



Merri-bek
City Council

Minutes of the Council Meeting

Election of Mayor

Held in Bunjil (Council Chamber), Merri-bek Civic Centre,
90 Bell Street, Coburg
on Wednesday 19 November 2025

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The Mayor opened the meeting at 6.39 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	6.39 pm	7.07 pm
Cr Sue Bolton	6.39 pm	7.07 pm
Cr Helen Davidson	6.39 pm	7.07 pm
Cr Liz Irvin	6.39 pm	7.07 pm
Cr Jay Iwasaki	6.39 pm	7.07 pm
Cr Chris Miles	6.39 pm	7.07 pm
Cr Helen Politis	6.39 pm	7.07 pm
Cr Adam Pulford	6.39 pm	7.07 pm
Cr Ella Svensson	6.39 pm	7.07 pm
Cr Katherine Theodosis	6.39 pm	7.07 pm
Cr Oscar Yildiz JP	6.39 pm	7.07 pm

OFFICERS

Acting Chief Executive Officer – Eamonn Fennessy
 Acting Director Business Transformation – Anita Curnow
 Manager Governance and Strategy – Yvonne Callanan
 Unit Manager Governance and Risk – Sophie Barison
 Executive Officer Civic and CEO Office - Sarah Lionakis

1. Apologies

Nil.

2. Declaration of Conflicts of Interests

Nil.

3. Term of Mayor

To fulfil the statutory obligations of section 26(3) of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act), before the election of the Mayor, a Council must determine by resolution whether the Mayor is to be elected for a 1 year or a 2 year term.

Historically, Merri-bek has elected a Mayor for a 1 year term only. The recommendation is that Council continues this precedent and sets a 1 year term for the 2025/2026 Mayoral year. However, it is open to the Council to determine a two year term instead.

In accordance with Council's Governance Rules, the Mayoral term determined by Council will also apply to a Deputy Mayor, if an office of Deputy Mayor is established.

In accordance with section 26(4) the Act, the next election of the Mayor and any Deputy Mayor will be held as close as possible to the end of the 1 year term as possible.

Recommendation

That Council:

1. Elects a Mayor for a one year term.
2. Notes the term of any Deputy Mayor is identical to the term of the Mayor.

Resolution

Cr Pulford moved, Cr Irvin seconded –

That Council:

1. **Elects a Mayor for a one year term.**
2. **Notes the term of any Deputy Mayor is identical to the term of the Mayor.**

Carried unanimously

4. Presentation to Outgoing Mayor and Deputy Mayor

The Acting Chief Executive Officer, Eamonn Fennessy, thanked the outgoing Mayor, Cr Helen Davidson, and outgoing Deputy Mayor, Cr Helen Politis, and made presentations on behalf of Council.

5. Election of Mayor

The Acting Chief Executive Officer, Eamonn Fennessy, in accordance with section 25 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and Merri-bek's Governance Rules, invited nominations for the office of Mayor for the 2025-2026 Mayoral Year.

Cr Miles nominated Cr Politis, seconded by Cr Theodosius.

Cr Politis accepted the nomination.

Cr Irvin nominated Cr Abboud, seconded by Cr Iwasaki.

Cr Abboud accepted the nomination.

Cr Yildiz nominated Cr Davidson, seconded by Cr Bolton.

Cr Davidson accepted the nomination.

As there were three nominations for the office of Mayor, the Acting Chief Executive Officer put it to the vote.

With the required absolute majority of six votes, the Acting Chief Executive Officer declared Cr Abboud elected as Mayor of Merri-bek City Council for the 2025-2026 Mayoral year.

6. Newly Elected Mayor – Mayoral Chains and assuming of the Chair

The newly elected Mayor, Cr Abboud received the Mayoral Chains and assumed the Chair.

7. Ceremonial Mayoral Speech

In accordance with sub-rule 4.7(1) of the Governance Rules, upon being elected, the Mayor made a ceremonial speech, outlining the priorities of the year ahead based on the previously adopted Council Plan.

Mayor, Cr Abboud

Thank you to my fellow Councillors, Merri-bek community members, family and friends.

I would like to begin by acknowledging that we meet on the land of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people. This land was taken without treaty process, consent, or compensation, and sovereignty was never ceded. I also wish to acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the traditional custodians of these lands and

waterways. I pay my respects to Elders past, present, and emerging, and to all First Nations communities who significantly contribute to the life of this area.

