



**Merri-bek**  
City Council

# Merri-bek City Council Annual Report 2023-24



**Cover image:** A resident with their dog enjoying the new fenced dog park in Kingsford Smith Ulm Reserve, at 81A Loongana Avenue, Glenroy. The new dog park was formally opened by Council on 14 May 2024.

# Welcome

This report tells you about our achievements from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024, which is the 2023–24 financial year.

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

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

You can find our annual report on our website at [merri-bek.vic.gov.au/annual-reports](https://merri-bek.vic.gov.au/annual-reports)

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

## Acknowledgement of Country

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

## Council Plan

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

To view our Council Plan, please:

- visit [merri-bek.vic.gov.au/council-plan](https://merri-bek.vic.gov.au/council-plan)
- call us on 9240 1111
- visit one of our customer service centres or libraries.

We also welcome your feedback on this annual report. You can:

- call us on 9240 1111
- TTY on 133 677
- Voice Relay on 1300 555 727 and ask for (03) 9240 1111
- email us at [info@merri-bek.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@merri-bek.vic.gov.au)
- send us a direct message on Facebook [@merribekcitycouncil](https://www.facebook.com/merribekcitycouncil)
- write to us at Locked Bag 10, Brunswick Victoria 3056.

Our Customer Service Centres are open from 8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

- Coburg Civic Centre, 90 Bell Street, Coburg
- Brunswick Customer Service Centre, 233 Sydney Road, Brunswick
- Glenroy Customer Service Centre, Glenroy Community Hub, 50 Wheatsheaf Road, Glenroy

You can also follow us on:

Facebook ([@merribekcitycouncil](https://www.facebook.com/merribekcitycouncil))

Instagram ([@merri\\_bekcitycouncil](https://www.instagram.com/merri_bekcitycouncil))

X (Threads) ([@merribekcouncil](https://www.threads.net/@merribekcouncil))

LinkedIn ([au.linkedin.com/company/merri-bekcitycouncil](https://au.linkedin.com/company/merri-bekcitycouncil))

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# Mayor's message

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Thank you, Merri-bek. I love our thriving, diverse and creative community and it has been a privilege to be your Mayor this year.

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Here are some of the highlights from the past year.

## **Investing in community facilities and services**

Everybody in our city deserves access to quality, accessible community infrastructure and services. This year we made huge progress on redeveloping the Fawkner Leisure Centre, which is set to open in time for summer and will help more people be active, more often. The centre will have new pools, including a 50 m outdoor pool, a water-play area and an expanded gym. It will also be gas-free, meaning fewer carbon emissions.

We also made great strides towards completing our new cultural and community centre at 33 Saxon Street in Brunswick. The centre will be home to artists, creatives, community groups and Blak Dot – a First Nations gallery space.

We continued to provide more than 150 services for our community including our much-loved maternal and child health services, libraries, as well as our in-home aged care services, to name just two.

## **Action on housing and climate**

We supported more good quality and affordable housing to be built in our community and set a clear vision and started work to have more affordable housing built on Council-owned land in central Coburg – right next to transport, shops and essential services.

We continued to take local action on the climate crisis, reducing our own emissions and supporting low-income households to make the shift to renewable-energy and improve the energy efficiency of their homes. This year we also rolled out the purple glass bin, which increased the amount of glass being recycled and reduced what we send to landfill.

## **More parks and safer and greener streets**

As our community grows and densifies, we must make sure everyone can easily access a park or open space. These provide free places for people to meet, relax, play and be active – which is important in the cost-of-living crisis, and for our community's social connection and mental health. Parks also help cool our city and provide a home for wildlife.

Through our A Park Close to Home framework we purchase properties and turn them into parks in areas with limited existing access, using money collected from developers through the subdivision process. During 2023–24, we completed Kirrip Bik in Coburg and made great progress on parks at 14 Frith Street and 260 Sydney Road in Brunswick. We have previously built new open spaces at Garrong and Bulleke-Bek parks in Brunswick and Citadel Park in Glenroy and we look forward to carrying out works on a new park in York Street in Pascoe Vale South next year.

We took steps to make our streets safer and greener for everybody – whether you're walking, riding, rolling or driving. We reduced speed limits on 362 km of our local roads from 50 km/h to 40 km/h, and we built more pedestrian crossings and safe cycling infrastructure. We planted 2,718 trees from quality tree stock and improved tree maintenance practices and now we have healthy and vigorous tree growth with fewer trees lost.

## **A strong voice for our community**

This year we championed investment in our community to the Victorian and Federal Governments. We supported community calls to transform Sydney Road with accessible tram stop and safe cycling infrastructure. We called for investment in the Upfield train line to make it a more frequent and reliable service, and we advocated to the Federal Government to keep our in-home aged care services in Council hands. We also supported moves towards a Treaty with First Peoples and backed community calls for the Ballerit Mooroop site in Glenroy to be returned to Traditional Custodians.

It's been a busy year, but I'm grateful for the opportunity to have been Mayor of our city.

**Cr Adam Pulford**  
**MAYOR**

# Chief Executive Officer's message

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This year has seen many milestones, including the construction and completion of some significant community facilities, and implementing the State Government's new 4-bin waste system.

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It's great to look back and see how we delivered more than 150 services to the community this year.

In 2023–24, we:

- delivered 59,928 meals to Merri-bek residents
- planted 2,718 trees
- loaned 1,226,831 books and electronic resources in our libraries
- swept 33,369 kilometres of roads
- collected 26,431 tonnes of garbage
- collected 2,462 tonnes of glass and 10,530 tonnes of co-mingled recycling
- collected 2,247 tonnes of booked hard waste (358 tonnes were recycled)
- diverted 17,322 tonnes of food and garden waste from landfill
- vaccinated 4007 children aged under 5 years, 1329 high school students and 797 adults.

I thank our staff for their commitment to service, and the people of Merri-bek for your care and cooperation in making this a great place to live and do business.

## **Investing in infrastructure for a growing community**

We have made major investments in infrastructure that are designed to serve Merri-bek residents and businesses for many generations. These major projects include:

- On-schedule construction of the Fawkner Leisure Centre redevelopment.
- Transformation of 33 Saxon Street into a new cultural and community hub, to be completed by the end of 2024.
- Further rollout of the 'A Park Close to Home' program to increase the number of communal green spaces within walking distance of homes.
- Creation of two new parks—at Frith Street and Michelle Guglielmo Park at Sydney Road.
- Significant kinder upgrades with \$27.832.1 million towards upgrade works for several early-years facilities over the next 5 years, including Oak Park Kindergarten and Derby Street Children's Centre.

## **Meeting financial responsibilities through care for our assets**

We have protected our investment in Merri-bek by ensuring our infrastructure receives the care and upgrades it needs to perform at its best.

In June, Council adopted its 4-year Council Budget for 2024–28 which included \$235.9 million for funding core services and facilities on which our growing community relies. As well as new facilities this includes maintenance to protect our investments in footpaths, parks and playgrounds, senior services, kindergartens and for immunisation programs.

We recognise that our commitment to environmental stewardship affects all communities, so we continue to implement programs and improvements which move Merri-bek to a net-zero carbon footprint by 2035.

Thank you for your partnership in making this possible.

**Cathy Henderson**

**CEO**



# About our municipality

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

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

The City of Merri-bek includes the following suburbs:

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

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

## Challenges and future outlook

### A growing population

By 2036, our municipality is expected to have a population of 220,408.

We are continuing to plan for the services needed to support new residents, and greater pressure on infrastructure. We have strategies on our key challenges:

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

### A diverse population

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

In 2023, there were an estimated 18,333 total GST registered businesses in the City of Merri-bek. Health Care and Social Assistance is the largest employer, generating 8,680 local jobs in 2021–22.

Our Community Connector program recruits volunteers to help facilitate meaningful engagement and communication between Council and our culturally diverse communities. Our Connectors ask our

community what information they need, share information from Council with their community and tell us how to improve our messages and translations. This year Council piloted a Youth Connectors program which is now integrated into the wider Connectors program.

### **Merri-bek households**

People who live alone make up the largest proportion of households with 28% in our municipality, followed by families making up 26% of households.

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

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

### **Modes of transport**

Population growth poses challenges for our city when it comes to transport, with transport already accounting for a large amount of carbon emissions in our municipality. However, about three-quarters of homes in our municipality are within 400 m of public transport which is a 5-minute walk.

Getting people where they need to be for work, school or leisure sustainably is a key challenge for us.

### **Open space**

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

Merri-bek has over 133 existing public playgrounds and the upgrade and renewal of these important community assets for the future. This year we completed 8 park upgrades, 4 playgrounds, 2 new dog parks and upgraded 2 gym stations.

### **The climate emergency**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Support for older people**

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

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

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

# Achievements of the year

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

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## **Strategic objective 1: An environmentally proactive Merri-bek**

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

### **Achievements:**

- Council launched the four-bin kerbside waste service in July 2023, and after 12 months of the service, we achieved a 7.5% decrease in waste sent to landfill.
- The “Recycle Right” communications campaign started in June 2024 to help educate residents on how to reduce bin contamination and update their recycling knowledge. We increased the amount of kerbside waste and recycling collected by 2.3%.
- Seven small Council facilities were electrified, and the Fawkner Leisure Centre was closed for redevelopment which will see gas pool heating replaced with electricity.
- The solar and thermal subsidy program supported 64 eligible low-income households to improve their homes' thermal comfort, and 35 households to install rooftop solar panels. These households will now save over \$600 a year on their energy bills and be more comfortable in their homes.
- Five new primary schools joined the Ride & Stride program, which offered e-bike subsidies, bike education courses, and bike repair pop-ups. Four schools held volunteer-led Open Streets events.
- A total of 113 people were trained in bike maintenance including 46 women and 67 nonbinary locals. Ten women in Fawkner learned to ride through the innovative 'Wheel Sisters' program.
- Council planted 2,718 trees sourcing high quality tree stock from nurseries, improving established tree maintenance practices and watering regimes. The result is healthy and vigorous tree growth with fewer trees lost.
- The new 'tricky-to-plant spaces' program started this year, with 55 new tree plots created in areas of high urban heat islands in Brunswick and Coburg North.

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

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

## **Achievements:**

- The Moving Around Merri-bek transport strategy was endorsed by Council in March 2024 after wide consultation where more than 1,300 residents gave feedback. From this the 'Streets for People' program was introduced to create more accessible and pedestrian-friendly urban environments.
- Council made a submission to the Victorian Inquiry into Vulnerable Road Users highlighting the need for safe and accessible transport options for our community. We attracted media coverage about the need for Sydney Road-accessible tram stops, protected bike lanes, and lower speed limits based on the findings from the inquiry.
- We reduced speed limits on our local roads to make them safer for our community. All local streets in Merri-bek now have 40 km/h speed limits to improve safety for vulnerable road users.
- Roundabouts were improved at the intersections of Belair and Chapman Avenues, Glenroy, and Barrow and Moore Streets, Coburg. Eleven pedestrian crossing location projects were completed including two zebra crossing upgrades and installation of pedestrian operated signals on Hilton Street, Glenroy. We also upgraded lighting and created a shared zone in Railway Place, Brunswick, near Union Street, and applied threshold treatments to intersections.
- We strongly advocated to progress planning and consultation around the Brunswick Level Crossing Removal Project with local and state ministers for transport. Council is calling on the Victorian Government to build accessible tram stops and protected bike lanes on Sydney Road to address the transport accessibility issues that will arise during the level crossing removals. We highlighted how the project could assist accessibility and safety improvements on Sydney Road and improve the Upfield corridor urban design, rail line upgrade, duplication, extension, and electrification to Wallan.

## **Strategic objective 3: A healthy and caring Merri-bek**

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

## **Achievements:**

- Considerable progress was made in redeveloping the \$36.9 million Fawkner Leisure Centre redevelopment with the construction of a new 50 metre outdoor pool, water play pool, new gym group fitness spaces, café lounge, and landscaped outdoor seating.
- Stage Two works were completed at Pascoe Vale Community Centre, creating a larger children's outdoor space to welcome up to 33 children, and an extra Maternal and Child Health (MCH) consulting room.
- Construction began for an extra 33-place kindergarten room at Oak Park Kindergarten, due for completion in August 2024.
- Stage One works were completed for the Derby Street Children's Centre for two new kindergarten rooms, with 27 more places for local children. Stage Two works have begun and are due for completion in the next financial year.

- In June, the Minister for Children visited the Dunstan Reserve Child Care Centre and announced \$1 million in funding to construct an extra 22-place kindergarten room and upgrade staff amenities. Works are expected to start in early 2025.
- The design is progressing for the build of the Brunswick Early Years Hub at Albert Street, to include a MCH room, long day care, 3-year-old and 4-year-old kindergarten, and a community room for playgroups and parent groups. Construction is expected to start in 2025.
- We hosted Ballerit Mooroop Day at the Ballerit Mooroop site in Hilton Street in Glenroy on 26 May 2024, which drew more than 400 people and engaged First Nations businesses, the State Emergency Service Fawkner and local Reconciliation groups. We received the Reconciliation Victoria Maggolee Award, for our work with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation towards transforming the Ballerit Mooroop site into a thriving community hub.

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

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

### **Achievements:**

- From September to December 2023, more than 1,300 residents took part in The Coburg Conversation engagement program. Council adopted the 'Revitalising Coburg' strategy to plan for the future of car parks, supermarkets and the Coburg Library. The revitalisation of the heart of Coburg will be a long-term process over many years.
- The reconstruction of the \$29 million project at 33 Saxon Street in Brunswick accelerated this year, completing clearing and levelling of the site, foundation works and formwork. The Heritage House and northwest building and the old school frame are preserved as distinctive elements, and the community was engaged to rename the site which is set to open in 2025.
- The Affordable Housing Action Plan was reviewed and actioned with the development of affordable housing on council land. Two developments with 34 affordable dwellings were completed, and five planning permits issued for future delivery of 372 affordable dwellings. Council drafted a new zone for the Brunswick Activity Centre to have mandatory affordable housing requirements. Council adopted a Homelessness Strategy and funded a two-year homelessness outreach program.
- Council endorsed a new Arts and Culture Strategy through to 2030 in September 2023. The Coughlin Gallery in Brunswick was attended by 7,303 visitors and held 11 exhibitions by contemporary artists from Merri-bek and across Australia, exploring social justice issues. The festivals program was attended by 111,685 people, with 772 artists and 266 stallholders at the Fawkner Festa, Carols by the Lake, Coburg Night Market, and the Glenroy Festival. The Brunswick Music Festival and Sydney Road Street Party attracted over 70,000 visitors over 10 days.
- More than 3,000 people took part in Council's Place Activation program, across Brunswick, Glenroy, and Coburg. Four murals were completed for the RenuWall graffiti intervention program. The Extraordinary Women of Glenroy exhibition and Taylor Swift's The Eras events at Glenroy Library and Bridget Shortell Reserve drew over 800 people. Coburg held 4 creative walks and an Eid event at Victoria Mall with the Central Coburg Business Association, attracting more than 600 people.

## **Strategic objective 5: An empowered and collaborative Merri-bek**

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

### **Achievements:**

- The Community Satisfaction Survey shows overall satisfaction improved significantly by 17 points from 51 in 2022–23 to 68 in 2023–24. Community satisfaction with customer service increased by 7 points to 72 in 2023–24 from 65 in 2022–23. Community satisfaction for 'informing the community' increased by 15 points to 71 in 2023–24 from 56 in 2022–23.
- Implementation of the Accessible and Inclusive Communications Policy continued with the support of the multicultural Community Connectors community engagement program. The program aims to improve access to information and services to our multicultural community. The program participants were involved in several key Council projects —the Transport Strategy, Open Space Strategy, Living and Ageing Well, and The Coburg Conversation engagements.
- Council made submissions to many government inquiries, including the 2022 Victorian Flood event, housing affordability, anti-vilification laws, the National Multicultural Framework, vulnerable road users, local government sustainability and funding, and climate resilience. A comprehensive submission was made to Infrastructure Victoria's 30-year infrastructure strategy.
- Council endorsed 10 new infrastructure funding priorities focusing on the next Federal election. Regular meetings with local, federal and state Members of Parliament ensure ongoing dialogue, strengthening the Council's advocacy and commitment to the Merri-bek community.

# Financial overview

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

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Some stakeholders and community members may find these detailed financial statements difficult to read and understand. This overview aims to simplify the key information about our financial performance for the financial year between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2024.

## Operating income

Our total income for the year was \$255.0 million.

This was a slight increase in income of \$0.1 million compared to 2022–23. This was largely due to the growth in rates income offset by a decrease in grant income. Our major source of income is rates and charges, which generated 72.6% of our total income (\$185.2 million).

Other major sources of income included:

- government grants of \$21.9 million (or 8.6% of total income)
- user fees and statutory fees and fines of \$24.2 million (or 9.5% of total income).

## Operating expenses

Our total operating expenses for the year were \$229.2 million.

The largest fraction of this was employee costs. This was \$111.7 million (48.7% of total expenses). The next biggest cost was material and services of \$69.7 million (30.4% of total expenses).

The key figure to look at is the surplus or deficit for the year. The accounting surplus or deficit is the total revenue less the total expenses. We are reporting an accounting surplus of \$25.8 million for the financial year. It is important to note that this accounting surplus is not spare money that builds up in the bank. While Council may be generating a healthy accounting surplus, this is used to fund other items in our operations. This includes loan principal repayments, transfers to reserves to fund future projects and rates-funded projects in the capital works program.

Council had an underlying surplus of \$10.6 million. This surplus is required to contribute towards our rates-funded capital works program, transfers to reserves and loan repayments.

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

The underlying operating result is an important measure of financial sustainability.

This measure demonstrates Council's ability to self-fund its operations and excludes funding relating to the capital works program.



## Operating expenditure profile for 2023–24

Operating category	Percentage
Asset depreciation	17.3%
Administration	12.8%
Waste collection and recycling	10.2%
Aged, disability and social services	7.8%
Parks and street trees	7.8%
Local laws and regulations	6.3%
Planning and economic development	5.4%
Arts, culture and libraries	4.8%
Systems and communications	4.1%
Street cleansing	3.0%
Health and immunisation	2.9%
Customer service	2.9%
Roads and footpaths	2.5%
Youth and children's services	2.1%
Asset maintenance	1.9%
Transport	1.8%
Sustainable communities and environment	1.8%
Recreation and leisure	1.5%
Governance	1.2%
Capital works	1.0%
Property services	0.5%
Asset management	0.4%
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Capital expenses

Our total completed capital expenditure for the year was \$87.6 million.

We continued to address our capital works program across a wide range of projects. Our total completed capital work spend was \$48.9 million above the depreciation for the year.

