Environmental Sustainability (in recognition of John Englart)
 - e) First Peoples Cultural Leadership (in recognition of Lisa Bellear)
 - f) Honouring Women
 - g) Merri-bek Community Police Leadership Award
 - h) Sport and Recreation Achievement
 - i) Volunteer of the Year
 - j) Youth Impact

Resolution

Cr Davidson moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded -

That Council:

1. **Endorses the revised Merri-bek Community Award categories for 2026 as follows:**
 - a) **Arts and Creative Expression**
 - b) **Community Initiative of the Year**
 - c) **Diversity and Inclusion**

- d) **Environmental Sustainability (in recognition of John Englart)**
 - e) **First Peoples Cultural Leadership (in recognition of Lisa Bellear)**
 - f) **Honouring Women**
 - g) **Merri-bek Community Police Leadership Award**
 - h) **Sport and Recreation Achievement**
 - i) **Volunteer of the Year**
 - j) **Youth Impact**
2. **Appoints Cr Irvin and Cr Davidson as additional Councillors to the Merri-bek Community Recognition Committee (Merri-bek Awards) for the 2025/26 Mayoral year.**

Carried unanimously

7.8 RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION - MAKING SYDNEY ROAD SAFER, GREENER, AND MORE ACCESSIBLE

Executive summary

This report responds to Council's 11 February 2026 Council Resolution requesting advice on the scope it would take to refresh Council's advocacy to make Sydney Road safer, greener and more accessible. It comes in the context of many years of advocacy, community campaigning and technical investigations on Sydney Road, with limited on-ground change delivered to date.

Officers have assessed three possible responses and recommend a focused corridor upgrade study as the most appropriate option for addressing the points in the Council Resolution. This approach focuses on identifying barriers and opportunities and preparing for enabling changes required to support upgrades such as accessible tram stops, greening and safety treatments, as well as the advocacy actions needed to progress delivery with State stakeholders.

The preferred option is narrower in scope than a full corridor visioning study. Officers consider it the most practical and cost-effective response resulting in meaningful research and options to resolve barriers and begin to progress early upgrades to Sydney Road. It is estimated to cost roughly \$200,000 over 12 months, which would need to be referred to the 2026-2027 budget for consideration alongside other priorities. The full upgrade of Sydney Road is a long term program, and further much more detailed work will be needed before full change can be realised. The proposed option is an appropriate next step to firm up the form and location of potential accessible tram stops and potentially facilitate early initiatives.

Officer recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the officer assessment of three study options in response to the Notice of Motion regarding options to advocate to make Sydney Road safer, greener and more accessible.
2. Endorses Option 3 – focused corridor upgrade study as Council's preferred response to the Notice of Motion, comprising a 12-month program focused on:
 - a) Presenting all available data gathered through recent studies and datasets relevant to Sydney Road, such as parking sensor and usage data, traffic data from internal and state government data sets, economic data such as business surveys, vacancy surveys and spendmap data.

- b) Assessing barriers to previous revitalisation and upgrade efforts.
 - c) Assessing enabling changes to incremental upgrades such as clearway, traffic, parking, outdoor dining, loading zones and other kerbside implications from infrastructure improvements.
 - d) Considering preferred tram stop designs in different movement and place contexts.
 - e) Identifying priority tram stop locations on Sydney Road through targeted engagement.
 - f) Engaging directly with the Department of Transport and Planning and Yarra Trams.
3. Notes that funding in the order of \$200,000 would be required to resource Option 3.
 4. Refers the funding required for Option 3 to the 2026-27 budget process for consideration.
 5. Notes that the higher-cost alternative study options assessed by officers are not recommended but may be more suitable as projects delivered at a later stage in partnership with the state government should the project progress to detailed design and development stages. These options include a full new study (which could cost in the range of \$1.5-2.0 million), or a synthesis of previous studies with targeted new work (which could cost in the range of \$0.5-1.0 million).