I am deeply honoured to be elected as Mayor of Merri-bek. We are proudly diverse in so many ways, and it is that diversity—and the way we share and celebrate our difference is what makes our city truly remarkable. I am delighted to be elected to lead this Council over the next 12 months because I am really enjoying our group and the way that we work together.

I would like to thank our outgoing Mayor, Cr Helen Davidson for her work in leading this Council group over the past 12 months. I have had the pleasure of working with you in context for long enough to know that you have brought your absolute 'A' game to the role. In the last year you have bedded down a really productive working group and I am grateful for that. I am really glad I nominated you and you were elected 12 months ago. You have built relationships and represented our Council group in a way that I hope I can achieve. You have been kind and patient, I am glad that you had the opportunity to do this again. I know I will be calling you for advice, and I hope that I can rely on you to pick up the phone.

I also want to thank our outgoing Deputy Mayor, Cr Helen Politis, who took on the role of deputy in her first year as a Councillor and supported both the Mayor and the Council group well—especially in your efforts to represent our older migrant communities.

I would also like to acknowledge the conversations that we have about the mayoralty can be really stressful, and I remind all of us that by tomorrow or the next day or maybe next week, we will all be able to sink back into the work that we have been doing to represent the communities that we love and that we live with. At the end of this first year, I think we can be really proud of where we have got to and I credit much of this to you Cr Davidson, for leading the way that you have.

All told, we have almost 50 years experience of Councillors as a group. We are business people, lawyers, chefs, policy writers, teachers, painters, activists, family therapists, ecologists, parents, transport planners, psychologists, carers, and volunteers. We ride the paths, we drive on the roads, walk on the streets, use the gyms, shop in the local activity centres, drink coffee at the local cafes, visit galleries and libraries, see bands and performances, walk our dogs and even our cats, rent and own property, play sport and work here. Your streets are our streets too, we love what you love about this place and sometimes we are frustrated by what frustrates you as well. Local Government is known as closest to the people and many of you know us well, you know us to say 'hi' and raise issues that are important to you and your communities with us. We are all here because we want to be involved in nutting out the best ways to make it all work as we continue to grow and change. We are also here because we wanted to be, and because you have trusted us with the task at hand. All told we are neurodiverse, analytical, social, reflective, creative, attentive, collaborative, logical and committed but there are things that we don't know and things that we can't do without your involvement. I am grateful for your involvement and I hope that you will continue to engage with us the way that you do.

This year Council endorsed our new Council Plan which sets out priorities and directions for the four years ahead. The Council Plan and Council Vision were shaped in partnership with our community whose feedback and input have been integral to the development of this living document. The Community Vision states: Merri-bek leads, and leaves no-one behind. I can think of no better statement that outlines our ambitions and values as a Council and as a community.

The Council Plan along with the Community Vision provide a roadmap for us to ensure that we deliver what the community has told us are their priorities for the city.

Our 2025-29 budget, which was endorsed in June, sets out how Council will fund essential services, build infrastructure and deliver projects over the coming years that align with the Council Plan and the Council Vision. This includes, but is not limited to:

- \$60 million for the new Coburg library and piazza
- \$30.7 million upgrade works on multiple facilities over the next 5 years
- \$23.2 million for roads and carparks renewal and maintenance
- \$11.9 million on organised sports assets in 2025-26
- \$16.4 million for improving parks, open space and streetscapes, and
- \$9.1 million for delivering on footpaths, bike paths and transport infrastructure, in addition to the above investment.

Over the past 12 months as the first term as a newly elected Council, we have progressed and overseen the delivery of major projects as well as continuing the delivery of high-quality core services. We continue to deliver more than 150 services, including our much loved libraries, youth services and maternal and child health services, as well as in-home aged care services and outdoor help services for older people.

We commenced planning and design of the \$60 million Coburg Library and Piazza project and in September announced four outstanding teams of finalists. This month we announced Council's bold new vision to develop our landholdings in central Coburg, whilst also balancing the suburbs rich culture and history. It has been a long-standing ambition of Council, building on extensive consultation with the community over the past 15 years.

This major project is going to change the face of Coburg and bring numerous community benefits, and it is currently out for community consultation and I hope that you will engage with it, and I know that many of you already have.