## Capital works by category delivered in 2023–24

Asset class	Amount
Buildings	\$41.9m
Parks, open space and streetscapes	\$16.4m
Roads	\$12.5m
Building improvements	\$4.2m
Footpaths and cycleways	\$4.0m
Other infrastructure	\$3.3m
Drainage	\$2.2m
Library books	\$1.1m
Plant, machinery and equipment	\$0.9m

Computers and telecommunications	\$0.7m
Bridges	\$0.2m
Land	\$0.1m
Fixtures, fittings and furniture	\$0.1m
Waste management	\$0.1m

# Delivering services to you

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

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Here are key figures about the services provided to our community from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024:

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

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

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

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

## Snapshot of key services in 2023–24

- 1,148 planning permit applications determined
- 59,928 meals delivered to Merri-bek residents
- 33,369 kilometres of streets swept
- 2,718 trees planted
- 583,239 visitors to libraries
- 1,226,831 loans of library materials including physical items and e-resources
- 44,193 people attended library program events
- 977 program sessions were offered for children and young people, including Storytimes in Italian, Greek, Spanish, Turkish and French languages, as well as rainbow and drag Storytimes.
- 446 program sessions were offered for adults, including conversation clubs, workshops and lectures, digital literacy sessions and book groups.
- 957,715 total attendances at Active Merri-bek Aquatic and Leisure Centres
- 158,354 attendees at Active Merri-bek Aquatic and Leisure Centres water safety and learn-to-swim programs
- 142,172 total aquatic visits to seasonal outdoor pools (including swim carnivals and swim lessons)
- 89,122 casual swims at the seasonal outdoor pools
- 7,738 Active Merri-bek Aquatic and Leisure Centres members at 30 June 2024
- 13,950 dogs and 8,332 cats registered
- 2,462.21 tonnes of glass and 10,529.95 of comingled recycling collected
- 17,322.03 tonnes of food and garden waste collected
- 2,246.81 tonnes of booked hard waste collected (357.62 tonnes of that material was recycled)
- 26,430.67 tonnes of garbage collected

- Total number of children, including aboriginal children who access MCH services at least once in a year: 6,193
- Total number of people immunised:
  - 4007 under 5 years of age
  - 1,329 high school students
  - 797 adults.

## Community satisfaction

Each year we ask our community how they feel about our services. This is our Community Satisfaction Survey. A total of 601 members of our community were interviewed from 8 May 2024 to 16 June 2024.

The survey asks questions about these services:

- waste management and environmental sustainability
- parking, roads and footpaths
- recreational facilities
- planning
- consultation and engagement, decision-making and lobbying
- support services and libraries
- customer service.

In 2024, our top 4 service areas ranked highest for performance by the community were:

- library services (8.6/10)
- supporting the diversity of the Merri-bek community (7.5/10)
- recreation centres (7.9/10)
- regular food and green waste collection (8.4/10).

Our top-performing service areas over the past 3 years are consistently library services and supporting diversity.

In 2024, the results showed a significant improvement in service areas including waste management, parking facilities and sealed local roads. Overall satisfaction with Council was 68/100 as compared to 51/100 in 2023. This result demonstrates considerable improvement across service areas of Council.

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

When asked about satisfaction with Governance and Leadership:

- Satisfaction with Council's support of diversity, inclusion, and human rights was 75 out of 100.
- The rating of Council as having a sound direction for the future was 69 out of 100.
- Consultation and engagement scored an improved 69 out of 100.
- Responsiveness of Council to local community needs was rated 68 out of 100.
- Making decisions in the interests of the community was rated as 68 out of 100.

## Awards and citations

**Winner**, 2024, Maggolee Award for Ballerit Mooroop (Strong Spirit) Site, Reconciliation Victoria

**High commendation**, 2024, Merri-bek Intergenerational Program, LGPro Awards for Excellence

The Glenroy Community Hub received the following awards:

- **Finalist**, 2024 Building Scale Category, National Biophilic Design Awards, International Living Future Institute
- **Commendation**, 2024 Library Design Awards by the Australian Library and Information Association

**High commendation**, 2024 Stormwater Victoria awards, Strategic or Master Planning category, Sub-catchment-scale Integrated Water Management Plan for Merri-bek project.

**Winner**, 2023, Outstanding WARR Project: Metro, the Kerbside Waste Reform (KWR) Project, WARR (Waste and Resource Recovery) Project: Metro, Waste Innovation & Recycling Awards

**Winner**, 2023, Tidy City of the Year, Keep Australia Beautiful Victoria awards, Green My Plate, My Smart Garden, and The Bike Shed's "Fix Your Own Bike".

**Recognition**, 2023, Tidy City of the Year, Keep Australia Beautiful Victoria awards, community Western Emergency Relief Network

**Finalist**, 2023, Community Champion - Unlocking Sustainable Strata program, Victorian Premier's Sustainability Awards

**Finalist**, 2023, Energy Efficiency Achievement Award, Solar and Thermal Subsidy Program, Cities Power Partnership Awards

**Finalist**, 2023, Community Choice Award, The Solar and Thermal Program, Cities Power Partnership Awards

**Finalist**, 2023, Collaboration Award for our Electrify Everything Community of Practice, Cities Power Partnership Awards

# Our council

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On 24 October 2020, our community elected 11 Councillors to represent them. These Councillors are elected from 3 wards across our municipality: North-West Ward, North-East Ward and South Ward.

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## Councillors

Merri-bek residents and ratepayers elect our councillors every four years. Together our councillors make decisions in the interests of the whole municipality. The next election is in October 2024.

The councillors elect a mayor and a deputy mayor each year. In November 2023, Council elected Cr Adam Pulford as Mayor and Cr Lambros Tapinos as Deputy Mayor. They will hold these offices until 26 October 2024.

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

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

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

Our Councillors for the 2023–24 year were:

### North–East Ward

Councillor Sue Bolton  
Councillor Annalivia Carli Hannan  
Councillor Helen Pavlidis-Mihalakos  
Councillor Adam Pulford

### North–West Ward

Councillor Helen Davidson  
Councillor Angelica Panopoulos  
Councillor Oscar Yildiz JP  
Councillor Monica Harte

### South Ward

Councillor James Conlan  
Councillor Mark Riley  
Councillor Lambros Tapinos

## Councillors, committees and responsibilities

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

### Mayor, Cr Adam Pulford



Elected to Council in 2020 and elected Mayor in 2023.

**Advisory committees:** Audit and Risk Committee, Coburg Revitalisation Oversight Committee, Coburg Advisory Group, Saxon Street Oversight Committee, First Nations Advisory Committee, Sustainable Transport Advisory Committee, LGBTIQ+ Reference Group, and the Merri-bek Community Recognition Committee.

**External committees:** Friends of Aileu Community Committee, Merri Creek Management Committee, Municipal Association of Victoria, and the Northern Councils Alliance.

**Councillor responsible for:** Human Rights, Transport and Getting Around.

### Deputy Mayor, Cr Lambros Tapinos



Elected to Council in 2008, 2012, 2016 and 2020, elected Mayor in 2008, 2013 and 2019, and elected Deputy Mayor in 2021 and 2023.

**Advisory committees:** Audit and Risk Committee, Brunswick Advisory Group, Merri-bek Community Recognition Committee, Saxon Street Oversight Committee, and the Heritage and Local History Reference Group.

**External committees:** Nil

**Councillor responsible for:** Arts and Culture, economic development, and urban planning.



## **Cr Sue Bolton**



Elected to Council in 2012, 2016 and 2020

**Advisory committees:** Coburg Advisory Group, Coburg Revitalisation Oversight Committee, First Nations Advisory Committee, and the Disability Reference Group.

**External committees:** Northern Councils Alliance (substitute).

**Councillor responsible for:** Nil

## **Cr Annalivia Carli Hannan**



Elected to Council in 2016 and 2020 and elected Mayor in 2020.

**Advisory committees:** Coburg Advisory Group, and the Coburg Revitalisation Oversight Committee.

**External committees:** Nil

**Councillor responsible for:** Early years

## **Cr James Conlan**



Elected to Council in 2020

**Advisory committees:** Brunswick Advisory Group, First Nations Advisory Committee, LGBTIQ+ Reference Group, and the Saxon Street Oversight Committee.

**External committees:** Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) Executive (substitute).

**Councillor responsible for:** Nil

## **Cr Helen Davidson**



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

**Advisory committees:** Glenroy Advisory Group

**External committees:** Nil

**Councillor responsible for:** Sport and recreation, and women

## **Cr Monica Harte**



Elected to Council in 2022

**Advisory committees:** Audit and Risk committee, Affordable Housing Reference Group, Age-Friendly (Older People) Reference Group, Arts Advisory Committee, and the Glenroy Advisory Group.

**External committees:** Nil

**Councillor responsible for:** Arts and Culture, Older Persons

## **Cr Angelica Panopoulos**



Elected to Council in 2020 and elected Mayor in 2022.

**Advisory committees:** Coburg Revitalisation Oversight Committee, Affordable Housing Reference Group, and the Glenroy Advisory Group.

**External committees:** Merri Creek Management Committee

**Councillor responsible for:** Climate and nature, economic development, urban planning, and young people.

## **Cr Helen Pavlidis-Mihalakos**



Elected to Council in 2020

**Advisory committees:** Coburg Revitalisation Oversight Committee, Coburg Advisory Group, Merri-bek Community Recognition Committee, Arts Advisory Committee, and the Age-Friendly (Older People) Reference Group.

**External committees:** Municipal Association of Victoria (substitute).

**Councillor responsible for:** Arts and Culture, Older persons, sport and recreation, and women.

## **Cr Mark Riley**



Elected to Council in 2016 and 2020, elected Deputy Mayor in 2018 and 2020, and Mayor in 2021.

**Advisory committees:** Saxon Street Oversight Committee, Brunswick Advisory Group, Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee, Human Rights and Inclusion Advisory Committee, and the Gender Equality Reference Group.

**External committees:** Metropolitan Transport Forum, Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) Executive.

**Councillor responsible for:** Multiculturalism

## **Cr Oscar Yildiz JP**



Elected to Council in 2008, 2012, 2016 and 2020, elected Mayor in 2010, 2012 and 2014 and elected Deputy Mayor in 2019.

**Advisory committees:** Glenroy Advisory Group

**External committees:** Nil

**Councillor responsible for:** Economic development, multiculturalism, sport and recreation

# Our people

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Merri-bek City Council is led by a chief executive officer and managed by a highly skilled and experienced executive team.

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## Our executive team

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

### Chief Executive Officer - Cathy Henderson

Our senior officers report to the Chief Executive Officer and their areas of responsibility are below.

#### Director Business Transformation - Sue Vujcevic

Responsible for the corporate functions of Council including:

- People and Safety
- Organisational Performance
- Information Technology
- Governance and Strategy
- Finance and Procurement

#### Director City Infrastructure - Anita Curnow

Responsible for the following branches:

- Amenity and Compliance
- Capital Works Planning and Delivery
- City Services
- Open Space and Environment
- Transport

#### Director Community - Eamonn Fennessy

Responsible for the following branches:

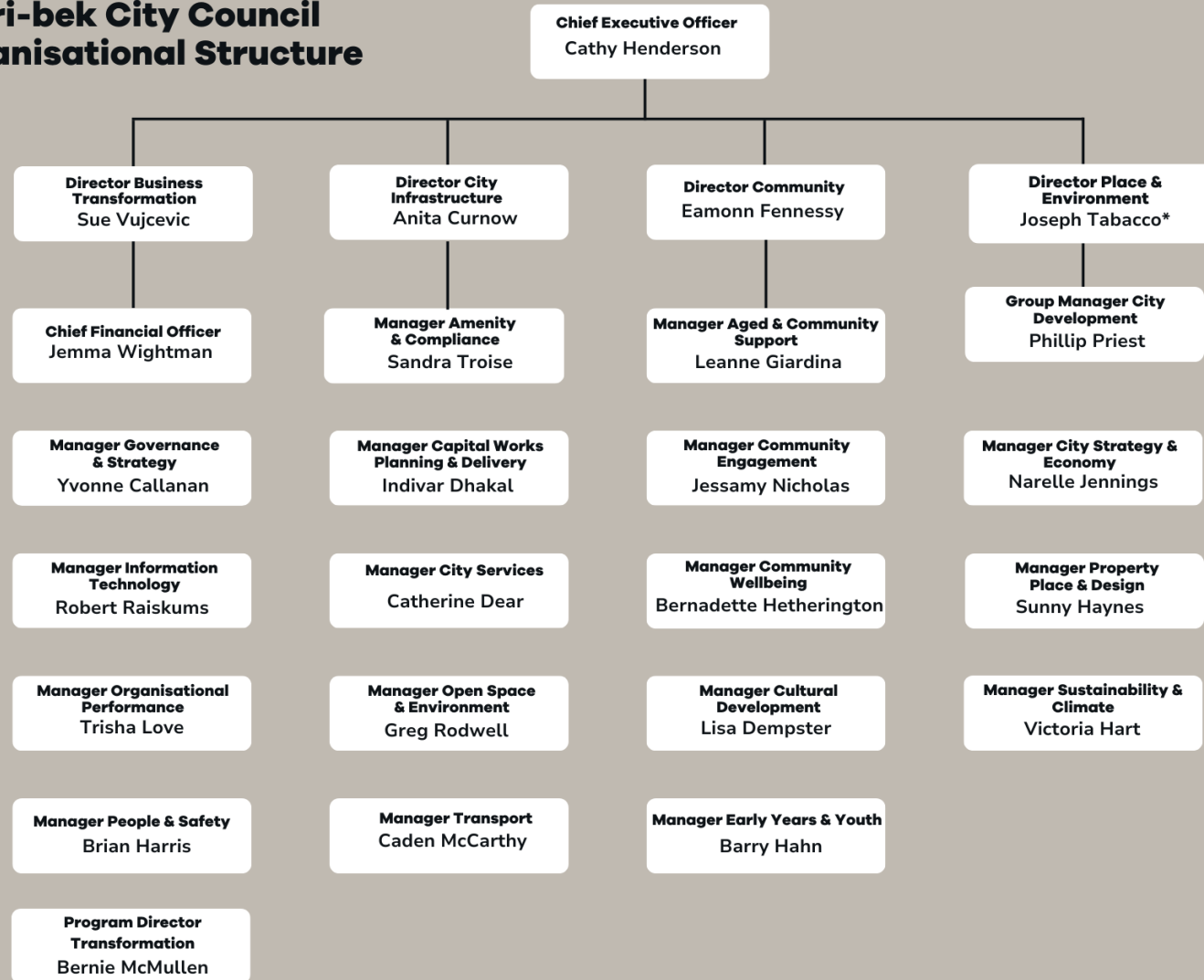
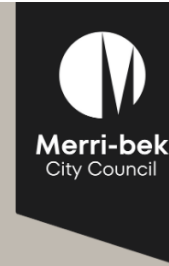
- Aged and Community Support
- Community Engagement
- Community Wellbeing
- Cultural Development
- Early Years and Youth

#### Director Place and Environment - Joseph Tabacco (until 3 May 2024)

Responsible for the following branches:

- City Development
- City Strategy and Economy
- Property, Place, and Design
- Sustainability and Climate

# Merri-bek City Council Organisational Structure



\*Joseph Tabacco was the Director Place & Environment until 3 May 2024. Phil Priest and Victoria Hart acted as Director Place & Environment from 3 May 2024 to 30 June 2024.

## Our staffing profile

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

Structure	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Band 5	Band 6	Band 7	Band 8	SO/SEO/ other	Total
Classification	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE
Permanent full time – female	0.00	0.00	9.00	54.54	48.81	49.21	30.00	21.90	9.00	222.46
Permanent full time – male	0.00	0.00	41.00	80.00	77.92	45.46	47.00	13.00	23.00	327.38
Permanent part time – female	15.01	0.00	57.48	18.71	26.44	18.54	6.94	27.95	2.42	173.49
Permanent part time – male	7.27	0.26	12.51	3.47	5.83	1.10	1.22	0.00	0.00	31.66
Permanent part time – non-specific	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.80	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.80
Temporary female	0.00	0.00	4.15	6.89	12.17	17.51	7.66	3.74	15.60	67.72
Temporary male	0.00	0.00	5.02	4.44	5.46	14.00	12.42	3.00	12.84	57.18
Temporary – non-specific	0.00	0.00	0.68	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.68
Casual	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Total FTE</b>	<b>22.28</b>	<b>0.26</b>	<b>129.84</b>	<b>168.85</b>	<b>176.63</b>	<b>145.82</b>	<b>105.24</b>	<b>69.59</b>	<b>62.86</b>	<b>881.37</b>

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

Directorate	Business Transformation	Chief Executive Office	City Infrastructure	Community	Place and Environment	Total
Employment status	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE
Permanent full time – female	44.92	1.00	42.00	89.43	45.11	222.46
Permanent full time – male	37.00	0.00	213.76	35.62	41.00	327.38
Permanent part time – female	10.07	0.00	13.99	138.59	10.84	173.49
Permanent part time – male	1.35	0.00	8.92	20.89	0.50	31.66
Permanent part time – non-specific	0.80	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.80
Temporary female	10.40	1.00	14.37	27.84	14.11	67.72
Temporary male	6.00	0.00	25.28	14.24	11.66	57.18
Temporary – non-specific	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.68	0.68
Casual	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Total FTE</b>	<b>110.54</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>318.32</b>	<b>326.61</b>	<b>123.90</b>	<b>881.37</b>



## **Inclusive employment**

We are proud to ensure our employees work in a supportive and understanding environment. Council has a range of agreed action plans in place to further support an inclusive working environment, that includes our Council Action Plan, Gender Equality Action Plan, Workforce Plan and First Peoples Employment Plan.

Some of the actions implemented this year from the above-mentioned plans that support diversity and inclusion include:

- Reviewing and strengthening our cultural awareness leadership development and programs that support a culture of inclusion for people with disabilities.
- Creation of an all-encompassing Flexible Work Arrangements Policy to strengthen gender equality and diversity and inclusion.
- Improving our data collection systems to enable safe and accurate recording of employee identity information.
- Gathering more data regarding the background of our existing staff to identify gaps and opportunities for strengthening our staff diversity in future.
- Reviewing and further developing our recruitment practices.
- Providing for the use of different pronouns in communications and providing appropriate training methods for staff to understand gender diversity specifically and the importance of why pronouns are important.
- Provision of all-gender bathrooms to create a more gender inclusive and safe workplace.
- Continue to support equal pay and equal recognition for all types of paid work within the organisation.

## **First Peoples**

Our commitment to Wurundjeri and the First Peoples community provides context and vision for our First Peoples Employment Plan. Our vision is to be an employer of choice by First Peoples and increase the number of First Peoples employed. The plan aims to create a culturally safe and supportive workplace and create an environment where First Peoples can freely express identity, gender, cultural values and practices, abilities, socio-economic status and rights to self-determination.

The First Peoples Employment Officer started in mid-2023 to:

- Develop Council's cultural capacity which impact First Peoples employment
- Increase First Peoples recruitment and retention
- Develop and implement employment pathways and skills development opportunities
- Providing culturally appropriate workplace supports.

Examples of our progress include:

- Development of tailored cultural learning framework by introducing organisational-wide compulsory online cultural awareness training.
- Introduction of First Peoples identified (special measures) and non-identified recruitment end-to-end processes with:
  - o Candidate care process to support candidates during the recruitment process.
  - o Inclusion of First Peoples Employment Officer on interview panels where a candidate has identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.
  - o Incorporation of First Peoples recruitment processes in our general recruitment training.

- Onboarding support for the employee and hiring manager with formal check-in touchpoints over many months.
- Support for unsuccessful candidates.
- Implementation of a First Peoples' Working Group to identify and discuss any issues and opportunities to improve well-being and participation in the workforce.
- Introduction of manager/team leader support document to support First Peoples employees and the workplace.
- Development of First Peoples' Well-being Calendar, with events dedicated to First Peoples employees and events for all staff to promote cultural awareness, well-being and inclusion.
- Professional development opportunities for First Peoples employees including secondments and leadership programs.

## **Equal opportunity**

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

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

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

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

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

## **Service recognition awards**

Our service recognition awards acknowledge the significant dedication and contribution of our employees to our organisation and the community. In 2023–24, we presented service recognition awards to 146 employees for five to 40 years of service.

## **Building our organisational capability**

This year we delivered a full Leader Development Program for all leaders, and uplifted the capability of our Senior Management Team, in ethics, leadership feedback and the climate crisis. A full training calendar provided all staff a range of opportunities to develop and upskill.