Resolution

Cr Pulford moved, Cr Irvin seconded -

That Council:

1. **Notes the officer assessment of three study options in response to the Notice of Motion regarding options to advocate to make Sydney Road safer, greener and more accessible.**
2. **Endorses Option 3 – focused corridor upgrade study as Council’s preferred response to the Notice of Motion, comprising a 12-month program focused on:**
 - a) **Presenting all available data gathered through recent studies and datasets relevant to Sydney Road, such as parking sensor and usage data, traffic data from internal and state government data sets, economic data such as business surveys, vacancy surveys and spendmapp data.**
 - b) **Assessing barriers to previous revitalisation and upgrade efforts.**
 - c) **Assessing enabling changes to incremental upgrades such as clearway, traffic, parking, outdoor dining, loading zones and other kerbside implications from infrastructure improvements.**
 - d) **Considering preferred tram stop designs in different movement and place contexts.**
 - e) **Identifying priority tram stop locations on Sydney Road through targeted engagement.**
 - f) **Engaging directly with the Department of Transport and Planning and Yarra Trams.**
3. **Notes that funding in the order of \$200,000 would be required to resource Option 3.**
4. **Refers the funding required for Option 3 to the 2026-27 budget process for consideration.**

5. Notes that the higher-cost alternative study options assessed by officers are not recommended but may be more suitable as projects delivered at a later stage in partnership with the state government should the project progress to detailed design and development stages. These options include a full new study (which could cost in the range of \$1.5-2.0 million), or a synthesis of previous studies with targeted new work (which could cost in the range of \$0.5-1.0 million).
- 6 Welcomes the recent budget announcement from the Premier committing to planning for accessible tram stops on Sydney Road and seeks to work with state government throughout the planning process to help accelerate the delivery of this essential infrastructure.

Carried unanimously

7.9 DRAFT FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICY

Executive Summary

The Financial Management Policy (The Policy) provides a single, overarching framework for the responsible, transparent and accountable management of Council's financial resources. It consolidates key financial governance principles and controls previously contained across multiple policies into a consistent and streamlined approach.

The Policy gives effect to the principles of sound financial management under the *Local Government Act 2020* and supports compliance with Council's statutory obligations for financial planning, reporting, revenue, assets, investments and borrowings. It strengthens governance, internal controls, oversight and decision-making across all financial operations.

The Policy supports Council's long-term financial sustainability by embedding responsible investment, sustainable borrowing and integrated financial planning principles, and aligns financial decision-making with Council's strategic and budgetary frameworks.

Adoption of the Policy formalises existing practices and:

- Establishes a clear governance and control framework for the management of Council's finances, including revenue, expenditure, assets, liabilities, investments and borrowings.
- Gives effect to the principles of sound financial management required under section 101 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.
- Supports Council's long-term financial sustainability, transparency and accountability.
- Ensures compliance with legislative, regulatory and reporting obligations.
- Strengthens internal controls, oversight and consistency across all financial operations.
- Aligns financial decision-making with Council's strategic, budgetary and long-term financial planning frameworks.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Adopts the Finance Management Policy (provided as Attachment 1 to this report)
2. Subject to point (1) approval, revokes the following policies which are now incorporated into the Finance Management Policy:
 - a) Investment Policy

- b) Loan and Borrowing Policy
 - c) Financial Reserves and Capital Management Policy
3. Notes that a report on the Fossil Fuel Divestment Strategy that accounts for the Finance Management Policy will be brought to Council before the end of 2026.

Resolution

Cr Irvin moved, Cr Svensson seconded -

That Council:

- 1. Adopts the Finance Management Policy (provided as Attachment 1 to this report)**
- 2. Subject to point (1) approval, revokes the following policies which are now incorporated into the Finance Management Policy:**
 - a) Investment Policy**
 - b) Loan and Borrowing Policy**
 - c) Financial Reserves and Capital Management Policy**
- 3. Notes that a report on the Fossil Fuel Divestment Strategy that accounts for the Finance Management Policy will be brought to Council before the end of 2026.**

Carried unanimously

7.10 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

Executive Summary

This report presents the Financial Management Report for the financial year to date period ending 31 March 2026. A detailed financial review was undertaken across the organisation at the end of February 2026. The results of this review are included in this report as the Annual Forecast.

For the nine months ended 31 March 2026 an operating surplus of \$74.9 million was achieved, which is \$0.7 million (1%) lower than the year-to-date (YTD) budget of \$75.6 million. 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 \$37.3 million on capital expenditure, which is tracking below the YTD budget of \$58.7 million. After the detailed review of the program undertaken at the end of February, a total program of \$68.9 million is forecast, with \$31.5 million remaining.