In December last year we opened the \$36.8 million Fawner Leisure Centre redevelopment, delivering an accessible and environmentally friendly space for people of all ages to play and socialise.

In March this year we opened the doors to Brunswick's newest art and community precinct, Balam Balam Place, a \$30 million redevelopment that has welcoming and affordable spaces for community use, as well as the new Maternal and Child Health centre.

We also expanded our early years facilities, including the Derby Street Children's Centre and Oak Park Kindergarten, to meet the needs of our growing population.

We have continued to improve our parks and open spaces and streetscapes. As part of the Park Close to Home program, we opened two new parks in Brunswick, Yubup Park in Frith Street and Michelle Guglielmo Park in Sydney Road.

Designs for the York Street park in Pascoe Vale South with valuable input from the community, have begun and we purchased a site at 568 to 574 Sydney Road, that some of you have been engaging with this week, that will provide new open space and unlock the potential to create an active transport link between the Merri Creek and the Moonee Ponds Creek.

Investments in our public spaces continue through initiatives such as the Love Sydney Road project to improve the amenity of the Sydney Road retail precinct from Brunswick Road, Brunswick to Bell Street, Coburg. We have finalised the transformation of Wilson Ave., Brunswick with a new streetscape that connects from Jewell Station through to Sydney Road.

We continue to take local action on the climate crisis and this year our 4-bin service saved an extra 2151 tonnes of household waste from landfill, and we saw 20% of the food and garden organic waste bins be filled with food waste, up from 5% in 2021.

We also continue to deliver our Zero Carbon Action Plan 2020 – 25, supporting low income houses with solar and insulation grants, upgrading stormwater systems and planting over 2000 more trees.

Moving forward we have much exciting work to do. We will begin towards the \$60 million library and piazza in Central Coburg. I am looking forward to the announcement of the winning design for the library competition in coming weeks.

Action on climate change is still a key priority for Merri-bek. We will continue to deliver our Zero Carbon Merri-bek 2040 Framework, which sets the vision and pathway for zero carbon emissions across our community by 2040; and we will apply the actions outlined in our Climate Risk Strategy.

Our advocacy work continues for aged care services, transport and housing including:

- Advocating to the Federal Government to retain upfront Commonwealth block funding for the Commonwealth Home Support Program, so we can continue to deliver vital services to older people in our community.
- Working with several councils in Melbourne's north, through the Northern Council Alliance, to call on the State Government to invest in the duplication and extension of the Upfield rail line to service the rapidly growing northern suburbs.
- Submissions to the State Government's Activity Centres Program to strongly advocate for more affordable housing in Merri-bek.

Our city is known for its creative community and businesses as well as its excellent festivals. Our calendar of festivals is bursting with interesting, free and fun events for everyone to enjoy, and I look forward to seeing you all at the upcoming events including Carols by the Lake on Saturday 6 December and Coburg Night Market which opens Thursday 11 December.

I look forward to continuing this work with my fellow Councillors, Council staff and community, to achieve the best outcomes for our great city. Merri-bek is a wonderful place to live, work and play. We are one community, proudly diverse in every way. I feel privileged to have been elected as Mayor tonight, and I am honoured to serve here in the fine City of Merri-bek. Thank you everyone for listening.

8. Election of Deputy Mayor

The Acting Chief Executive Officer, in accordance with section 27 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and the Governance Rules, invited nominations for the office of the Deputy Mayor for the 2025-2026 Mayoral year.

Cr Yildiz nominated Cr Theodosius, seconded by Cr Politis.

Cr Theodosius accepted the nomination

Cr Abboud nominated Cr Iwasaki , seconded by Cr Irvin.

Cr Iwasaki accepted the nomination.

Resolution

Cr Irvin moved, Cr Theodosius seconded –

That the two candidates for Deputy Mayor give a short speech.

Carried

Cr Theodosius addressed the meeting.

Cr Iwasaki addressed the meeting.

As there were two nominations for the office of Deputy Mayor, the Acting Chief Executive Officer put it to the vote.

With the required absolute majority of six votes, the Acting Chief Executive Officer declared Cr Iwasaki elected as Deputy Mayor of Merri-bek City Council for the 2025-2026 Mayoral year.

9. Meeting Close

The Council meeting closed at 7.07pm.

Confirmed

Cr Abboud
MAYOR