### **Organisational plan and vision**

We implemented an Organisational Plan with an active program to help leaders deliver our vision 'One Team, Brave and Diverse, Making a Difference'. This program delivered:

- A leader speaker series for all people leaders on many topics including gender equity
- A presentation by Dr Vyom Sharma on mental health in the workplace
- A presentation by Dr Kate Cashman about neuroscience, and how to support your career with courageous choices
- An improved induction program for all new staff
- Unconscious bias training for people leaders, facilitated by Polykala.

### **Senior Management Team development**

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

- A feedback program for Level 3 Branch managers
- How we improve psychological safety in the workplace
- Participating in the Koorie Heritage Trust Walk to improve our First Nations cultural competence
- Playing 'The Adaptation Game' to embed thinking around the climate emergency
- A session on ethics with Peter Mare from Cranlana Centre for Ethical Leadership
- A range of seminars on various topics including city design, placemaking and community engagement.

### **Leader Development Program**

We delivered a new comprehensive Leader Development Program including:

- 'Learning to Lead' for 50 first-time people leaders. This is a six-month development program with two rounds of Swinburne New Supervisors training course.
- Two rounds of 'Leadership Fundamentals' for 30 existing frontline people leaders. This three-month development program aims to form consistency in leadership practice.
- Two rounds of 'Coaching for Leaders' program for managers with 20 coaches and 20 coachees. This six-month program builds coaching capability for mid to senior managers with coaching as a core leadership skill.
- We held 'The Merri-bek Challenge', a six-month experience for exceptional performers with the LGPro Management Challenge and a 'back to business' team project.
- A range of leaders took part in the LGPro calendar of leadership programs suited to their level of experience and development needs.
- We began Unit Leader gatherings, with a working group of Unit Managers from each Directorate. Extensive consultation took place to form a quarterly calendar of events to support professional development and relationship building objectives.
- The first event 'Building and Maintaining Teams' was delivered to 30 senior leaders by guest speaker Chyloe Kurdas, a former elite Australian rules footballer, television and radio sports commentator and a prominent advocate for gender equity and culture change, with experience in leadership, and driving transformative cultural shifts.

Overall, we had a very positive year of leadership development. We continue to learn from the success of our programs and seek innovative ways to provide enriching professional development for people leaders across our many branches, units and teams at Merri-bek.

### **Training for all staff**

This year we delivered a learning and development calendar of events for all staff. Our focus was Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) awareness, OHS Committee Training and OHS for managers and leaders. We delivered 65 courses to 653 staff face-to-face and online.

New and existing staff completed 9,298 online training modules, across 17 topics, with many compulsory modules for all staff including an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Inclusion and Cultural Safety program.

### **Project Management upskilling**

A cohort of 11 Project Managers graduated from the Swinburne Diploma of Project Management in May. Swinburne University also conducted a two-day Foundations in Project Management course for 16 project managers and staff in project delivery. This is the third year of the course offering to staff.

### **Capability uplift**

We continued to embed a competency framework to align our Leader Development Programs with our competencies, across the recruitment process and the Performance and Development process by:

- Developing and supporting future leaders with our “Leader as Coach” training program, through Local Government Professionals. They took part in development opportunities through secondments, acting opportunities and project work. This helped staff to gain valuable skills and take on more senior or complex roles.
- Introducing the Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Compliance (Disco) tool to improve teamwork and communication, and to support outdoor staff with improved decision-making and conflict resolution.
- Delivering three change management training programs, Change Ready Training for 30 staff, Change Leadership Training for 35 leaders and a Change Leadership Pilot Program with a Climate Action focus for 24 leaders.

## Training and development programs

Council is committed to investing in our employees through development and training. By building our internal capacity, we contribute to improving the performance of the organisation. The following table outlines a summary of training courses delivery and employee attendance in the past year.

Category	Courses run	Attendees (instances)
Business effectiveness (online)	6	56
Business effectiveness (face-to-face)	11	121
Occupational health and safety (online)	6	57
Occupational health and safety (face-to-face)	26	207
Self-care and wellness programs (online)	3	42
Self-care and wellness programs (face-to-face)	6	77
Diversity and inclusion programs (online)	5	65
Diversity and inclusion programs (face-to-face)	2	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>653</b>
Online compliance modules (Litmos is Council's Learning Management System)	17 compliance modules	9,298 courses completed

## **Occupational health and safety**

We are committed to providing a healthy and safe environment for all:

- employees
- contractors
- visitors
- members of the public and children.

We recognise our employees are our most important asset. Our highest priority is ensuring all employees are supported to work safely. Our safe work procedures are useful, and relevant so they can be followed easily and consistently.

We are committed to the continuous improvement of all our health and safety systems and standards. We work to prevent and minimise workplace injuries and illnesses as far as reasonably practicable. We recognise the importance of managing psychosocial hazards and supporting the psychological health of our employees.

### **Safety management system**

We continue to support the organisation to adhere to the MoreSafe safety management system. This system supports us to meet our obligations outlined in the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* ('the OHS Act') and associated regulations.

We have a Safety and Wellbeing team, resourced and skilled to support and partner with business unit leaders. This team supports our leaders to understand their obligations to employees and Council in relation to occupational health and safety (OHS) and complying with the relevant regulations.

The focus on high-risk work areas, and those units at greater risk of workers compensation claims has continued in 2023–24 in line with the development of a new Strategic Safety Plan.

Consultation on safety incidents and changes to the workplace occur at all levels of the organisation. We oversee training and undertake continuous improvement activities to create efficiencies and maintain compliance to a high standard.

These activities include:

- incident management system enhancements
- development and/or updates of safety-related processes
- audits of the safety management system
- monitoring and review of data to support decisions on health and safety.

Key safety initiatives undertaken during 2023–24 included:

- continued adaptation of Elumina to manage workplace incidents and investigations
- continued review and consolidation of MoreSafe procedures
- expansion of our OHS related training program including Mental Health First Aid training for select leaders to support their teams' psychological wellbeing.

## Occupational Health and Safety Training 2023–24

Course	Number of sessions completed	Number of participants attended
Fire and emergency warden training	2	16
CPR training	2	25
Occupational violence prevention	2	25
First aid training	2	22
First aid for mental health	1	15
Initial chief warden training	1	1
HSR refresher training	1	11
Initial HSR training (5-day program)	2	9
Traffic management and traffic control	4	44
OHS Committee Training	1	12
Injury Management Training (inhouse)	1	8
Safety Essentials Training (inhouse)	2	17
OHS Duties Awareness Training	3	30
Mental Health Awareness	1	15
Drug, Alcohol and Mental Health Awareness	1	10
Noise Awareness Training	2	18
Deaf Awareness Workshop	1	12
OHS for Managers	2	25
<b>Total sessions run</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>315</b>

### Injury management

Incidents reported (including injuries)	685
Injuries reported	206
Claims (standard)	15
Average claim cost	\$10,147
Employees returned to work	10
Staff who remain unfit	5

Our Occupational Rehabilitation and Wellbeing Adviser supports and facilitates the return-to-work plans and workers' compensation process. They also provide ongoing support to employees and guidance to leaders.

We acknowledge the importance of early treatment and support for staff when a workplace injury occurs. It is essential for an injured worker's recovery that the medical treatment they receive is provided quickly and return-to-work activities are proactively supported by their manager or supervisor. This aids in their recovery and a productive return to a normal work and home life.

We have an early intervention program which incorporates:

- onsite physiotherapy assessment
- offer of suitable alternative duties
- development of a return-to-work plan to match any restrictions injured workers have.

## **Employee Health and Wellbeing**

We have many health and wellbeing initiatives with a focus on mental health support, enhanced by other health-related activities, including:

- Free classes are offered at the Coburg Leisure Centre
- HeadSpace – a mental health app offered for 12 months for free to employees
- The EAP provider Converge continues to offer individual sessions and team debriefs for incidents of a psychosocial nature as required
- Manager Assist continues to be highlighted as a resource for people leaders.

## **Child Safety**

- Our Child Safe Advisor guides and facilitates child safety related activations across Council to ensure our compliance with Child Safe legislation. They lead the identification of roles requiring working with children's checks and provide support on child safe reporting and cases of reportable conduct. Face to face and online training is provided to staff.

In 2023–24 Council's Child Safety program:

- Finalised and distributed Council's Child Safe Commitment Statement in Plain English and in key community languages. These posters were designed with feedback from children and young people across Merri-bek and are displayed in Council venues and on the website to demonstrate Council's commitment to child safety to the community.
- Developed a child friendly complaints management system, flyer and poster in collaboration with children and young people to provide them information on how to make a complaint and their rights in Plain English and key community languages, and displayed in Council programs, activities, events and venues where children and young people may be present.
- Developed and implemented a Child Safety and Wellbeing Procedure Manual providing guidance to staff about child safety and wellbeing in recruitment, risk management, complaints management, training and education, reporting procedures and record keeping.
- Assessed all employee roles against Working with Children Check (WWCC) requirements, ensuring all staff with high or moderate level of interaction with (risk to) children and young people have a WWCC.

## **Risk management**

Risk management is embedded in our business practices and culture. We continue to implement improvements and changes that bolster our risk culture, ensuring our risk management remains integrated, structured, and customised.

Our risk management planning encompasses all levels of the organisation, addressing strategic, operational, climate, fraud, and environmental risks. Our Enterprise Risk Management Framework and Risk Management Policy guides our approach by outlining our objectives, delineating responsibilities, and setting timeframes for risk review and reporting.

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

Council's Audit and Risk Committee is responsible for overseeing the governance of audits, accounting controls, and risk management. This year the committee held four meetings, providing valuable and independent risk management advice. Our internal audit program completed eight audits across the organisation, using the recommendations to inform risk controls and tasks within Council's Operational Risk Register.



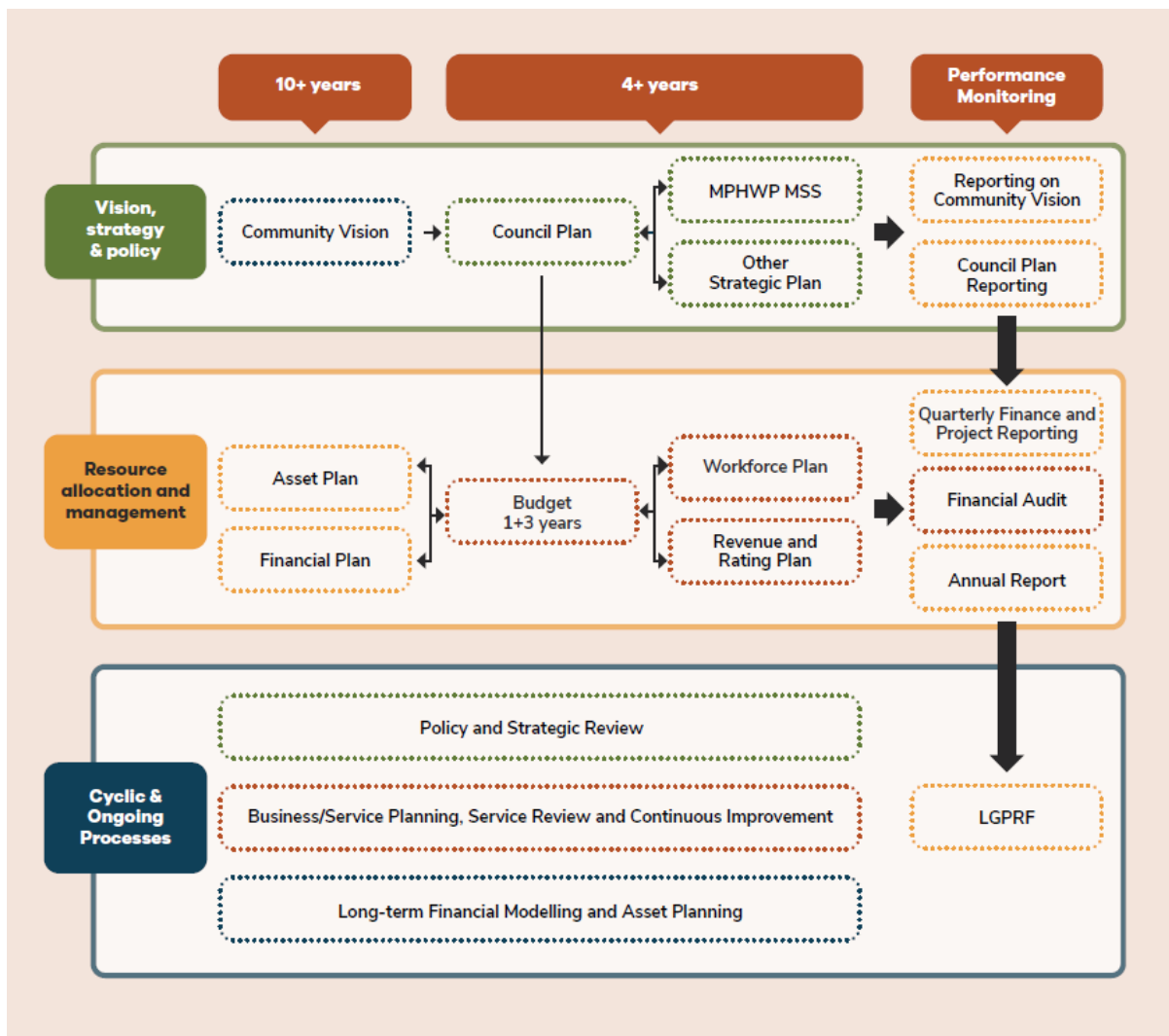
# Our performance

## Integrated planning and reporting framework

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

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

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



Source: Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions

## Vision

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

*"Merri-bek is our home.*

*We respect and look after our land, air, waterways and animals.*

*We care for our people and celebrate our diverse stories, cultures, and identities.*

*Merri-bek is enhanced by all of us supporting our local businesses, arts communities and social organisations.*

*We work together proactively and transparently to continue to create a vibrant, safe, healthy, resilient, innovative, and regenerative community. Many faces, one Merri-bek."*

## Council Plan

Our Council Plan 2021–25 sets a strategic direction for the related four-year council term. This plan has been shaped by the voice of the community and is the result of deliberative engagement with a broad cross-section of the community.

Our Council Plan 2021–25 is set out under five themes:

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

These themes guide our progress towards achieving the Merri-bek Community Vision 2021–31 (Community Vision) and set out ways to achieve these objectives through delivery of major initiatives and priorities. Our plan also includes indicators for measuring our progress over the next four years and outlines how Council will protect, improve, and promote public health and wellbeing within the municipality.

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

The five strategic objectives are:

1. To strive for maximum protection of people's health, plants and animals through leading an urgent response to the climate emergency and a regeneration of our natural environment.
2. To contribute to the health, safety, and security of everyone living in our diverse community and to increase safe, accessible, physically active and enjoyable ways to get around Merri-bek, especially via walking, cycling and public transport.
3. To support Merri-bek to become a more inclusive, connected, healthy and caring community through providing equitable access to community facilities and services, facilitating local partnerships and programs, mitigating the effects of climate change and supporting the community to adapt and build climate resilience.
4. To create welcoming, unique spaces and places across Merri-bek that attract and connect everyone, improving access to community facilities and affordable housing and encouraging vibrant artistic, social and economic activity.
5. To build community trust through encouraging participation, evidence-based decision-making, stewardship of resources and being accessible and responsive.

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

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

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

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

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

## Council plan on a page

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

Strategic objective	Strategies
<p><b>An environmentally proactive Merri-bek</b> Strive to protect people’s health, plants and animals. Respond now to the climate emergency. Regenerate nature.</p>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cut carbon emissions from energy, transport and waste</li> <li>• protect existing trees and plant more trees</li> <li>• care for open space and ecosystems, including waterways</li> <li>• provide better access to parks, playgrounds and facilities</li> <li>• reduce the amount of waste going into landfill</li> <li>• develop a healthy and affordable local food system.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Moving and living safely in Merri-bek</b> Improve the safety of everyone in our community. Make it safer and easier to get around.</p>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• build better paths for people to get around without a car</li> <li>• advocate for better access to public transport for everyone</li> <li>• encourage more people to walk, cycle, or take public transport</li> <li>• consult the community before removing parking or road space</li> <li>• improve the safety of our roads and paths for everyone.</li> </ul>
<p><b>A healthy and caring Merri-bek</b> Support Merri-bek to become a more inclusive, connected, healthy and caring community.</p>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide services which respond well to diverse and changing needs</li> <li>• build community resilience to the impacts of climate change</li> <li>• help residents to be healthier and more active, more often</li> <li>• support good mental health and help people connect</li> <li>• work closer with First Peoples communities</li> <li>• reduce the harm caused by gambling and tobacco</li> <li>• work to prevent family violence and support victims</li> <li>• help more people volunteer in the community</li> <li>• work with others to support people in insecure housing</li> <li>• advocate for better use of digital technology for everyone.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Vibrant spaces and places in Merri-bek</b> Create welcoming, unique spaces across Merri-bek that are for everyone. Improve access to services and housing. Encourage artistic, social and economic activity.</p>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide accessible facilities to meet community needs</li> <li>• design safe neighbourhoods and pleasant places for all</li> <li>• create a sense of place and protect valued heritage</li> <li>• promote clean, attractive and useful public spaces</li> <li>• create engaging spaces for children, young people and families</li> <li>• increase local affordable housing</li> <li>• work for better quality private developments</li> <li>• improve our shopping strips while keeping their local identities</li> <li>• increase local jobs by supporting local, micro, and social business</li> <li>• make Merri-bek a creative and cultural destination.</li> </ul>
<p><b>An empowered and collaborative Merri-bek</b> Build community trust. Encourage everyone to get involved in council decision-making. Make good use of our resources. Be accessible and responsive to our community.</p>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improve access to council information for everyone</li> <li>• increase community participation in council decision-making</li> <li>• involve our community in matters which directly impact their lives</li> <li>• improve the way we respond to community requests and issues</li> <li>• advocate for our community</li> <li>• secure more developer funding to respond to population growth</li> <li>• manage our funds fairly and transparently for the long term</li> <li>• manage assets to meet changing needs over the long term.</li> </ul>

# Report of operations

## Performance against our objectives

Council's performance for the 2023–24 year has been reported against each strategic objective to demonstrate how we are performing in achieving the 2021–25 Council Plan. Performance was measured as follows:

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

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

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

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

## Local Government Performance Reporting Framework

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

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

Some of the information below is repeated in the 'Performance Statement' section of this report on page 101. This includes commentary and figures in addition to the LGPRF requirements met in the Performance Statement, which is auditable by the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO).