Officer Recommendation

That Council notes the Financial Management Report for the period ending 31 March 2026 included as Attachment 1 to this report.

Resolution

Cr Svensson moved, Cr Irvin seconded -

That Council notes the Financial Management Report for the period ending 31 March 2026 included as Attachment 1 to this report.

9.05 pm Cr Miles left the meeting during the debate.

Carried unanimously

7.11 YEAR 1 COUNCIL ACTION PLAN 2025-26 - THIRD QUARTER PERFORMANCE REPORT

Executive Summary

The Third Quarter Performance Report (Attachment 1) provides an overview of Council's performance in delivering the Council Plan 2025–2029, with a specific focus on implementation of the Year 1 Council Action Plan 2025–26.

The report highlights key achievements and progress across initiatives supporting Council's strategic objectives, and provides a status update on the 79 actions, as follows:

- 6% (5 actions) achieved
- 90% (71 actions) in progress and on track
- 1% (1 action) off track
- 3% (2 actions) on hold or proposed for withdrawal

Overall, 96% of actions are either achieved or on track, reflecting strong progress in delivering the action plan.

One action is currently progressing behind target: Action 68 – *Redesign grants program to support more opportunities to create, learn and connect*. A further action is proposed to be withdrawn from ongoing reporting and replaced in the Year 2 Council Action Plan 2026–27 with two new actions. Further detail is outlined in the Issues section of this report.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Receives and notes the Year 1 Council Action Plan 2025-26 – Third Quarter Performance Report (provided as Attachment 1).
2. Notes that Action 68 - Redesign grants program to support more opportunities to create, learn and connect is currently behind schedule.
3. Endorses withdrawal of Action 12, (relating to expanding Council's practice to ensure Council buildings and infrastructure are environmentally sustainable) noting that this action is proposed to be replaced by two specific actions in the proposed Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2026-2027 to improve clarity and strengthen intended outcomes.

Resolution

Cr Irvin moved, Cr Theodosius seconded -

That Council:

1. **Receives and notes the Year 1 Council Action Plan 2025-26 – Third Quarter Performance Report (provided as Attachment 1).**

2. **Notes that Action 68 - Redesign grants program to support more opportunities to create, learn and connect is currently behind schedule.**
3. **Endorses withdrawal of Action 12, (relating to expanding Council's practice to ensure Council buildings and infrastructure are environmentally sustainable) noting that this action is proposed to be replaced by two specific actions in the proposed Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2026-2027 to improve clarity and strengthen intended outcomes.**

Carried

7.12 FRIENDS OF AILEU ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Executive Summary

This report presents the Friends of Aileu Annual Report 2025 (Attachment 1), documenting the activities undertaken for, and supported by, the East Timor Partnership Project (Merri-bek and Hume) for the calendar year 2025, for Council to note.

Officer Recommendation

That Council notes the Friends of Aileu Annual Report 2025.

Resolution

Cr Pulford moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded -

That Council notes the Friends of Aileu Annual Report 2025.

9.07 pm Cr Miles returned to the meeting during the debate.

Carried unanimously

7.13 OPEN COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS REPORT

Executive Summary

The Open Council Resolutions Report provided as Attachment 1, has been prepared to inform Councillors and the community of the actions taken to date to implement Council resolutions that are currently open and not yet finalised.

There are currently 36 open Council resolutions, with 2 of these relating to Petitions, 19 relating to Council officer reports and 15 relating to Notices of Motion.

Officer Recommendation

That Council receives and notes the Open Council Resolutions Report provided as Attachment 1 to this report.

Resolution

Cr Irvin moved, Cr Svensson seconded -

That Council receives and notes the Open Council Resolutions Report provided as Attachment 1 to this report.

Carried unanimously

7.14 GOVERNANCE REPORT - MAY 2026 - CYCLICAL 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 11 March and 8 April 2026 Council meetings, with a recommendation that Council notes the responses.