## Strategic objective 1: An environmentally proactive Merri-bek

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

### Strategic indicators

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

Strategic Indicator/measure	Target or desired trend	2023–24 Result	Comments
<b>Council greenhouse gas emissions from baseline year</b>	80%–100% reduction by 2030 against 2011–12 (baseline)	65% reduction (2022–23 from 2011–12 baseline) 2022–23 emissions were 7,388 tCO <sub>2</sub> e.  2011–12 (baseline) (21,253 tCO <sub>2</sub> e), but above 2021–22 (6,597 tCO <sub>2</sub> e).	Due to a lag in available data, the 2022–23 is Council's most recent certified annual carbon footprint, with Climate Active certification.  Factors which influenced the change in emissions from 2021–22 to 2022–23 include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The published 'emission factor' for diesel increased by 18%. While Council fleet diesel use dropped by 2%, related emissions increased by 16% (610 tCO<sub>2</sub>e).</li> <li>Reporting guidelines for electricity were changed, which meant exports of solar electricity no longer offset other emissions. This increased reported emissions by 156 tCO<sub>2</sub>e.</li> </ul> Council's remaining carbon emissions are mostly (85%) from diesel use by fleet and contractors, and gas use at Council sites.  Key actions to meet Council's 2030 carbon target: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Electrify Fawkner Leisure Centre redevelopment due for completion by summer 2024–25.</li> <li>A grant application to the Federal Community Energy Upgrades Fund seeks funding for the electrification of the Oak Park Sports and Aquatic Precinct.</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transition light and heavy vehicle fleet to zero-carbon technologies, requiring an upgrade of electrical capacity at Council's Hadfield Depot.</li> </ul>
<b>Community greenhouse gas emissions</b>	% Reduction (from baseline year) 1,672kt (CO2-e).	35% reduction 1,087kt (CO2-e).	The most recent community emissions profile is 1,087 kt CO2-e for the 2021–22 period, representing a 35% reduction against the 2013–14 baseline of 1,672kt (CO2-e). This data was sourced from snapshotclimate.com.au and adheres to international standards for emissions reporting for cities and local governments.
<b>Juvenile tree retention on public land (1-3-year-old trees) in the municipality.</b>	85% retention rate	84.5%	A total of 15.5% of trees were lost that were planted in 2021–22, 2022–23 and 2023–24.
<b>Number of trees planted on public land in the municipality</b>	10,000 over the 4-year period plus replacement of trees removed in this period	2,718 trees planted	<p>The number of trees planted for 2023–24 was 2,718, and the number of trees removed was 775 (based on Tree Inventory data).</p> <p>Our annual public tree planting target is exceeded in each reporting year of the Council Plan (the plan).</p> <p>The number of trees removed over the life of this plan is estimated to be 2,275. Council exceeded this year's target by 175 trees, providing the community with a significant net increase in the planting of public trees.</p>
<b>Tonnes of kerbside waste and recycling collected</b>	% Reduction (Baseline measurement 57,551 tonnes)	56,744.86 tonnes	<p>Overall, across all streams, there was a 2.4% net increase in the tonnes of waste and recycling collected compared to the prior year, led by a 31.5% increase in food and garden organics offsetting reductions in the other streams</p> <p>The breakdowns are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tonnes of co-mingled recycling (10,529.95) and glass (2462.21) collected, totaling 12,992.16 tonnes which is a 4.9% reduction on the prior year, resulting from the move to</li> </ul>

			<p>fortnightly co-mingled recycling and introduction of 4-weekly glass.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tonnes of food and garden waste collected: 17,322.03, which is a 31.5% increase on the prior year following the doubling in collection frequency to weekly.</li> <li>• Tonnes of garbage collected: 26,430.67 which is a 7.5% reduction on the prior year.</li> </ul>
<b>Municipal waste diverted from landfill (Local Government Performance Framework Indicator)</b>	% Increase by previous year result: 48.42%	53.42%	The commencement of weekly food and garden organics (FOGO) collection municipal-wide from July 2023 has seen a positive increase year-to-date in the diversion rate of organics, recycling (including glass) from landfills. Council has exceeded the target set for this indicator, which aligns with the desired outcomes of the newly implemented strategy and policy positions.
<b>Capacity of water harvesting systems for re-use/irrigation</b>	Increase (Baseline measurement 39 ML/year)	0 M / year increase.	<p>The Dunstan Reserve Stormwater Harvesting project will be delivered over two financial years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2023–24, the design and procurement for the planned construction was completed.</li> <li>• Delivery of the project and capacity of water harvested will be accounted for 2024–25.</li> <li>• The capacity of water harvesting systems for re-use / irrigation remains the same as the baseline measurement 39 ML/year.</li> </ul>
<b>Area of catchment treated by water sensitive urban design approaches</b>	Increase (Baseline measure 256 hectares)	<p>0 hectares increase.</p> <p>Works are progressing for a continued increase in 2024–25.</p>	<p>Planning and design of several water sensitive urban design projects were progressed in 2023–24.</p> <p>Delivery of the designed projects will progress to construction in 2024–25.</p> <p>Currently, the area of catchment treated by water sensitive urban design remains the same as last year at 284Ha.</p>



Major Initiatives and Priorities	Progress – the following statement reviews the progress of council in relation to major initiatives and priorities as identified in the 2023–24 budget and Council Action Plan for the year.
<p><b>\$1.5 million for Park Close to Home projects including 260 Sydney Road, Brunswick and 508–512 Bell Street, Pascoe Vale</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council continues to implement its successful Park Close to Home program, delivering new open spaces for the community in areas which need it most.</li> <li>• This year Council started construction on Michelle Guglielmo Park (260 Sydney Road, Brunswick) and the new park at 14 Frith Street, Brunswick. Both new parks are on track to be open to the public before Christmas in time for Summer.</li> <li>• Community consultation on designs for the new park at York Street, Pascoe Vale South at 508–512 Bell Street commenced, with construction scheduled to occur in 2024–25.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Implement Zero Carbon Merri-bek including 2030 targets review, transition off fossil gas and innovative partnerships for efficient and distributed renewable energy</b></p>	<p>This year Council made significant progress towards a zero carbon Merri-bek by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Advocacy for a safe climate:</b> Council called on the state and federal governments to scale up energy upgrades for vulnerable households and submissions to the Australian Government's National Adaptation Plan Issues Paper and the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Climate Resilience.</li> <li>• <b>Electrification of Council buildings:</b> Seven small facilities were electrified, and the electrification of Fawkner Leisure Centre is due for completion by Summer 2024–25. Council applied for a grant from the Federal Community Energy Upgrades Fund to electrify the Oak Park Sports and Aquatic Precinct.</li> <li>• <b>Community engagement:</b> Council delivered a successful Electrify Everything communications campaign with Sustainable House Day, the Solar for Apartments webinar, and the High Life Expo sustainability events. Council held The Adaptation Game educational game play sessions at many community venues, to show Council's commitment to build climate awareness and support community action.</li> <li>• <b>Subsidies for a just and inclusive transition:</b> The solar and thermal subsidy program supported 64 eligible low-income households to improve their homes' thermal comfort, and 35 households to install rooftop solar panel. These households will now save over \$600 a year on their energy bills and be more comfortable in their homes.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Promoting sustainable travel behaviours:</b> Five new primary schools joined the Ride &amp; Stride program, which offered e-bike subsidies, bike education courses, and bike repair pop-ups. Four schools held volunteer-led Open Streets events. A total of 113 people were trained in bike maintenance including 46 women and 67 nonbinary locals. Ten women in Fawkner learned to ride through the innovative 'Wheel Sisters' program.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Finalise and implement Kerbside Waste Reform (including Policy)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council launched the four-bin kerbside waste service in July 2023, with the “Thank you Merri-bek” campaign to thank our community for adjusting to the new service and encouraging correct bin use. The multi-unit dwelling assessment program and “Bin Smart Buildings” e-newsletter supported residents living in units and apartments to improve the bin storage and set-up at their properties.</li> <li>• The “Recycle Right” communications campaign started in June to help educate residents on how to reduce bin contamination with outdoor advertising, educational videos and social media, to encourage residents to update their recycling knowledge. After 12 months of the 4-bin service, a 7.5% decrease in waste sent to landfill was achieved. Planning for the next stage of the kerbside reform program, the fortnightly general rubbish trial, is underway.</li> <li>• The continued rollout of Zero Waste and Plastic Wise community and Council initiatives saw the trial of reusable crockery at several events, going beyond the Plastic Wise Policy to reduce waste to landfill, not just plastic waste.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Urban forest strategy – tree planting Regime</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council planted 2718 trees with increased focus on purchasing quality tree stock from nurseries, improving established tree maintenance practices and watering regimes. The result is healthy and vigorous tree growth with less tree loss.</li> <li>• The new 'tricky-to-plant spaces' program started this year, with 55 new tree plots created in areas of high urban heat islands in Brunswick and Coburg North. Creating tree plots involved removing existing low-quality soil and replacing with new soil, to help trees grow quicker and healthier than traditional footpath cut-outs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Review and implement the Merri-bek Open Space Strategy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council endorsed the final Open Space Strategy, developed with full community involvement and engagement. Councillors reflected on the strategy's innovative vision and strategic direction and how it will shape the future of open spaces in Merri-bek.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The new strategy serves as a guiding framework to plan, deliver, and maintain outdoor spaces across Merri-bek, to continue as a liveable, green city designed with the needs of future generations in mind. Council will continue to engage with the community about open space projects, to realise the vision and objectives in the Open Space Strategy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Implementation of the Integrated Water Management Framework 2040 and action plan</b></p>	<p>Council is committed to advancing the Integrated Water Management (IWM) Framework 2040 and action plan, targeting effective and sustainable water management practices within the municipality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The construction of the Dunstan Reserve stormwater harvesting system in Brunswick West, was contingent upon securing external funding.</li> <li>• After unexpected delays, the construction tender process was finalised, with a tender report scheduled for review at the July 2024 Council meeting. Construction is expected to start in early 2024–25, marking a pivotal step toward enhancing stormwater management in the area.</li> </ul> <p>Council also made strong progress in developing place-based action plans to deliver IWM outcomes across the remaining nine sub-catchments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive analysis was conducted to identify issues, opportunities, priority areas, and potential works for each sub-catchment.</li> <li>• A range of potential initiatives were identified through stakeholder engagement aiming to improve waterway health, promote greening and cooling, enhance open spaces and recreational areas, and support active transport and flood mitigation efforts.</li> <li>• These insights will inform the action planning process as Council prioritises the next steps in the IWM Strategy Action Plan.</li> </ul> <p>These initiatives demonstrate Council’s commitment to sustainable water management and the enhancement of community resilience to climate change.</p>
<p><b>Develop a governance structure and operations to oversee the Community Food Hub in the North</b></p>	<p>The Food Leadership Action Group (FLAG) funded two key projects— Growing Farmers and Merri Food Hubs trial projects through a competitive grants program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project's governance has changed to a lead organisation model. Open Food Network is leading the project, and Council is supported by FLAG members.</li> <li>• The project has set up a trial FLAG food subsidy voucher program (the program), in exchange for affordable and culturally appropriate fresh fruit and vegetables.</li> <li>• The program has intake, ongoing consultation and support from other service providers.</li> </ul>

	<p>The FLAG funded fresh produce supply project addresses two challenges of on-the-ground community organisations who run food relief:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. lack of funding to pay for food (food subsidies)</li> <li>2. lack of reliable and affordable fresh and culturally appropriate fresh produce (ethical supply subsidy).</li> </ol>
<p><b>Investigate Municipal battery storage</b></p>	<p>Council achieved many key milestones under the Neighbourhood Battery Initiative, a collaborative project funded by a state grant in partnership with Yarra Council.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council successfully completed the first technical and commercial analysis stage across 20 identified sites within both municipalities. In line with the milestones in the funding agreement, the final report of these investigations is anticipated to be completed early in 2024–25.</li> <li>• Council also finalised governance arrangements for the Brunswick Community Battery Project, which is supported by federal grant funding and involves a partnership with the City of Melbourne.</li> <li>• The project's engineering and energy advisors started developing procurement documentation for the battery's supply, installation, and operation.</li> <li>• Council also actively engaged with CitiPower, the electricity distribution service provider, to start the connection application process.</li> </ul> <p>Both initiatives show Council's commitment to advancing sustainable energy solutions within our community and reflect Council's dedication to innovative projects which promote environmental sustainability and resilience.</p>

## Services

The following statement provides information in relation to the services funded in the 2023–24 budget and the persons or sections of the community who are provided the service.

Service	Description	Net Cost Actual <u>Budget</u> Variance \$000
Open Space Design & Development	Partnering with the community, this service protects and enhances our green public open space which includes parks, reserves, playgrounds, sports fields, creek corridors and streetscapes. The service responsibilities of this service unit are open space strategic planning and policy; bushland conservation; and park capital works planning, design and delivery.	(3,261) <u>(2,999)</u> (262)
Open Space Maintenance	This service maintains open space assets such as playgrounds, sporting infrastructure, and park furniture; streetscapes such as street trees, roadside garden beds and street/footpath/laneway weeds; and grounds in community centres, childcare centres and kindergartens located in Merri-bek.	(14,426) <u>(14,361)</u> (65)
Sustainable Built Environment	This service is responsible for developing, implementing, monitoring reporting on strategies, policies, programs and partnerships relating to Merri-bek's environmental sustainability, in particular relating to integrated water management, sustainable management of Council's buildings and infrastructure, promoting a sustainable built environment in new development, and promotion and expansion of our electric vehicle fleet and charging network.	(1,393) <u>(1,797)</u> 404
Sustainable Communities	This service is responsible for developing, implementing, monitoring and reporting on strategies, policies, programs and partnerships relating to Merri-bek's environmental sustainability, in particular fostering community climate action and advocacy for zero net emissions, zero waste and a circular economy in Merri-bek.	(2,526) <u>(3,023)</u> 497
Community Development & Social Policy	This service contributes to social justice and community wellbeing by advocating for equitable and inclusive Council policies, services, facilities and programs.	(2,238) <u>(2,158)</u>

	Further, by facilitating consultation and collaboration across Council and with community partners to address current and emerging community needs and supporting local actions to promote human rights, accessibility for all, volunteering, community service networks, food security, social cohesion, reconciliation, gender equality, family violence prevention, gambling harm prevention.	(80)
<b>Waste Services</b>	From 2023–24 the waste collection service provides weekly general rubbish and food and garden organics collections, fortnightly mixed recycling collections, 4-weekly glass recycling collections and booked kerbside hard waste collections.	(22,140) <u>(24,311)</u> 2,171

**Service performance indicators**

The following statement provides the results of the prescribed service performance indicators and measures including explanation of results in the comments.

LGPRF under this section	Results				
Service/Indicator/measure	2021	2022	2023	2024	Comments
<p><b>Service standard</b></p> <p><b>Kerbside collection bins missed</b></p> <p>[Number of kerbside garbage and recycling collection bins missed/Number of scheduled kerbside garbage and recycling collection bin lifts] x10,000</p>	12.92	12.51	14.65	16.54	<p>This reporting year Council saw a 13% increase in garbage and recycling collection requests. This was primarily due to missed collections while the community adjusted to the new fortnightly recycling collection. Additionally, there were some delays in our southern collection due to resource shortages with the Council's contractor in this collection area.</p>
<p><b>Service cost</b></p> <p><b>Cost of kerbside garbage bin collection service</b></p> <p>[Direct cost of the kerbside garbage bin collection service/Number of kerbside garbage collection bins]</p>	\$68.05	\$70.95	\$74.17	\$75.25	<p>There have been minimal changes to the cost-of-service delivery for this year, a positive result for Council.</p>
<p><b>Service cost</b></p> <p><b>Cost of kerbside recyclables collection service</b></p> <p>[Direct cost of the kerbside</p>	\$101.02	\$114.00	\$122.31	\$120.97	<p>There have been minimal changes to the cost-of-service delivery for this year, a positive result for Council.</p>

recyclables bin collection service/Number of kerbside recyclables collection bins]					
<b>Waste diversion</b>  <b>Kerbside collection waste diverted from landfill</b>  [Weight of recyclables and green organics collected from kerbside bins/Weight of garbage, recyclables and green organics collected from kerbside bins] x100	49.39%	48.34%	48.42%	53.42%	The commencement of weekly food and garden organics (FOGO) collection municipal-wide from July 2023 has seen a positive increase year-to-date in the diversion rate of organics, recycling (including glass) from landfills. Council has exceeded the target set for this indicator, which aligns with the desired outcomes of the newly implemented strategy and policy positions.



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

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

### Strategic indicators

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

Strategic Indicator/measure	Target or desired trend	2023–24 Result	Comments
<b>Expenditure per capita on bike and pedestrian infrastructure</b>	Maintain baseline (With an aim to increase, subject to budget process)	\$12.76	Council's baseline expenditure per capita on bike and pedestrian infrastructure is \$10 per head of population. Actual spending, including some carry forwards from 2022–23, was \$12.76 per head.
<b>Number of transport related injuries and fatalities</b>	Decrease	4 fatalities, 106 serious and 328 other injury crashes	Crash history from 2022–23 indicates 4 fatalities, 106 serious injuries and 328 other injury crashes which unfortunately indicates an increase in fatalities and serious injuries. As a 3% increase on the previous year, this is consistent with the statewide increase in injuries and fatalities. Note** There is a lag in available data used to measure this indicator.
<b>Proportion of trips made by public transport, bicycle or on foot</b>	Increase	No result available	Council has been unable to ascertain this information as the annual household surveys have not been undertaken.
<b>Number of kilometres of new, separated, dedicated cycling infrastructure / safe places to ride</b>	Maintain baseline (With an aim to increase, subject to budget process)	70 metre increase	Council installed a shared zone of 70 m in Railway Place, Brunswick, in the last financial year to provide improved safety for cyclists using the Upfield shared path. This is in addition to the 840 m installed in the previous financial year, taking the total number of metres installed to 910 m over the past three financial years, which is in line with the indicators objective to increase new, separated, dedicated cycling infrastructure safe places to ride around the municipality.

			Planning is underway for implementation of several large cycling projects in 2024–25 including O’Hea Street, Coburg, Victoria Street, Brunswick and Harding Street Bridge.
<b>Number of pedestrian crossings installed per year</b>	Maintain baseline (With an aim to increase, subject to budget process) 2-3 per year	17 Installations	Council installed 17 pedestrian crossing treatments (coloured and/or textured road surface treatments that contrast with adjacent roadway, zebra crossings, pedestrian operated signals, pedestrian islands) after receiving more State and Federal funding, which is 10 more than in 2022–23.