This report recommends revoking the Sister and Friendship City Guidelines (2016) as a Council-adopted document and transitioning revised guidelines as an internal operational document approved by the Chief Executive Officer. This recommendation responds to statutory obligations introduced since the original adoption and aims to strengthen compliance, governance and operational efficiency, while maintaining Council's decision-making authority proposals to establish or revoke international partnerships.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the summary of minutes from the Advisory Committees and Groups to Council, at Attachment 1 to this report, as follows:
 - a) First Peoples Advisory Committee – 26 March 2026
 - b) Friends of Aileu Community Committee – 14 April 2026
2. Notes the Records of Meetings, at Attachment 2 to this report.
3. Notes responses to questions taken on notice during Public Question Time at the 11 March and 8 April 2026 Council meetings, provided as Attachment 3 to this report.
4. Revokes the Sister/Friendship City Guidelines (as adopted in 2016) and notes the transition of revised guidelines to be established as an internal operational guideline to be adopted by the Chief Executive Officer.

Resolution

Cr Svensson moved, Cr Irvin seconded -

That Council:

1. **Notes the summary of minutes from the Advisory Committees and Groups to Council, at Attachment 1 to this report, as follows:**
 - a) **First Peoples Advisory Committee – 26 March 2026**
 - b) **Friends of Aileu Community Committee – 14 April 2026**
2. **Notes the Records of Meetings, at Attachment 2 to this report, with an amendment to the Planning Briefing of 20 April 2026 record to be amended to note that Cr Yildiz and Cr Bolton were apologies for this meeting.**
3. **Notes responses to questions taken on notice during Public Question Time at the 11 March and 8 April 2026 Council meetings, provided as Attachment 3 to this report.**

4. **Revokes the Sister/Friendship City Guidelines (as adopted in 2016) and notes the transition of revised guidelines to be established as an internal operational guideline to be adopted by the Chief Executive Officer.**

Carried unanimously

7.15 CONTRACT VARIATION: PA-2026-1 - 2707/0846 SECURITY AND CASH COLLECTION SERVICES

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval to opt into additional service categories under Contract No 2707/0846 for Security and Cash Collection Services and to vary the associated contract expenditure.

Under this contract arrangement, Council currently utilises the security guard service category and now proposes to expand its scope to include security monitoring services; access control systems supply and installation; CCTV supply and installation; security system maintenance; and security consultancy services. These services were previously delivered under separate contract *NR-0969-2018 - Provision of Security Services* that has since expired.

This report does not seek further budget, rather transfer existing budget allocation in opting into these services under the Procurement Australia contract.

Council's Procurement Policy permits participation in collaborative procurement arrangements, including those established by Procurement Australia. Opting into this additional service categories will enable Council to access a broader range of services while ensuring value for money through competitive quoting from pre-qualified suppliers.

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

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Opts into additional service categories under existing **Procurement Australia Contract 2707/0846 Security and Cash Collection Services** for the purposes of security monitoring services; access control systems supply and installation; CCTV supply and installation; security system maintenance and security consultancy services.
2. Approves a variation to the Procurement Australia Contract 2707/0846 Security and Cash Collection Services to increase the maximum spend to \$4,610,245 (excluding GST).
3. Notes that all terms and conditions (excluding maximum spend) as previously resolved remain unchanged, including:
 - i) contract term ending 31 July 2027, with two (2) additional extension options of one (1) year each at discretion of Council; and
 - ii) authorising the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to formalise the arrangement; and exercising contract extension options subject to contractor performance and vary the contract (as required) in accordance with the terms of the contract.

Resolution

Cr Irvin moved, Cr Svensson seconded -

That Council:

- 1. Opts into additional service categories under existing Procurement Australia Contract 2707/0846 Security and Cash Collection Services for the purposes of security monitoring services; access control systems supply and installation; CCTV supply and installation; security system maintenance and security consultancy services.**
- 2. Approves a variation to the Procurement Australia Contract 2707/0846 Security and Cash Collection Services to increase the maximum spend to \$4,610,245 (excluding GST).**
- 3. Notes that all terms and conditions (excluding maximum spend) as previously resolved remain unchanged, including:**
 - i) contract term ending 31 July 2027, with two (2) additional extension options of one (1) year each at discretion of Council; and**
 - ii) authorising the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to formalise the arrangement; and exercising contract extension options subject to contractor performance and vary the contract (as required) in accordance with the terms of the contract.**