<b>Major Initiatives and Priorities</b>	<b>Progress – the following statement reviews the progress of council in relation to major initiatives and priorities as identified in the 2023–24 budget and Council Action Plan for the year.</b>
<b>Refresh the transport strategy in consultation with the community</b>	<p>The Transport Strategy and Action Plan was officially adopted by Council in March, marking a step forward to enhance transportation infrastructure in Merri-bek. The new strategy outlines a forward-thinking approach to future transport projects, and introduced the 'Streets for People' program, which aims to create more accessible and pedestrian-friendly urban environments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extensive community engagement informed the development of the strategy, with over 1,300 Merri-bek residents giving valuable insights in the two stages of consultation. This robust feedback process ensured the strategy reflected the community's needs and aspirations.</li> <li>• Council started implementing the revised Parking Management Policy in April. The amendments to this policy will enhance how Council officers oversee public parking modifications and the allocation of parking permits across Merri-bek, to improve municipal parking management.</li> </ul>
<b>Implement footpaths and bike paths capital works program</b>	<p>Key highlights of the delivery of the active travel capital works program include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Installing 40 km/h speed limits on all local streets to improve safety for vulnerable road users.</li> <li>• Nine intersection threshold treatments.</li> <li>• Roundabout improvement projects at Belair and Chapman Avenues, Glenroy and Barrow and Moore Streets, Coburg.</li> <li>• Two zebra crossings.</li> <li>• Pedestrian operated signals on Hilton Street, Glenroy.</li> <li>• Lighting upgrades.</li> <li>• Shared zone in Railway Place, Brunswick, near Union Street.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renewal of both asphalt and concrete footpaths throughout the municipality, fully expending the budget for this program.</li> </ul>
<b>Implement roads and car parks renewal and maintenance capital works program</b>	Council made significant progress in delivering both the roads and car park capital works renewal program and the road resurfacing capital works program. By June 2024, 85% of budget was expended and of 27 projects, only 3 were less than 85% complete with all commenced. The road resurfacing budget was fully expended at 30 June 2024.
<b>Design and construction of new shared paths along the Craigieburn Rail Corridor</b>	The shared path designs for Stages 2 and 3 of the Craigieburn Rail Corridor were not approved by VicTrack and Melbourne Water due to concerns about flood and construction impacts. The future of these projects will be determined in future infrastructure planning programs.
<b>Advocate to improve public transport capacity and equitable access across Merri-bek</b>	<p>Council advocacy efforts made significant progress in calling for improving public transport accessibility and sustainability within Merri-bek.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key highlights include achieving media coverage about the need for Sydney Road-accessible tram stops, protected bike lanes, and lower speed limits prompted by the findings from the Victorian Inquiry into Vulnerable Road Users (the inquiry).</li> <li>• Council made a submission to the inquiry and spoke to the submission at a hearing held at Council, to highlight the importance of safe and accessible transport options for our community.</li> <li>• Council successfully engaged with the Minister for Public and Active Transport, the Parliamentary Secretary for Transport and Level Crossing Removal, and representatives from the Level Crossing Removal Project and the Department of Transport and Planning to progress planning and consultation around the Brunswick Level Crossing Removal Project.</li> <li>• Council highlighted how the project could be a catalyst for accessibility and safety improvements on Sydney Road and improved urban design outcomes for the Upfield corridor.</li> <li>• Significant progress was made to develop a regional approach to advocate for the Upfield rail line upgrade, duplication, extension, and electrification to Wallan. The Northern Councils Alliance (NCA) endorsed a regional advocacy paper and a strategic plan for its transport campaign.</li> </ul> <p>Council held productive briefings about improving public transport capacity and equitable access across Merri-bek with local, state, and federal Members of Parliament.</p>

<b>Services</b>		
The following statement provides information in relation to the services funded in the 2023-24 budget and the persons or sections of the community who are provided the service.		
<b>Service</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Net Cost Actual Budget Variance \$000</b>
<b>Engineering Services</b>	This service develops and coordinates the detailed planning, design, tendering and construction of Council's Road and drainage asset capital works programs, and manages the design and reconstruction of Council's drainage network.	(378) <u>(1,055)</u> 677
<b>Transport Development</b>	This service provides strategic transport planning and transport engineering to support a liveable city by ensuring that the community has access to a variety of modes to travel around and that consideration is given to what is best for the environment, community and the economy. Specific services include strategic transport planning, transport engineering, road safety and accessibility, transport permits, and transport advocacy.	(2,444) <u>(3,199)</u> 755
<b>Road Construction and Maintenance</b>	This service aims to create a more liveable city by providing a range of services to maintain and improve the safety and integrity of the City's Road Network. Specific services include pothole patching, road re-sheeting and various civil infrastructure maintenance activities.	(4,342) <u>(4,384)</u> 42

**Service performance indicators**

The following statement provides the results of the prescribed service performance indicators and measures including explanation of results in the comments.

LGPRF under this section	Results				Comments
	2021	2022	2023	2024	
<b>Service/ Indicator/ measure</b> <b>Roads</b>  <b>Satisfaction of use</b> <b>Sealed local road requests</b>  [Number of sealed local road requests / kilometres of sealed local roads] x100	98.94	98.78	142.53	137.50	Sealed local road requests have reduced slightly, attributed to Council's ongoing commitment to proactive road maintenance and construction programs.
<b>Condition</b>  <b>Sealed local roads maintained to condition standards</b> [Number of kilometres of sealed local roads below the renewal intervention level set by Council / kilometres of sealed local roads] x100	95.04%	95.36%	93.34%	92.37%	Council undertook its four-yearly survey of road condition in 2023–24 and the results have shown while just over 92% of the road network is above the intervention level, ongoing investment is needed to maintain these standards.
<b>Service cost</b>  <b>Cost of sealed local road reconstruction</b> [Direct cost of sealed local road reconstruction / square	\$237.53	\$299.69	\$347.04	\$435.16	This increase reflects the current inflation in the CPI and within the construction industry. Additionally, over the last three years, Council's commitment to improving drainage in older areas has also contributed to higher costs.

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metres of sealed local roads reconstructed]					
<b>Service Cost</b>  <b>Cost of sealed local road resealing</b>  [Direct cost of sealed local road resealing / square metres of sealed local roads resealed]	\$19.58	\$22.10	\$28.13	\$32.20	The increase in cost also reflects the current inflation in the CPI and within the construction industry.
<b>Satisfaction</b>  <b>Satisfaction with sealed local roads</b>  [Community satisfaction rating out of 100 with how council has performed on the condition of sealed local roads]	60.00	57.00	51.00	68.00	The score for Merri-bek in 2024 of 68 (metro Melbourne scored 70) is a significant increase from 51, scored in 2023. Significant investment continues to be made in road reconstruction and resurfacing throughout Merri-bek. It is noted that the customer satisfaction survey methodology has changed in 2023–24.

### Strategic objective 3: A healthy and caring Merri-bek

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

#### Strategic indicators

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

Strategic Indicator/measure	Target or desired trend	2023–24 Result	Comments
<b>Number of visits to aquatic facilities per head of municipal population (Local Government Performance Framework Indicator).</b> Noting construction periods and irregular opening hours may impact on number of visits.	Increase	5.28	Council visitor attendance was down slightly from last year's results due to a cooler-than-average summer and the closure of the Fawkner Leisure Centre for a major redevelopment.
<b>Active library borrowers in municipality (Local Government Performance Framework Indicator)</b>	Increase	22.34%	22% of the Merri-Bek community are registered library members. Library Services has continued to campaign to encourage the community to join and/or return to the library with an 11.6% growth in members from last year.
<b>Participation in the MCH service (Local Government Performance Framework Indicator)</b>	Increase	75.51%	Participation in MCH services has increased slightly. The positive results reflect process improvement with various proactive programs that are available for this service.

<b>Participation in community playgroups kindergarten and childhood immunisation programs.</b>	Increase	Four-year-old Kindergarten participation: 97%	<p>Four-year-old kindergarten participation increased by 9% since the previous year. This may indicate the success of continued implementation of early years reforms and kindergarten infrastructure expansions.</p> <p>We also note the Department of Education disclaimer that for LGAs and SA2s with small populations, a small error in estimating the number of children in the year before school population can disproportionately affect the participation rate.</p>
	Increase	Childhood immunisation programs: 4007	<p>There were 4007 children under 5-years of age vaccinated through our council immunisation program. This represents a 9.1% increase on the previous year.</p> <p>It is positive to see the overall direction of the trend with some continuing vaccine hesitation in the community</p>
<b>Increase Merri-bek Council's active partnerships with First Nations Business and community organisations</b>	Increase	148%	<p>Council procurement aims to spend 1% of its total procurement activities year-on-year through partnerships with First Nations Businesses.</p> <p>Council achieved 61% of its target by spending \$962,423 in 2023–24, which is an increase of 148% compared to \$383,608 in 2022–23.</p> <p>The Ballerdt Mooroop Project and Ballerdt Mooroop Day and other events gave the opportunity to engage First Nations businesses Little Rocket, Yarn Strong Sisters, Mullum Mullum catering, Wanyara, Deadly Sports Plus, and the Djirri Djirri Dancers. Design on Country is a partnership with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Aboriginal Corporation and the University of Melbourne delivered at the Ballerdt Mooroop site.</p>



Major Initiatives and Priorities	Progress – the following statement reviews the progress of council in relation to major initiatives and priorities as identified in the 2023–24 budget and Council Action Plan for the year.
<p><b>Develop and implement a Climate Resilience Strategy (including climate adaptation)</b></p>	<p>In November 2022, Council endorsed the Climate Risk Strategy (the strategy) and the Climate Risk Foundational Action Plan (the action plan) in June 2023. The first year of the Action Plan has shown progress and is largely on track with the plan's objectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant achievements include uplifting Council staff capability to manage climate risk, through reporting and disclosures</li> <li>• Successful integration of climate resilience considerations into key projects, strategies, and action plans.</li> <li>• Council officers assessed early years, youth, aged, and community services for resilience to extreme heat and put in place relevant procedures to ensure appropriate preparation and response, focusing on at-risk clients.</li> <li>• Council conducted two rounds of building vulnerability assessments across neighbourhood houses, kindergartens, and senior citizen centres.</li> <li>• The findings and recommendations provide guidance to the development and delivery of Council's capital works program, including on maintenance, asset management, and identification of priority works.</li> </ul> <p>These actions are expected to enable safe service delivery in Council buildings under a changing climate.</p>
<p><b>Review and strengthen the Urban Heat Island Effect Action Plan in alignment with Council's review of key environment and climate strategies</b></p>	<p>Council reviewed the Urban Heat Island Effect (UHIE) Action Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The review found many of the objectives were delivered or effectively transferred to more recent strategic and planning documents —Urban Forest Strategy, the IWM Strategy and Action Plan, the Open Space Strategy, and the Climate Risk Strategy and Foundational Action Plan.</li> <li>• The reduction of the urban heat island effect was delivered through the Environmentally Sustainable Design requirements in the Planning Scheme.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These endorsed documents demonstrate Council’s commitment to continuing action to mitigate urban heat and is well equipped through its range of strategies and actions.</li> <li>• While existing UHIE Action Plan actions are carried forward, the findings of the review show strengthening cooling interventions in response to UHIE are occurring and will need to continue across Council’s strategic landscape.</li> </ul> <p>Council is committed to fostering a resilient community well-equipped to handle the challenges posed by climate change, to safeguard the wellbeing of our residents and improve our municipality's overall sustainability.</p>
<p><b>Fawkner Leisure Centre upgrade</b></p>	<p>The new, accessible, and environmentally friendly Fawkner Leisure Centre has improved options for people of all ages and abilities to lead healthy and active lifestyles. The new leisure centre includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a new 50-metre outdoor pool</li> <li>• water play pool</li> <li>• sauna, spa, and steam room</li> <li>• gym extension with a new program and group fitness spaces,</li> <li>• cycle studio,</li> <li>• new foyer, reception</li> <li>• café lounge area with landscaped outdoor seating and social areas.</li> </ul> <p>Council consulted extensively with the local community to ensure their feedback was represented in the final design. Works commenced in April 2023, and the centre is scheduled to open for summer of 2024–25.</p>
<p><b>Advocate to support delivery of the Ballerdt Mooroop Community Hub</b></p>	<p>Council proudly hosted 2024 Ballerdt Mooroop Day on 26 May, which drew over 400 attendees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The event commenced with a Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony led by Wurundjeri Elders Uncle Andrew Gardiner and Uncle Bill Nicholson, with attendance by Councillors and the Local Member.</li> <li>• The significance of the site was activated with a variety of engaging activities—a dance workshop by the Djirri Djirri Wurundjeri female dance group, a landscape design exhibition by Melbourne University students, face painting by Yarn Strong Sista, and traditional Aboriginal games facilitated by Wanyara.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community organisations Sowing Sistas and Merri-bek Residents for Reconciliation Action showed a growing support for the Ballerdt Mooroop project. The event concluded with an invitation to all to join the Friends of Ballerdt Mooroop group.</li> </ul> <p>In May 2024, Council received the Reconciliation Victoria Maggolee Award, for the collaborative efforts with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to transform the Ballerdt Mooroop site into a thriving community hub. This accolade is a testament to our dedication to fostering cultural connections and ensuring the success of the Ballerdt Mooroop project for future generations.</p>
<p><b>Continue the delivery of the early years infrastructure plan across the municipality including Brunswick Early Years Hub, Derby Street Kindergarten / Children’s Centre, and Oak Park Kindergarten in 2023–24</b></p>	<p>Key early years infrastructure projects included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Pascoe Vale Community Centre</b> —Stage Two works were completed, creating a larger children's yard to accommodate up to 33 children. An extra Maternal and Child Health (MCH) consulting room is progressing and due for completion in July 2024.</li> <li><b>Oak Park Kindergarten</b> —works to construct an extra 33-place kindergarten room and make other improvements to the centre is progressing, with an anticipated completion date of August 2024.</li> <li><b>Derby Street Children's Centre</b> —works commenced on Stage Two of the project to provide two new kindergarten rooms and 27 more places. The Mayor, Cr Pulford, with the Minister for Children, the Hon Lizzy Blandthorn and the Member for Pascoe Vale, the Hon Anthony Cianflone, visited the centre on 6 June to view the completed Stage One works. They conducted a sod turn for Stage Two, which is scheduled for completion in November 2024.</li> <li><b>Dunstan Reserve Child Care Centre</b> — On 6 June, the Minister for Children visited the centre and announced the allocation of \$1M funding to support the project to construct an extra 22-place kindergarten room and upgrade staff amenities. Works are expected to commence in early 2025.</li> <li><b>Brunswick Early Years Hub</b> — Detailed design is progressing for the Hub to be built on council-owned land at 346 Albert Street, Brunswick. Construction works are anticipated to commence in 2025. The Hub will include maternal and child health, long day care, 3-year-old and 4-year-old kindergarten, and a community room for playgroups and parent groups.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Youth Assertive Outreach Program</b></p>	<p>Council contributed \$60,000 in funding toward Youth Assertive Outreach in recognition of long waiting lists for specialist support and a major service gap in the demand for intensive case-management support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Youth Holistic Outreach Program (YHOP) is an early intervention assertive outreach service which engages and connects at-risk young people aged 12 to 25 years to individualised housing, mental health education, training, employment, and crisis support.</li> <li>• Forty-two young people were supported during the reporting period. The funding provided this year was used to appoint a part-time YHOP coach (youth worker) to provide timely support to young people to overcome a range of barriers through tailored, flexible and holistic wrap-around support.</li> <li>• The young people engaged in the program presented with multiple and complex issues including poor mental health, relationship breakdown, disability and family violence and reported improvements in their relationships, social connection, self-confidence, mental health, and re-engagement in education and training, from the support they received from YHOP.</li> <li>• YHOP introduced an intake worker to improve young people's engagement with the service.</li> <li>• YHOP also provided outreach through schools with a YHOP coach based at Oxygen Youth Space one afternoon each week, to improve young people's access to immediate support and referral pathways.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Implement the Children, Young People and Families Plan</b></p>	<p>Council continued implementing the Children, Young People and Families Plan this year. Key highlights included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council partnered with Victoria University to host a pop-up play event at Coburg Station House on 11 June 2024, to celebrate the inaugural United Nations International Day of Play. This event highlighted the importance of play and fostered community engagement.</li> <li>• The Youth Zone at the Glenroy Community Hub continues to serve as a vibrant and popular destination for young people, with a diverse range of programs offered at the CB Smith Reserve sports hall drawing enthusiastic attendance. The Youth Ambassadors' survey engaged over 600 school students about school disengagement. The findings will be presented and discussed at the upcoming School Principals Forum on 21 August 2024. This initiative highlights the commitment to addressing educational challenges faced by young people.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Children’s Reference Group continues with 12 primary school aged children participating in quarterly meetings where they provide feedback on Council strategies, plans and projects —Food System Strategy, Safe Standards Resource for Children, Transport Strategy, and the Children’s Exhibition. This initiative supports children’s civic engagement and participation, aligning with the endorsed Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter.</li> <li>• Maternal and Child Health Service remains dedicated to promoting health and wellbeing for families, providing preventative programs —Sleep and Settling sessions and the INFANT program, which support early nutrition and parenting.</li> <li>• The Dads Group made a significant impact at the Glenroy Festival, successfully engaging with local families and recruiting 12 new fathers to participate in local groups and online events.</li> <li>• Council developed an Early Years Workforce Strategy with other local services, to focus on attracting and retaining high-quality Educators to ensure excellence in service provision. This strategic approach is crucial to support the ongoing development and wellbeing of our youngest community members.</li> </ul> <p>All initiatives reflect Council's commitment to fostering a supportive and engaged community, ensuring children, young people and families receive the resources and opportunities they need to thrive.</p>
<p><b>Implement the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan and audits</b></p>	<p>Council successfully delivered all planned activities in the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This year’s key highlight was the delivery of specialised disability inclusion training for Neighbourhood House staff, to equip them with skills to support all community members effectively.</li> <li>• Council hosted a vibrant social dance event for more 150 residents from Supported Residential Services (SRSs), fostering a sense of community and social engagement. This event gave residents an excellent opportunity to connect and build relationships.</li> <li>• The redevelopment of the Good Access Good Business program, to More Access More Business, has enhanced our advocacy efforts for local businesses to adopt more inclusive practices.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Council successfully advocated for the endorsement of temporary threshold ramps at shopfronts, which is a significant step towards improved access for individuals with disabilities. This empowers our continued commitment to enhancing mobility across the community.</li><li>• Council implemented a work experience program tailored for students with intellectual disabilities, to provide valuable opportunities to gain practical skills and experience.</li><li>• Council facilitated several networks to foster collaboration among stakeholders committed to improving accessibility across our municipality.</li></ul>
<b>Implement the Social Cohesion Plan</b>	<p>Council made significant strides in implementing the Social Cohesion Plan, focusing on fostering inclusivity and community engagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A notable achievement was securing funding for the Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre (ASWC) in Brunswick to collaborate with a consumer-led advisory group. This group is instrumental in guiding the ASWC's initiatives, providing valuable insights on current programs, and informing future projects to promote civic engagement among asylum seekers and refugees.</li><li>• A highlight of this year's activities was the Refugee Week event, co-hosted with the ASWC. This event celebrated the remarkable achievements of the Welcome Centre community and highlighted the resilience and strength of the broader refugee population.</li><li>• The "Women in the Driver's Seat in Merri-bek" (Prace) project was trialed to increase economic participation. Council will analyse reports from this initiative to explore future funding and advocacy opportunities to support women's empowerment in our community.</li></ul>

<p><b>Outdoor help for seniors' program</b></p>	<p>Council made significant advancements in the Outdoor Help for Seniors Program, to assist vulnerable residents and connect the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognising this initiative's positive impact, Council funded this successful pilot program for another year through the June budget process.</li> <li>• This program supported more than 300 residents aged 55+ who are eligible.</li> <li>• The extension of program this year supported 200 people—80 with a mix of raised garden beds, pruning and large clean ups, 83 with general garden works and 36 with Arborist Tree Works.</li> </ul> <p>The continued success and expansion of the Outdoor Help for Seniors Program reflects Council's dedication to meeting the needs of our residents and improving their quality of life.</p>
<p><b>Develop and implement Gender Equity Action Plan and conduct an annual review</b></p>	<p>Council supported and implemented the Gender Equality Action Plan by completing several support programs and activities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of the plan and submission of the report to the Gender Equality Commissioner.</li> <li>• Submitting Gender Impact Assessments (GIAs).</li> <li>• Providing continued training for Council leaders in GIAs.</li> <li>• Holding events and activities to mark International Women's Day and promote positive work by nominating positive female role models across Council.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Implement the First Peoples Employment Plan</b></p>	<p>The implementation of the First Peoples Employment Plan was progressed this year and seen a tremendous positive step forward. Many activities, events, and learnings were achieved including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of the First Peoples Working Group</li> <li>• Launch of the First Peoples Wellbeing Calendar at Coburg and Hadfield.</li> <li>• Unconscious Bias as a cultural support and learning action for our staff and leaders began, with a leadership session for staff on 24 June.</li> </ul>

## Services

The following statement provides information in relation to the services funded in the 2023-24 budget and the persons or sections of the community who are provided the service.

Service	Description	Net Cost Actual <u>Budget</u> Variance \$000
<b>Aquatic and Community Facilities</b>	<p>This service provides for the management, operations and service delivery of Merri-bek's six Aquatic and Leisure Centres through an external contracted service provider; including direction and oversight of the Active Merri-bek program and service development; compliance auditing across a range of functions to deliver the objectives and outcomes required of the contract; capital maintenance and infrastructure improvement planning and project supervision; and policy development and review.</p> <p>This service also provides accessible well utilised Council managed community venues for hire facilities that meet community needs, through the management of the 20 venues including small halls, senior citizen centres and external meeting rooms.</p>	<p>169 <u>(470)</u> 639</p>
<b>Assessment Services</b>	<p>This service provides Home Support Assessments for the older people, people with a disability or illness and their carers, they provide referrals to and information about other related services, and assistance with care coordination. Clients are then either linked to support services as part of the Commonwealth Home Support Program or the Home and Community Care Program for Younger People.</p>	<p>(899) <u>(894)</u> (6)</p>
<b>Children's Services</b>	<p>This service provides years early advocacy and planning, infrastructure management, professional training, network facilitation, resourcing and support to childcare, kindergarten and playgroup providers. This unit also provides services and programs for families, including Supported Playgroups, Family Day Care, Primary School Holiday Programs, Kindergarten Central Enrolment and Child Care Central Registration to access Merri-bek programs, inclusion support to kindergartens through the Preschool Field Officer Program, and information on early years services.</p>	<p>(1,695) <u>(1,531)</u> (164)</p>



<b>Environmental Health</b>	This service works to prevent food-borne illness by ensuring the supply of safe and suitable food through inspecting food premises, manage infectious disease outbreaks, ensure prescribed accommodation is provided at required standards, nuisance complaint investigation and resolution, proactively manage tobacco control activities, manage residential noise complaints, provide support to the Municipal Emergency Management Plan and provide public health-related information to the community.	11 <u>(51)</u> 61
<b>Home Care</b>	This service aims to assist eligible residents to remain living at home independently and in a safe and secure environment. Specific services include home maintenance and modifications, general home care and support, respite care, assistance with shopping and other activities and personal support.	(1,853) <u>(2,254)</u> 401
<b>People and Safety</b>	This service provides advice and support to the organisation regarding: the attraction, recruitment and selection for its employees; payroll; performance management; employee and industrial relations; development and implementation of HR policies, systems and processes including workforce planning; gender equity action planning; learning and development; and oversight of the health and safety processes including management of WorkCover claims and the return to work of sick and injured employees. In addition, there is a focus on the provision of health and well-being activities, induction and workplace training which supports a proactive approach to workplace safety.	(3,841) <u>(3,609)</u> (233)
<b>Maternal Child Health and Immunisation</b>	The Maternal and Child Health (and Immunisations) service supports the optimal health and development of young children and families in their parenting role. Specific activities include parenting support and education; breastfeeding support, sleep and settling, health promotion; immunisations for children, youth and adults; monitoring of growth and development in children; and early identification and attention to child and family health issues. Our Immunisation service provides a schedule of vaccines offered free under the National Immunisation Program and Victorian immunisation programs for children, adolescents and adults at scheduled ages.	(3,833) <u>(3,772)</u> (61)
<b>Recreation Services</b>	This service aims to improve sport and physical activity participation for people of all ages gender, background and ability by promoting the use of recreation facilities and enhancing the capacity of local recreation, sporting clubs and community organisations to deliver services.	(1,581) <u>(1,342)</u> (239)
<b>Social Support Services</b>	This service delivers a number of specific social support programs, including Community Transport, Food Services, Social Support Connection Options (which	(1,951) <u>(2,210)</u>

	provides activities, outings for socially isolated eligible residents), and the provision of information and support to older community residents and senior citizens groups.	260
<b>Youth Services</b>	This service aims to improve the lives of young people through the provision of safe, supportive and inclusive programs and spaces that promote youth participation and wellbeing. Specific service activities include service planning and delivery; facility management and working in partnership with young people and the community to engage and empower young people in Merri-bek.	(1,398) <u>(1,413)</u> 15

<b>Service performance indicators</b>					
The following statement provides the results of the prescribed service performance indicators and measures including explanation of results in the comments.					
<b>LGPRF under this section</b>	<b>Results</b>				
<b>Service/ Indicator/ measure</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Aquatic Facilities</b>  <b>Service standard</b>  <b>Health inspections of aquatic facilities</b> [Number of authorised officer inspections of Council aquatic facilities/Number of Council aquatic facilities]	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	Councils Environmental Health Officers conducted inspections of 100% of council owned aquatic facilities within the reporting period. Fawkner Leisure Centre was closed during this period for major renovations.
<b>Utilisation</b>  <b>Utilisation of aquatic facilities</b> [Number of visits to aquatic facilities/Municipal population]	2.31	3.55	5.64	5.28	Council visitor attendance was down slightly from last year's results due to a cooler-than-average summer and the closure of the Fawkner Leisure Centre for a major redevelopment.

<p><b>Service cost</b></p> <p><b>Cost of aquatic facilities</b></p> <p>[Direct cost of aquatic facilities less income received /Number of visits to aquatic facilities]</p>	\$10.60	\$7.04	\$2.37	\$0.43	While attendance was slightly down for the reporting year, Council saw an improvement in all facility's performance this year. The closure of the Fawkner Leisure Centre for redevelopment also significantly reduced management and operational costs.
<p><b>Food Safety Timeliness</b></p> <p><b>Time taken to action food complaints</b></p> <p>[Number of days between receipt and first response action for all food complaints/ Number of food complaints]</p>	2.91	2.91	2.92	2.18	Positively the average time taken to respond to food related complaints decreased across the year and is an improvement from, 2.92 days last year to 2.18 calendar days this year, maintaining Council's average response rate below three calendar days since 2018.
<p><b>Service standard</b></p> <p><b>Food safety assessments</b></p> <p>[Number of registered class 1 food premises and class 2 food premises that receive an annual food safety assessment in accordance with the <i>Food Act 1984</i> / Number of registered class 1 food premises and class 2 food premises that require an annual food safety assessment in accordance</p>	40.60%	55.63%	71.82%	71.71%	A significantly higher rate of non-compliance prompting more follow-up inspections has been impacting Council's ability to achieve 100% of first assessments of Class 1 and 2 food premises since pandemic. Actions are in place to influence greater compliance levels and therefore a reduced need for follow-up which together with other initiatives are planned to improve this measure into the future.

with the Food Act 1984] x100					
<b>Food safety samples</b>  [Number of food samples obtained/Required number of food samples] × 100	New	New	New	105.79%	Council procured and submitted the full number of food samples required for the 2023 calendar year.
<b>Service cost</b>  <b>Cost of food safety service</b>  [Direct cost of the food safety service/Number of food premises registered or notified in accordance with the Food Act 1984]	\$639.60	\$551.37	\$586.59	\$643.40	A minor net decrease in the number of food premises across the year combined with increased costs incurred and a stable workforce has returned costs to 2020–21 levels resulted in an increase in the overall cost to deliver the service.
<b>Health and safety</b>  <b>Critical and major non-compliance outcome notifications</b>  [Number of critical non-compliance outcome notifications and major non-compliance notifications about a food premises followed up/Number of critical non-compliance outcome notifications and major non-compliance notifications about a food premises] x100	95.05%	100.00%	100.00%	99.11%	99% of Class 1 assessments completed, reflecting a commitment to ensuring the businesses associated with the highest risk consumers were inspected and monitored

<b>Maternal and Child Health (MCH)</b>  <b>Service standard</b>  <b>Infant enrolments in the MCH service</b>  [Number of infants enrolled in the MCH service (from birth notifications received) / Number of birth notifications received] x100	100.83%	100.73%	100.98%	100.67%	This indicator has remained consistent over the past few years. Enrolments have remained stable, with a slight decrease of 22 infants enrolled from birth notifications.
<b>Service cost</b>  <b>Cost of the MCH service</b>  [Cost of the MCH service / Hours worked by MCH nurses]	\$74.35	\$86.34	\$69.28	\$72.38	Many factors can explain increased costs, including the increased use of casual staff, the number of Saturday services, including clinics and groups, and Breastfeeding support to meet community needs. Additionally, the costs associated with implementing a new program—Infant—which is now implemented.
<b>Participation</b>  <b>Participation in the MCH service</b>  [Number of children who attend the MCH service at least once (in the year) / Number of children enrolled in the MCH service] x100	69.79%	71.95%	74.60%	75.51%	Participation in MCH services has increased slightly. The positive results reflect process improvement with various proactive programs that are available for this service.
<b>Participation</b>	68.86%	71.52%	73.81%	80.00%	Participation rates have increased compared to last year's results. The MCH service continues to develop and grow

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<p><b>Participation in the MCH service by Aboriginal children</b>  [Number of Aboriginal children who attend the MCH service at least once (in the year)/Number of Aboriginal children enrolled in the MCH service] x100</p>					<p>cultural capabilities to ensure Aboriginal children and families feel welcome and safe within the service.</p>
<p><b>Satisfaction</b>  <b>Participation in 4-week Key Age and Stage visit</b>    [Number of 4-week key age and stage visits/Number of birth notifications received] x100</p>	88.39%	88.69%	87.73%	87.87%	<p>Participation rates have remained steady for this indicator with 1963 four-week key age and stage visits conducted.</p>

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

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

### Strategic indicators

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

Strategic Indicator/measure	Target or desired trend	2023–24 Result	Comments
<b>Number of businesses in the municipality</b>	Increase	16,063 (December 2023)	The figure represents businesses registered with the Australian Taxation Office, registered for Goods and Services Tax (GST) and hold an Australian Business Number (ABN) actively used within the previous two financial years from 2022–23 to 2023–24.  The figure 16.063 show a 3.98% decrease in the number of registered businesses in Merri-bek compared to 16,729 in December 2022.
<b>Proportion of residents employed in the municipality</b>	Increase	19.0%	The most recent Census conducted in 2021 shows 19% of Merri-bek's employed residents work in a job located in Merri-bek which equates to 17,658 people. This is a small increase compared to the previous result in the 2016 Census data.
<b>Number of affordable housing projects delivered</b>	Increase	Two projects delivered with 34 affordable dwellings	In 2023–24 two developments with 34 affordable dwellings were completed, and five planning permits for 372 affordable dwellings were issued for future delivery.  This is a marked increase from 2022–23 where one development containing 5 affordable dwellings was completed. (This number does not include Homes Victoria developments).
<b>Participation in arts / cultural events</b>	Increase	120,183 people participation in arts and cultural	Counihan Gallery was attended by 7,303 visitors including on site public programs. There were 147 exhibiting artists, and 10 artists involved in public programs. The festivals program was attended by 111,685 people, with 772 artists involved and 266 stallholders.

		programs and events including audiences, artists and stallholders	
<b>Increase number of jobs within the municipality</b>	Increase	51,064	The preceding 2022–23 figure was revised to 49,003 resulting in a 4.2% increase in the number of jobs in Merri-bek in 2023–24 to 51,064.

Major Initiatives and Priorities	Progress – the following statement reviews the progress of council in relation to major initiatives and priorities as identified in the 2023–24 budget and Council Action Plan for the year.
<b>Collaborative Graffiti Intervention Program</b>	<p>Four murals were completed in 2023–24 for the RenuWall graffiti intervention program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alisa Tanaka-King completed the Anderson Reserve mural, co-created with Sydney Road Community School students.</li> <li>• Two murals were undertaken in Wilson Ave. First Nations artist, Jesse Wright, explores themes of toxic masculinity through the depiction of a giant gorilla.</li> <li>• David Lee Pereira was commissioned to create another mural in Wilson Ave that celebrates the LGBTQIA+ community of Merri-bek, drawing on research he undertook with the queer archives.</li> <li>• Leah Bartholomew, completed a bright floral mural on a shopfront on the corner of Hope and Sydney Roads, Brunswick.</li> </ul>
<b>Revitalise the Coburg Activity Centre</b>	<p>Between September and December 2023, Council undertook a large-scale engagement called The Coburg Conversation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities included online and in-person elements, creative expressions, one-on-one conversations, and Council's advisory groups.</li> <li>• Over 1300 people took part in this engagement program across the community.</li> <li>• Council adopted a set of objectives called Revitalising Coburg in April, based on the feedback collected through The Coburg Conversation, and the Community Vision and Council strategies and positions.</li> </ul> <p>Revitalising Coburg captures the tangible outcomes Council is seeking and is the platform for the next phase of planning to transform Council land in Central Coburg.</p>



<p><b>Deliver Saxon St Community Hub - Brunswick (continue to explore partnerships to support growth and development of creative arts on the site and nearby)</b></p>	<p>Construction began in June 2023 at 33 Saxon Street, a well-known and much-loved community and creative space in the heart of Brunswick Design District.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The site has undergone significant redevelopment to transform it into a state-of-the-art cultural, creative and accessible hub, with welcoming and affordable spaces for creatives, artists and the Brunswick community.</li> <li>• The redevelopment has created approximately 3,500 sqm of floorspace, with accessible and functional buildings drawing visitors to experience a range of community activities and events.</li> </ul> <p>The project will be completed by the end of 2024.</p>
<p><b>Review and implement the Affordable Housing Action Plan including the development of affordable housing on council land</b></p>	<p>Council took the following actions in line with the four focus areas of the Action Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable housing contributions totalling 372 dwellings were negotiated through the planning permit process.</li> <li>• A new Zone for the Brunswick Activity Centre was drafted to include a mandatory affordable housing requirement.</li> <li>• Working closely with Merri-bek Affordable Housing to progress the funding and planning of an affordable housing development at 2–12 Wilkinson St Brunswick.</li> <li>• Attendance and presentation at housing-related conferences.</li> <li>• The Affordable Housing Reference Group was convened 4 times during 2023.</li> <li>• Continued research and advocacy, including partnering with other Councils.</li> <li>• Homelessness outreach program funded for 2 years.</li> <li>• Homelessness Strategy adopted by Council.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Deliver Zero Carbon in the Planning Scheme (formally ESD version 2)</b></p>	<p>Council officers regularly engaged with the Council Alliance for Sustainable Built Environments while awaiting the Minister for Planning’s decision to progress changes to the planning scheme.</p> <p>These meetings focused on advocating for the integration of zero-carbon principles into the planning scheme and collaborating with the Department of Transport and Planning to promote sustainable development practices.</p>
<p><b>Review and prepare an implementation plan for the Merri-bek Planning Scheme</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council initiated a review of Neighbourhood Character provisions. The project was significantly impacted by anticipated State Government planning reforms about housing supply, and action was withdrawn from the Council Action Plan for 2023–24, pending the public release of the reforms.</li> <li>• The Planning Scheme Amendment C196, which aims to formalise stormwater modelling within the Planning Scheme, was exhibited from May to June.</li> <li>• These efforts show Council's commitment to enhance the planning framework and ensure it aligned with community needs and state directives.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ongoing reviews and adjustments in the Merri-bek Planning Scheme aimed to promote sustainable development and effective resource management.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Implement major activity centre capital works improvements in Coburg, Brunswick and Glenroy and neighbourhood activity centre capital works improvements as per the Shopping Strip Renewal Program</b></p>	<p>Streetscape improvements were made in major activity centres and neighbourhood shopping strips across the city, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Construction for streetscape upgrades to Stewart Street in Brunswick to create a new accessible link into CERES, beautification and traffic calming improvements.</li> <li>Interim works to make Louisa Street in Coburg safer for walkers and wheelers were completed. The carpark was made safer for pedestrians, new plantings and seating were added, and a temporary footpath with planter boxes and colourful artworks was created.</li> <li>The concept design for permanent improvements to the Louisa Street streetscape is underway.</li> <li>Council awarded the contract for improvements to the shopping strip at Wheatsheaf Road in Glenroy in June. Work is expected to start later in 2024, pending final authority approvals.</li> <li>Detailed design work for the renewal of the streetscape in West Street Hadfield began, with feedback from multiple rounds of community engagement. Design improvements include traffic calming, new trees, new seating, and public artworks.</li> </ul> <p>These projects demonstrate the Council's commitment to elevating local shopping strips and enhancing community spaces, which ultimately contribute to a vibrant and connected community.</p>
<p><b>Activate major activity centres with intensive, holistic, rapid turnaround economic programs that increase social and economic activity and enhance local identity</b></p>	<p>Over 3,000 people took part in events and activities as part of Council's Place Activation program this year, across our three major activity centres of Brunswick, Glenroy, and Coburg.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Extraordinary Women of Glenroy exhibition and Taylor Swift's The Eras event drew over 800 locals together to enjoy a wide range of fun activities.</li> <li>New murals were created at Wilson Avenue in Brunswick. Council partnered with sustainable group Awareaway to plant gourd vines on the temporary scaffolding at 260 Sydney Road. The team ran a booked-out community workshop where attendees learnt to make vases, hanging planters and jewellery out of the gourds with Brazilian drumming performed on instruments crafted from gourds.</li> <li>Coburg held four creative walks offering residents a chance to explore and appreciate the area from a fresh perspective.</li> <li>A successful Eid event at Victoria Mall, held in partnership with the Central Coburg Business Association, attracted 600 attendees.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council completed an Expression of Interest process for the former Coburg Station for potential tenants to activate the space.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Implement Library strategy</b></p>	<p>The delivery of the Library Strategy led to several notable achievements including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Glenroy Library operated until 10 pm every Thursday, providing residents with an alternative nighttime activity to gambling.</li> <li>• The Library Social Worker pilot program effectively supported community members through client referrals from library and security staff and provided advice to the front-of-house library teams. This pilot was extended until February 2025, and an evaluation method was established to assess the program's impact.</li> <li>• Libraries continued to offer a variety of digital inclusion activities, including iPad lending, Tech Cafe sessions for seniors, and digital mentoring programs.</li> <li>• The Community Programs Framework was refreshed, and all libraries organized inclusive and welcoming events specifically tailored to community members and aligned with our human rights priority groups.</li> </ul> <p>These initiatives highlight Council's commitment to promoting access, engagement, and support within the community, demonstrating the library strategy's ongoing efforts to enhance the diverse needs of Merri-bek residents.</p>
<p><b>Develop and implement integrated arts and culture strategy</b></p>	<p>In September 2023, Council endorsed a new Arts and Culture Strategy (the strategy) to guide the development of arts, culture, and creative practices in Merri-bek through to 2030.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The strategy prioritises First Nations artists and audiences, opportunities for artists and audiences from our Human Rights Priority Groups, collaboration with the community and across Council and advocacy as artists for workers.</li> <li>• The vision of Merri-bek – where creativity and culture thrive, will be delivered through three key priority areas – creation, connection and investment.</li> <li>• The strategy will enhance cultural engagement, support local artists, and foster creative initiatives that contribute to the vibrancy and diversity of our community. Together, these efforts reflect Council's commitment to investing in the arts and nurturing a flourishing creative environment.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlights from the 2023–24 Arts and Culture Action Plan included creation of a new Merri-bek Art Collection Policy and enabling online access to the collection, making Coburg Courthouse a free venue for creative development and increasing First Nations and LGBTQIA+ programming.</li> <li>• The gallery held 11 exhibitions by contemporary artists from Merri-bek and across Australia, exploring various social justice issues. A highlight was Future River, featuring four First Nations women artists, Peta Clancy, Jody Haines, Maree Clarke and Julie Gough and curated by Kimba Thomspson from Blak Dot Gallery.</li> <li>• Several new public artwork commissions are underway, including with Reko Rennie at Council’s new Saxon Street Cultural Centre and with Yufang Chi and Tyson Savannah along the Merri Creek (Community Budget item).</li> <li>• Council successfully managed the Flourish Arts grant program for the 2024 calendar year, funding 20 artists and arts organisations. Notable funding recipients included Colectivia Abya Yala, Melbourne School of Tarantella, Pink Ember Studio, Jungle City Projects, Loom Arts and Management, and many others, showcasing our community's diversity of artistic talent.</li> <li>• Council also produced the annual Making it in Merri-bek artist professional development program in partnership with local arts organisations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Deliver the festivals program</b></p>	<p>The 2023–24 Festival Program ran from November to May and reflects Council's commitment to fostering community spirit through festival programming and supporting local talent. Highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Fawkner Festa featuring ‘Fawkner Marketplace’, an initiative led by two community members providing opportunity for local artists to sell homemade goods.</li> <li>• Despite the rain, Carols by the Lake was widely celebrated by those braving the weather to attend.</li> <li>• Perfect weather for Coburg Night Market brought a record-breaking attendance of 29,000 people to enjoy a diverse program of music, activities, food and creative makers tailored for the community.</li> <li>• Council supported the development of excellent new works by leading artists for the Brunswick Music Festival - including Shuffle Play by the Australian Art Orchestra - developed to celebrate the Coburg Town Hall and its organ.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Brunswick Music Festival and Sydney Road Street Party attracted over 70,000 visitors over ten days. The Music for the Mob event was delivered in partnership with Bad Apples Music and moved indoors due to extreme heat. The Blak Dot First Nations Artist Market was supported as part of Sydney Road Street Party.</li> <li>• Glenroy Festival premiered three new works developed specifically for the event by local artists—Joy+, The Birds and Hello Red Planet. Highlights included a reading by local author Andrew McDonald and showcases of talent from local artists and school students.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Enable and support the continued emergence of the Brunswick Design District as a State designated creative precinct</b></p>	<p>Council continued to elevate Brunswick's profile as a design district through the Brunswick Design District (BDD) partnership. The partnership aims to create a vibrant environment to attract and support the ongoing growth of design enterprises within the area. Highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful filming of a series of six BDD videos, released in the first quarter of 2023–24 across social media, other platforms and the BDD website.</li> <li>• A BDD District window decal was designed and installed at RMIT Place Lab, strategically positioned in the heart of the design district.</li> </ul> <p>These efforts show Council's commitment to promoting Brunswick as a dynamic centre for design and fostering economic vitality and cultural creativity in the community.</p>
<p><b>Create a Visitation and Experience Plan</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two new 'Love Merri-bek Trail Maps' were distributed and promoted through blog stories about local businesses on the 'Love Merri-bek' website.</li> <li>• The Economic Development Unit supported the Eid event in Central Coburg, which was jointly run by the Central Coburg Business Association and Merri-bek City Council and attracted visitors to Merri-bek.</li> <li>• Development of a section of Visitor and Experience Economy was included as one of seven themes in the newly developed and endorsed Economic Development Action Plan 2024–27 to guide actions over the coming three years.</li> </ul>

## Services

The following statement provides information in relation to the services funded in the 2023–24 budget and the persons or sections of the community who are provided the service.