Carried unanimously

NOTICES OF MOTION

8.1 FOOTBRIDGE ACROSS MERRI-CREEK IN SOUTHERN FAWKNER

Motion

That Council receives a report this year on what it would cost to determine service need and, pending that, undertakes a feasibility study, for a footbridge across the Merri Creek between Fawkner and Reservoir, near Lorne Street, Fawkner with a view to consideration in the 2027-28 budget process. The scope would consider:

- 1. Exploring options for external funding; and**
- 2. Delivering an appropriate stakeholder consultation program which might include: City of Darebin; Merri Creek Management Committee; State Government; Victoria Walks; Bicycle Victoria; Walk on Merri-bek; Merri-bek Bicycle Users Group; Darebin Bicycle Users Group; Streets Alive Darebin.**

Resolution

Cr Bolton moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded -

That Council receives a report this year on what it would cost to determine service need and, pending that, undertakes a feasibility study, for a footbridge across the Merri Creek between Fawkner and Reservoir, near Lorne Street, Fawkner with a view to consideration in the 2027-28 budget process. The scope would consider:

- 1. Exploring options for external funding; and**
- 2. Delivering an appropriate stakeholder consultation program which might include: City of Darebin; Merri Creek Management Committee; State Government; Victoria Walks; Bicycle Victoria; Walk on Merri-bek; Merri-bek Bicycle Users Group; Darebin Bicycle Users Group; Streets Alive Darebin.**

Carried unanimously

8.2 MERRI-BEK CREATIVES WORKSHOP

Motion

That Council facilitates a networking event at Council designed to hear from, support and help creatives to connect with each other and their common practices in the arts community.

Resolution

Cr Abboud moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded -

That Council facilitates a networking event at Council designed to hear from, support and help creatives to connect with each other and their common practices in the arts community.

Carried unanimously

8.3 OPEN FAWKNER OUTDOOR POOL YEAR-ROUND

Motion

That Council receives a report which explores options for keeping the Fawkner Leisure Centre 50 metre outdoor pool open year-round, even if limited to early morning hours such as 6am–9am.

Resolution

Cr Bolton moved, Cr Davidson seconded -

That Council receives a report which explores options for keeping the Fawkner Leisure Centre 50 metre outdoor pool from 1 September 2026, including for early morning lap swimming, with a view to have the outdoor pool open all-year-round.

9.23 pm Cr Yildiz left the meeting during the debate.

Carried unanimously

8.4 PLACE-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR FAWKNER

Motion

That Council receives a report by August 2026 on options for an expanded Place-Based Community Development Program for Fawkner, including possible objectives, scope and cost implications.

Resolution

Cr Bolton moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded –

That Council:

- 1. Notes the success of the Place-based Community Outreach – Fawkner Pilot program which has an emphasis on helping communities, especially disadvantaged and multicultural communities, to become sustainable and climate resilient.**

2. **Receives a report by August 2026 on options for an expanded Place-Based Community Development Program for Fawkner, including possible objectives, scope and cost implications, with consideration to be given to including a sustainable communities aspect.**

9.28 pm Cr Yildiz returned to the meeting during the debate.

Carried unanimously

The order of business was altered to bring forward *Notice of Motion 8.5 Climate Advocacy*, which was considered as the first item.

Time Extension

Resolution

Cr Svensson moved, Cr Miles seconded -

That the Council meeting be extended by 30 minutes at 9.31 pm.

Carried

NOTICE OF RESCISSION

Nil.

FORESHADOWED ITEMS

Nil.

URGENT BUSINESS REPORTS

Nil.

CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

Resolution

Cr Iwasaki moved, Cr Davidson seconded –

In accordance with section 66(2) of the Local Government Act 2020, this Council meeting be closed to the public to consider this report:

- **12.1 Contract Matters 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.**

Carried

The Council meeting closed to the public at 9.34 pm.

OPENING THE MEETING TO THE PUBLIC

Resolution

Cr Davidson moved, Cr Pulford seconded –

The Council meeting be open to the public.

Carried

The Council meeting opened to the public at 9.37 pm.

The Council meeting closed at 9.37 pm.

Confirmed

Cr Nat Abboud
MAYOR