Service	Description	Net Cost Actual Budget Variance \$000
<b>Amenity and Compliance</b>	This service aims to improve the safety, amenity and access within the municipality. Specific services include parking and road safety enforcement, local laws, animal management, business support, prosecutions and school crossings service.	4,390 5,227 (838)
<b>Arts and Culture</b>	This unit is responsible for enhancing opportunities for artistic and cultural experiences for the Merri-bek community and growing the capacity of Merri-bek's creative sector and local artists. Merri-bek has developed a strong reputation for the arts and our creative community is well-established and plays a significant role in contributing to the identity, community well-being and economic success of Merri-bek.	(2,729) <u>(2,963)</u> 234
<b>Asset Management</b>	This service aims to provide sound stewardship of Council's \$1 billion asset base, undertaken through the development and implementation of Asset Management policies, strategies and plans and the provision of high-quality Asset Management data to support informed decision making.	(825) <u>(782)</u> (43)
<b>Building Maintenance</b>	This service maintains Council buildings to appropriate Standards and Regulations.	(3,872) <u>(3,640)</u> (232)
<b>Building Projects</b>	This service delivers Council's Capital Works Program for buildings and structures and provides construction advisory services across the organisation and to its stakeholders.	1,855 <u>(959)</u> 2,814
<b>Building Services</b>	This service aims to provide a safe and habitable for all stakeholders by meeting Council's statutory obligations under the Building Act 1993 and subordinate legislation.	(699) <u>(848)</u> 149
<b>City Strategy and Economy</b>	This service is responsible for leading Council's response to population growth and land use and development trends to create sustainable neighbourhoods. The branch does this by keeping the Merri-bek Planning Scheme current and responsive to	(3,083) <u>(3,975)</u> 892

	change; implementing actions aiming to increase the supply of social and affordable housing; leading an integrated approach to the planning of community infrastructure; and leading a research program, which includes population forecasting and supporting the organisation to use evidence in the delivery of services. This service facilitates industry innovation, investment and job creation, to enhance the reputation of Merri-bek as a progressive and prosperous municipality.	
<b>Property, Place and Design</b>	This service delivers a wide array of projects, partnerships and internal services that define, strengthen, protect and celebrate Merri-bek's unique sense of place. The branch's primary functions are buying, selling and leasing Council's substantial portfolio of land and buildings, delivering place activation programs in our activity centres, conceptualising and delivering major urban revitalisation projects on Council's land, and designing and delivering upgrades to streetscapes, civic spaces and shopping strips.	(1,549) <u>(2,094)</u> 545
<b>Library Services and Resources</b>	This service provides library lending services, literacy, digital and community programs and extension services, information services, internet access and facilities.	(5,785) <u>(5,336)</u> (448)
<b>Street Cleansing</b>	This service aims to maintain and enhance the quality of life for people who live and work in, and travel through Merri-bek, by improving the cleanliness and presentation of public spaces. This includes graffiti removal, pit and drain cleaning, street sweeping, street and park litter bin collection and removal of illegal dumped rubbish.	(6,679) <u>(5,941)</u> (738)
<b>Urban Planning and Planning Enforcement</b>	<p>These units manage administration and enforcement of the Merri-bek Planning Scheme and planning permits. The Urban Planning service assesses and determines planning permit applications and other related matters as well as representing Council at hearing before the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal including applications for use, development and subdivision of land and fast-track services for simple matters and commercial priority services to assist new and expanding businesses. investment decisions.</p> <p>The Planning Enforcement service oversees compliance with the Merri-bek Planning Scheme and planning permits through responses to complaints, proactively monitoring compliance with a select number of planning permits each year, and monitoring permits with legal agreements and land contamination considerations.</p>	5,328 <u>6,954</u> (1,626)

## Service performance indicators

The following statement provides the results of the prescribed service performance indicators and measures including explanation of results in the comments.

LGPRF under this section	Results				Comments
	2021	2022	2023	2024	
<b>Service/ Indicator/ measure</b> <b>Animal Management Timeliness</b> <b>Time taken to action animal management requests</b> [Number of days between receipt and first response action for all animal management requests / Number of animal management requests]	4.02	3.72	2.03	2.64	Council is committed to delivering a high-quality, risk-based animal management service that remains highly responsive. The results show a slight increase in the average time taken for first action on requests. During this period, there has been an increase of over 30% in annual requests, which directly impacts response time.
<b>Service standard Animals reclaimed</b> [Number of animals reclaimed / Number of animals collected] x100	20.76%	23.09%	34.99%	29.64%	A total of 641 animals were collected in 2023–24; 30% were reclaimed. This is a decrease from last year and is influenced by an increase in the number of animals being surrendered. (Note that Council responded to 2,444 animal-related requests, an increase of 576 compared with 1868 in the previous year.)
<b>Animals rehomed</b> [Number of animals rehomed / Number of animals collected] x100	68.59%	61.37%	51.69%	63.64%	All avenues are explored to reunite animals with their owners prior to offering them up for adoption to new owners. Of the 641 animals collected in 2023–24, 63.64% were rehomed, an improvement on previous years' results.



<b>Service cost</b> Cost of animal management service per population	\$5.65	\$6.46	\$7.25	\$8.32	The overall cost of animal management has increased. This increase is primarily due to the cost associated with caring for impounded animals.
<b>Health and safety</b> <b>Animal management prosecutions</b>  [Number of successful animal management prosecutions / Number of animal management prosecutions] x 100	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	<p>In April 2022, Council received a high number of unpaid animal registrations, which were issued infringement notices after appropriate warnings. Council also provided follow-ups on unpaid infringements to give people as much time as possible to pay (or appeal their infringement) before referring these matters further. Due to the extra interactions with these residents, the fines could not be referred under the Domestic Animals Act to Fines Victoria because the statutory time period of 6 months had passed. Instead, the matters were taken to court. There were 147 such matters taken to court, and all 147 were successfully prosecuted. Even though the registrations relate to 2022, the several steps taken and the statutory period mean that the matters went to court in 2023–24.</p> <p>Council has been working hard to continue to promote responsible pet ownership including animal registration and on-time payment of registration and as a result this high number of matters taken to court is unlikely to reoccur as we will make use of the Fines Victoria process on most Domestic Animals Act matters. It should also be noted that last year's reporting workbook incorrectly reported the Council's results as 0% rather than 100% due to a formula issue.</p>
<b>Libraries</b> <b>Resource currency</b> <b>Recently purchased library collection</b>  [Number of library collection items	71.51%	68.29%	74.85%	70.54%	Over 70% of library collections, physical and digital materials are current resources purchased over the last 5-year period. The slight decrease is due to the longevity of our digital materials, which increased considerably during the pandemic.

purchased in the last 5 years / Number of library collection items] x100					
<b>Service cost</b> <b>Cost of library service per population</b>  [Direct cost of the library service / Population]	\$24.89	\$29.31	\$32.18	\$34.73	Increase mainly due to the additional OHS safety measures.
<b>Utilisation</b> <b>Loans per head of population</b>  [Number of library collection item loans / Population]	New	New	New	6.50	Merri-bek Libraries' collections are used 6.5 times per head of the population, which is on the higher side of the expected range for this indicator, showing strong use of this service from the community.
<b>Participation</b> Library membership [Number of registered library members / Population] x100	New	New	New	22.34%	22% of the Merri-bek community are registered library members. Library Services has continued to campaign to encourage the community to join and/or return to the library with an 11.6% growth in members from last year.
<b>Library visits per head of population</b>  [Number of library visits / Population]	New	New	New	3.22	Libraries received 3.22 visits per head of population. While this result is in the mid-range expected for this indicator, it is still an increase of 12% from last year.
<b>Statutory Planning</b> <b>Timeliness</b>  <b>Time taken to decide planning applications</b>	94.00	112.50	106.00	86.00	Median days has reduced significantly (106 days compared to 86 days) showing improved performance, this is in part due to reduced planning permit lodgements.

[The median number of days between receipt of a planning application and a decision on the application]					
<b>Service standard Planning applications decided within required time frames</b>  [Number of regular planning application decisions made within 60 days) + (Number of VicSmart planning application decisions made within 10 days) / Number of planning application decisions made] x100	65.29%	58.10%	59.87%	74.91%	Council's performance has improved significantly from 59.87% in 2022–23 to now 74.56% in 2023–24, more than averages for inner and middle suburb metropolitan Councils.
<b>Service cost Cost of statutory planning service</b>  [Direct cost of the statutory planning service / Number of planning applications received]	\$2,292.96	\$2,423.15	\$2,447.28	\$2,943.24	Reduced application numbers, including the reduced relative value of applications lodged, as well as planning reform resulting in high value applications being lodged with the Minister for Planning and greater Vic Smart applications (with a 50% reduction on standard fees) are all impacting application revenue. There has been a 6.34% reduction in applications being received, when compared to the 2022–23 financial year. A stable workforce in 2023–24 has resulted in both higher performance and increased costs due to fewer vacant positions.

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<p><b>Decision making Council planning decisions upheld at VCAT</b></p> <p>[Number of VCAT decisions that did not set aside council's decision in relation to a planning application / Number of VCAT decisions in relation to planning applications] x100</p>	75.00%	56.67%	64.29%	85.29%	<p>The improved result (85%) in part due to change in definition to include consent orders combined with good decision making. In comparison to pre-pandemic years, there has been a significant reduction in VCAT reviews.</p>
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## Strategic objective 5: An empowered and collaborative Merri-bek

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

### Strategic indicators

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

Strategic Indicator/measure	Target or desired trend	2023–24 Result	Comments
<p><b>Community Satisfaction Survey - Overall satisfaction, aim to increase to meet or exceed metropolitan average</b> Victorian Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey Results (published annually on Council's website)</p>	Increase metropolitan average	68/100	<p>The Community Satisfaction Survey shows overall satisfaction improved significantly by 17-points from 51 in 2022–23 to 68 in 2023–24.</p> <p>In 2023–24, the metropolitan average for this indicator was 70, a two-point difference in Merri-bek's result compared to Metropolitan Melbourne.</p>
<p><b>Community Satisfaction Survey - Customer Service, aim to increase to meet or exceed metropolitan average</b> Victorian Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey Results (published annually on Council's website)</p>	Increase metropolitan average	72/100	<p>The Community Satisfaction Survey shows community satisfaction with customer service increased by 7-points to 72 in 2023–24 from 65 in 2022–23.</p> <p>This result is above the 2023–24 metropolitan average of 71, which means Council outperformed metropolitan Melbourne, which is a significant achievement for this indicator.</p>
<p><b>Community Satisfaction Survey - Consultation and Engagement, aim to increase to meet or exceed metropolitan average</b> Victorian Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey Results (published annually on Council's website)</p>	Increase metropolitan average	69/100	<p>The score for Merri-bek in 2024 of 69 (the average for the metro was 72) is a significant increase from 51, scored in 2023. A new evaluation provider was engaged and used a door-knocking methodology. This method gave participants the opportunity to detail their opinions, speak with someone from their own or similar language group, and likely obtained more precise and accurate findings</p>

<p><b>Community Satisfaction Survey - Informing the Community, aim to increase to meet or exceed metropolitan average</b> Victorian Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey Results (published annually on Council's website)</p>	<p>Increase metropolitan average</p>	<p>71/100</p>	<p>The Community Satisfaction Survey shows community satisfaction for 'informing the community' increased by 15-points to 71 in 2023–24 from 56 in 2022–23.</p> <p>In 2023–24, the metropolitan average was 73, which is a two-point difference in Merri-bek's result compared to metropolitan Melbourne.</p>
<p><b>Council decisions made at meetings closed to the public (Local Government Performance Framework Indicator)</b> To decrease from Merri-bek 2021 baseline measure of 4.62%</p>	<p>Decrease</p>	<p>3.24%</p>	<p>A total of 309 decisions were made at Council meetings held in the last financial year, with 10 decisions being made in meetings closed to the public. This continues ongoing downward results for this indicator and shows transparent decisions in line with the definition of confidential information in the Local Government Act.</p>
<p><b>Community satisfaction with Council decisions (Local Government Performance Framework Indicator)</b> to increase to meet or exceed metropolitan average</p>	<p>Increase metropolitan average</p>	<p>68/100</p>	<p>The score for Merri-bek in 2024 of 68 (metro Melbourne scored 69) is a significant increase from 48, scored in 2023. The new methodology employed could be a reason for this increase result. Moreover, more focused attention on making decisions with community members, rather than for, is a probable reason for this increase also.</p>
<p><b>Adjusted underlying surplus (or deficit) as a percentage of underlying revenue (Local Government Performance Framework Indicator)</b> aiming for surplus</p>	<p>Surplus</p>	<p>7.91%</p>	<p>The 2023-24 accounting surplus decreased by \$15.2 million or 37.1%. This decrease was a result of revenue remaining similar to 2022–23, but in comparison, expenses increased by \$15.3 million (7.1%). The main factors for the decrease in the accounting surplus were made up of a \$6.3 million (19.6%) increase in depreciation costs due to a revaluation of infrastructure assets at 30 June 2023 and an increase in employee benefits of \$8.8 million (8.5%).</p>
<p><b>Asset renewal and asset upgrade as a percentage of depreciation (Local Government Performance Framework Indicator)</b> Increase from Merri-bek 2021 baseline measure of 95.57%</p>	<p>Increase</p>	<p>185.83%</p>	<p>The asset renewal and upgrade expenditure increased by \$33.6 million in 2023–24. Resulting in the increase shown of 57% which is a great outcome to achieve a low-risk ratio as per the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO). Council forecasts to maintain a ratio of greater than 100 percent in the forward 2-years. This means that Council is forecasting to maintain the low-risk ratio which is an indicator that ensures that Council is spending enough to maintain its existing assets.</p>

<b>Governance and management: Compliant measures that are in place</b> (Local Government Performance Framework Indicator) aim of 100% compliance	100% Compliance	Result: 100%	Merri-bek was 100% compliant with the Governance and Management check list.
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<b>Major Initiatives and Priorities</b>	<b>Progress – the following statement reviews the progress of council in relation to major initiatives and priorities as identified in the 2023-24 budget and Council Action Plan for the year.</b>
<b>Implement the Community Engagement Policy</b>	The implementation of the Community Engagement Policy continued across the organisation. Council officers were involved in over 30 pop-up engagements and continue to be trained in best practice engagement through the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2).
<b>Continue streamlining the customer experience including through service re-design, improved service targets and making easier council interactions across various digital channels</b>	<p>Training modules were developed for communicating effectively with a range of people and understanding customer service essentials. Other capability-building activities equipped leaders to embed the ‘Community at the Heart’ program into their teams, by learning from community feedback and driving local service improvements.</p> <p>A series of staff training sessions were delivered to improve our website customer service channel, to maintain current and relevant content to support self-service and improved Council information.</p>
<b>Prepare and implement a revised Open Space Levy</b>	Conducted a feasibility analysis to determine land, construction costs, funding sources and prioritisation of expenditure to inform developer contributions. The results will inform the review of open space contribution rates for the Merri-bek Planning Scheme to progress scheme amendments.
<b>Annual review of the 10-year financial plan alongside the development of the 4-year budget</b>	Conducted an annual review of the 10-year financial plan as part of the 2024–28 Budget adopted by Council on 26 June.
<b>Develop and implement a new Development Contributions Plan</b>	Preparation of a new Development Contributions Plan continues. Officers are preparing the background work to support a new plan, through stakeholder engagement with internal Council departments.
<b>Implement the Accessible and Inclusive Communications Policy</b>	Implementation of the Accessible and Inclusive Communications Policy continued with the support of the multicultural Merri-bek Connectors community engagement program. The program aims to improve access to information and services to our multicultural community. The program participants were involved in several key Council projects —the Transport Strategy, Open Space Strategy, Living and Ageing Well, and The Coburg Conversation engagements.

<p><b>Coordinate advocacy for improved community outcomes</b></p>	<p>Council made significant progress with advocacy campaigns including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful site activations at Ballerdt Mooroop.</li> <li>• Constituent representation to Ministers and local Members of Parliament and productive meetings with the Department of Education to progress the request to transfer the Ballerdt Mooroop land title to the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Corporation.</li> <li>• Council continued to push for an extension of block funding for the Commonwealth Home Support Program, accessible tram stops and protected bike lanes for Sydney Road and the duplication and extension of the Upfield rail corridor.</li> <li>• Meetings held with Ministers and key stakeholders to discuss Council's aspirations for social and affordable housing in central Coburg and Merri-bek's strong planning record.</li> <li>• Active participation in advocacy groups—Northern Councils Alliance (NCA), Melbourne 9 (M9), Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA), and Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE).</li> <li>• Collaboration with advocacy groups allowed Council to progress priorities in transport infrastructure, planning and housing, family violence prevention and mental health and wellbeing, sustainability priorities and waste.</li> <li>• Council made submissions to many government inquiries, including the 2022 Victorian Flood event, housing affordability, anti-vilification laws, the National Multicultural Framework, vulnerable road users, local government sustainability and funding, and climate resilience. A comprehensive submission was made to Infrastructure Victoria's 30-year infrastructure strategy, and Council met with them to discuss drainage and the broader water sector</li> <li>• Council endorsed 10 new infrastructure funding priorities focusing on the next Federal election. Regular meetings with local, federal and state Members of Parliament ensure ongoing dialogue, strengthening the Council's advocacy and commitment to the Merri-bek community</li> </ul>
<p><b>Continue the phased implementation of the Merri-bek name change – as per Budget</b></p>	<p>The renaming project is complete, and the name change plan is fully implemented. Council will routinely update smaller assets like street signs and facility signage within the regular budget allocations and asset renewal plans over the next eight years.</p>



## Services

The following statement provides information in relation to the services funded in the 2023-24 budget and the persons or sections of the community who are provided the service.

Service	Description	Net Cost Actual Budget Variance \$000
<b>Communications</b>	This service supports many corporate functions, including issues and reputation management; marketing and branding services; website and social media; community engagement; corporate and internal communications; and delivers community information about council work impacting the community and promotions of services, events, Council decisions, projects and community development initiatives.	(1,952) <u>(1,961)</u> 9
<b>Community Engagement</b>	This service ensures that Council is providing the community with good information about the work it is doing and consulting the community about how it develops and delivers projects and services, including consulting the community about any changes to the way Council works. It allows Council to make decisions that best reflect the views of the community.	(1,114) <u>(1,028)</u> (86)
<b>Corporate Finance</b>	This service undertakes the management of corporate level finances including loan interest repayments, bank fees, parental leave costs, and utilities.	11,240 <u>11,083</u> 157
<b>Customer Service</b>	This service is the primary public contact point for the organisation and is delivered through three citizen service centres, the telephone contact centre and other multi-media channels.	(3,396) <u>(3,379)</u> (17)
<b>Facilities</b>	This service co-ordinates the provision of Town Hall bookings, and meeting rooms with the Civic Buildings, including facility management, catering and security.	(2,696) <u>(2,467)</u> (229)
<b>Finance</b>	This service provides a range of financial services, managing Council's finances, internal and external reporting, payments to suppliers of goods and services, with procurement and contracting services. This service also manages the valuation and rating of properties within the municipality and the collection of debts owed to Council.	(3,637) <u>(3,769)</u> 132

<b>Fleet Services</b>	This service provides a fleet management and maintenance service for over 660 items of plant and equipment.	(3,744) <u>(3,958)</u> 215
<b>Governance and Civic Protocols</b>	This service ensures good governance and transparent and responsible decision making, whilst providing support to the Mayor and Councillors through the development and implementation of systems which support democratic and corporate governance.	(2,604) <u>(2,712)</u> 108
<b>Integrity, Risk and Resilience</b>	This service coordinates Council's Audit and Risk Committee and audit function. It is responsible for ensuring that risk management is embedded into Council's activities, that Council is appropriately insured and that claims made by and against Council are proficiently processed. This service also ensures a Business Continuity Plan and Environmental Management System are in place.	(3,411) <u>(3,793)</u> 383
<b>Information Technology and Records</b>	This service supports and maintains corporate computing, communication and record management systems for Councillors, staff and users of our public internet services.	(10,041) <u>(10,607)</u> 566
<b>Organisational Performance</b>	This service supports and leads Council's culture and leadership development, change and continuous improvement capability building and supports the organisation in service unit planning and process mapping. This service also supports project management systems, processes and reporting.	(1,360) <u>(1,465)</u> 105
<b>Civic Leadership / General Overheads</b>	This service ensures that Council is providing the community with good information about the work it is doing and consulting the community about how it develops and delivers projects and services, including consulting the community about any changes to the way Council works. It allows Council to make decisions that best reflect the views of the community.	(2,673) <u>(2,584)</u> (89)

## Service performance indicators

The following statement provides the results of the prescribed service performance indicators and measures including explanation of results in the comments.

LGPRF under this section	Results				Comments
	2021	2022	2023	2024	
<p><b>Service/ Indicator/ Measure</b></p> <p><b>Governance Transparency Council decisions made at meetings closed to the public</b></p> <p>[Number of Council resolutions made at meetings of Council, or at meetings of a delegated committee consisting only of Councillors, closed to the public / Number of Council resolutions made at meetings of Council or at meetings of a delegated committee consisting only of Councillors] x100</p>	4.62%	3.82%	3.67%	3.24%	<p>A total of 309 decisions were made at Council meetings held in the last financial year, with 10 decisions being made in meetings closed to the public. This continues ongoing downward results for this indicator and shows transparent decisions in line with the definition of confidential information in the Local Government Act.</p>
<p><b>Consultation and engagement</b></p> <p><b>Satisfaction with community consultation and engagement</b></p> <p>[Community satisfaction</p>	59.00	54.00	51.00	69.00	<p>The score for Merri-bek in 2024 of 69 (the average for the metro was 72) is a significant increase from 51, scored in 2023. It is important to note that a new evaluation provider was engaged, who performed a door-knocking methodology. Given the opportunity for participants to detail their opinions, the door-knocking method is likely to have obtained more precise and</p>

rating out of 100 with how Council has performed on community consultation and engagement]					accurate findings.
<b>Attendance Councillor attendance at council meetings</b>  [The sum of the number of Councillors who attended each Council meeting / (Number of Council meetings) × (Number of Councillors elected at the last Council general election)] x100	96.73%	91.79%	89.97%	93.56%	All Council meetings are held hybrid, allowing Councillors to attend in person or virtually, creating greater flexibility and higher attendance at Council meetings; our Councillors remain committed to accountable and transparent decision-making, reflecting a consistent attendance.
<b>Service cost Cost of elected representation</b>  [Direct cost of the governance service / Number of Councillors elected at the last Council general election]	\$49,265.02	\$50,959.55	\$54,385.73	\$58,645.00	The increase can be mainly attributed to the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal's determination to increase Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Councillor allowances.
<b>Satisfaction Satisfaction with council decisions</b> [Community satisfaction rating out of 100 with how council has performed in making decisions in the interest of the community]	58.00	53.00	48.00	68.00	The score for Merri-bek in 2024 of 68 (metro Melbourne scored 69) is a significant increase from 48, scored in 2023. The new methodology employed could be a reason for this increase result. Moreover, more focused attention on making decisions with community members, rather than for, is a probable reason for this increase also.

# Performance statement

For the year ended 30 June 2024

## Description of municipality

The City of Merri-bek lies between 4 and 14 kilometres north of central Melbourne. The City of Merri-bek is bounded by the Western Ring Road and Hume City in the north, the City of Darebin and Merri Creek in the east, the City of Yarra, the City of Melbourne and Park Street in the south, and the City of Moonee Valley and Moonee Ponds Creek in the west.

The City of Merri-bek covers the suburbs of Brunswick, Brunswick East, Brunswick West, Coburg, Coburg North, Glenroy, Gowanbrae, Hadfield, Fawkner, Oak Park, Pascoe Vale, and Pascoe Vale South. Partial sections of the suburbs of Fitzroy North, Parkville and Tullamarine are also part of the City of Merri-bek.

Estimated resident population is 186,000 based on 2024 forecasting figures (Quantify, 2024). COVID-19 has had, and will continue to have, an impact on our population and its growth. Our forecasts now suggest that our population will increase to a total population of 223,000 by 2036 (Quantify, 2024). This is 22,000 fewer residents than we previously forecast we would have by 2036 (Charter Keck Consultancy 2021).

Merri-bek is a highly culturally and linguistically diverse municipality. In 2021, 33% of Merri-bek residents were born overseas. At home, residents are most likely to speak Italian, Arabic, Greek or Urdu if not speaking English. In total, 35% of households in our community speak a language other than English at home (ABS, 2021). In 2023, there were an estimated 18,333 total GST registered businesses in the City of Merri-bek. In the City of Merri-bek, Health Care and Social Assistance is the largest employer, generating 8,680 local jobs in 2021/22.

**Service performance indicators**

For the year ended 30 June 2024

Service	Results					Comments
Indicator / Measure	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24		Material Variations and Comments
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Target as per budget	Actual	
<b>Aquatic Facilities</b>						
<b>Utilisation</b>						
Utilisation of aquatic facilities [Number of visits to aquatic facilities / Municipal population]	2.31	3.55	5.64	N/A	5.28	Council visitor attendance was down slightly from last year's results due to a cooler-than-average summer and the closure of the Fawkner Leisure Centre for a major redevelopment.
<b>Animal Management</b>						
<b>Health and safety</b>						
Animal management prosecutions [Number of successful animal management prosecutions / Number of animal management prosecutions] x 100	100%	100%	0%	N/A	100%	<p>In April 2022, Council received a high number of unpaid animal registrations, which were issued infringement notices after appropriate warnings. Council also provided follow-ups on unpaid infringements to give people as much time as possible to pay (or appeal their infringement) before referring these matters further. Due to the extra interactions with these residents, the fines could not be referred under the Domestic Animals Act to Fines Victoria because the statutory time period of 6 months had passed. Instead, the matters were taken to court. There were 147 such matters taken to court, and all 147 were successfully prosecuted. Even though the registrations relate to 2022, the several steps taken and the statutory period mean that the matters went to court in 2023/24.</p> <p>Council has been working hard to continue to promote responsible pet ownership including animal registration and on-time payment of registration and as a result this high number of matters taken to court is unlikely to reoccur as we will make use of the Fines Victoria process on most Domestic Animals Act matters. It should also be noted that last year's reporting workbook incorrectly reported the Council's results as 0% rather than 100% due to a formula issue.</p>

Service	Results					Comments
Indicator / Measure	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24		Material Variations and Comments
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Target as per budget	Actual	
<b>Food Safety</b>						
<b>Health and safety</b>						
Critical and major non-compliance outcome notifications [Number of critical non-compliance outcome notifications and major non-compliance notifications about a food premises followed up / Number of critical non-compliance outcome notifications and major non-compliance notifications about a food premises] x100	95.05%	100.00%	100.00%	N/A	99.11%	99% of Class 1 assessments completed, reflecting a commitment to ensuring the businesses associated with the highest risk consumers were inspected and monitored
<b>Governance</b>						
<b>Satisfaction</b>						
Satisfaction with community consultation and engagement [Community satisfaction rating out of 100 with the consultation and engagement efforts of Council]	59	54	51	55	69	The score for Merri-bek in 2024 of 69 (the average for the metro was 72) is a significant increase from 51, scored in 2023. It is important to note that a new evaluation provider was engaged, who performed a door-knocking methodology. Given the opportunity for participants to detail their opinions, the door-knocking method is likely to have obtained more precise and accurate findings.
<b>Libraries</b>						
<b>Participation</b>						
Library membership [Percentage of the population that are registered library members] x100	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	22.34%	22% of the Merri-Bek community are registered library members. Library Services has continued to campaign to encourage the community to join and/or return to the library with an 11.6% growth in members from last year.

Service	Results					Comments
Indicator / Measure	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24		Material Variations and Comments
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Target as per budget	Actual	
<b>Maternal and Child Health (MCH)</b>						
<b>Participation</b>						
Participation in the MCH service [Number of children who attend the MCH service at least once (in the year) / Number of children enrolled in the MCH service] x100	69.79%	71.95%	74.60%	N/A	75.51%	Participation in MCH services has increased slightly. The positive results reflect process improvement with various proactive programs that are available for this service.
<b>Participation</b>						
Participation in the MCH service by Aboriginal children [Number of Aboriginal children who attend the MCH service at least once (in the year) / Number of Aboriginal children enrolled in the MCH service] x100	68.86%	71.52%	73.81%	N/A	80.00%	Participation rates have increased compared to last year's results. The MCH service continues to develop and grow cultural capabilities to ensure Aboriginal children and families feel welcome and safe within the service.
<b>Roads</b>						
<b>Condition</b>						
Sealed local roads below the intervention level [Percentage of sealed local roads that are below the renewal intervention level set by Council and not requiring renewal]	95.04%	95.36%	93.34%	93.00%	92.37%	Council undertook its four-yearly survey of road condition in 2023-24 and the results have shown while just over 92% of the road network is above the intervention level, ongoing investment is needed to maintain these standards.
<b>Statutory Planning</b>						
<b>Service standard</b>						
Planning applications decided within the relevant required time [Percentage of planning application decisions made within the relevant required time]	65.29%	58.10%	59.87%	63.00%	74.91%	Council's performance has improved significantly from 59.87% in 2022-23 to now 74.56% in 2023-24 being in excess of averages for inner and middle suburb metropolitan Councils.
<b>Waste Management</b>						
<b>Waste diversion</b>						
Kerbside collection waste diverted from landfill [Weight of recyclables and green organics collected from kerbside bins / Weight of garbage, recyclables and green organics collected from kerbside bins] x100	49.39%	48.34%	48.42%	52.00%	53.42%	The commencement of weekly food and garden organics (FOGO) collection municipal-wide from July 2023 has seen a positive increase year-to-date in the diversion rate of organics, recycling (including glass) from landfills. Council has exceeded the target set for this indicator, which aligns with the desired outcomes of the newly implemented strategy and policy positions.



## Financial performance indicators

For the year ended 30 June 2024

Dimension/indicator/ measure	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24		2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Material Variations and Comments
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Target As per budget	Actual	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	
<b>Efficiency</b>										
<b>Expenditure level</b>										
Expenses per property assessment [Total expenses / Number of property assessments]	\$2,504.57	\$2,376.93	\$2,542.84	\$2,544.78	\$2,653.07	\$2,732.11	\$2,619.52	\$2,593.90	\$2,632.68	Expenditure between 2022-23 and 2023-24 has increased 7.1% or \$15.3 million while the number of property assessments has only increased by 1.1%. This increase in expenditure is primarily related to EA increases in alignment with the rate cap of 3.5%, increase in Workcover premiums, 0.5% increase to the superannuation guarantee and a \$6.3 million (19.6%) increase in depreciation costs.
<b>Revenue level</b>										
Average rate per property assessment [Sum of all general rates and municipal charges / Number of property assessments]	\$1,743.48	\$1,775.81	\$1,832.70	N/A	\$1,916.40	\$1,945.03	\$1,978.21	\$2,011.50	\$2,044.90	The result achieved has remained consistent. Council has increased the rate base by the 3.5% rate cap that is set by the State Government.

Dimension/indicator /measure	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24		2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Material Variations and Comments
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Target As per budget	Actual	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	
<b>Liquidity</b>										
<b>Working capital</b>										
Current assets compared to current liabilities [Current assets / Current liabilities] x100	241.44%	361.94%	357.24%	149.50%	297.88%	259.30%	316.43%	405.44%	488.80%	Whilst current assets increased by \$5.1 million (3.0%), the decrease is driven by the increase of \$10.7 million (23.7%) in current liabilities. Council's current liabilities increased primarily as a result of grants received in advance as well as increase in trade payables at 30 June 2024.
<b>Unrestricted cash</b>										
Unrestricted cash compared to current liabilities [Unrestricted cash / Current liabilities] x100	96.17%	39.22%	-60.93%	N/A	-63.95%	24.98%	9.50%	18.45%	54.13%	This indicator has decreased in the current year as Council's conditional unspent grants has increased between 2022-23 and 2023-24 by \$5.1 million. This indicator also shows the impact of capital works carried forward to be completed in 2024-25. This figure increased by \$1.7 million.
<b>Obligations</b>										
<b>Loans and borrowings</b>										
Loans and borrowings compared to rates [Interest bearing loans and borrowings / Rate revenue] x100	21.04%	14.23%	12.94%	N/A	16.15%	13.98%	6.41%	5.15%	3.94%	Loan and borrowings increased \$6.7 million (28.8%) between 2022-23 and 2023-24. This is primarily attributed to the drawdown of an \$8.0 million loan through Treasury Corporation of Victoria relating to the Fawkner Leisure Centre redevelopment.
Loans and borrowings repayments compared to rates [Interest and principal repayments on interest bearing loans and borrowings / Rate revenue] x100	1.38%	6.19%	1.13%	N/A	1.11%	1.52%	7.58%	1.23%	1.19%	The result achieved has remained consistent.

Dimension/indicator/ measure	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24		2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Material Variations and Comments
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Target As per budget	Actual	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	
<b>Obligations</b>										
<b>Indebtedness</b>										
Non-current liabilities compared to own source revenue [Non-current liabilities / Own source revenue] x100	14.14%	12.69%	11.46%	N/A	13.86%	6.51%	5.52%	4.45%	3.42%	Non-current liabilities increased \$6.2 million (25.8%) in 2023-24, primarily attributed to the drawdown of an \$8.0 million loan through Treasury Corporation of Victoria relating to the Fawkner Leisure Centre redevelopment. That, combined with own source revenue increasing \$15.9 million (7.2%), resulted in a minor decrease in this indicator.
<b>Obligations</b>										
<b>Asset renewal and upgrade</b>										
Asset renewal and upgrade compared to depreciation [Asset renewal and asset upgrade expense / Asset depreciation] x100	95.57%	94.99%	118.36%	282.10%	185.83%	177.30%	141.22%	73.91%	75.60%	The asset renewal and upgrade expenditure increased by \$33.6 million in 2023-24. Resulting in the increase shown of 57% which is a great outcome to achieve a low-risk ratio as per the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO). Council forecasts to maintain a ratio of greater than 100 percent in the forward 2-years. This means that Council is forecasting to maintain the low-risk ratio which is an indicator that ensures that Council is spending enough to maintain its existing assets.

Dimension/indicator/ measure	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24		2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Material Variations and Comments
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Target As per budget	Actual	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	
<b>Operating position</b>										
<b>Adjusted underlying result</b>										
Adjusted underlying surplus (or deficit) [Adjusted underlying surplus (deficit)/ Adjusted underlying revenue] x100	10.28%	16.07%	12.41%	N/A	7.91%	10.73%	13.63%	15.69%	15.69%	The 2023-24 accounting surplus decreased by \$15.2 million or 37.1%. This decrease was as a result of revenue remaining similar to 2022-23, but in comparison, expenses increased by \$15.3 million (7.1%). The main factors for the decrease in the accounting surplus were made up of a \$6.3 million (19.6%) increase in depreciation costs due to a revaluation of infrastructure assets at 30 June 2023 and an increase in employee benefits of \$8.8 million (8.5%).
<b>Stability</b>										
<b>Rates concentration</b>										
Rates compared to adjusted underlying revenue [Rate revenue / Adjusted underlying revenue] x100	70.18%	72.09%	73.10%	74.30%	74.18%	73.20%	75.22%	75.42%	75.57%	The result of this indicator has remained consistent.
<b>Rates effort</b>										
<b>Rates compared to property values</b>										
[Rate revenue / Capital improved value of rateable properties in the municipality] x100	0.27%	0.28%	0.25%	N/A	0.26%	0.27%	0.28%	0.28%	0.29%	The result achieved has remained consistent. The small increase shown is due to property valuations decreasing by 0.9% in 2023-24 and rates revenue increased 3.2%.

## Section 4. Sustainable capacity indicators

For the year ended 30 June 2024

Service	Results				Comments
Indicator / measure [formula]	2021	2022	2023	2024	Material Variations and Comments
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	
<b>Population</b>					
Expenses per head of municipal population [Total expenses / Municipal population]	\$1,107.12	\$1,084.83	\$1,228.54	\$1,264.88	The result achieved has remained consistent. The 2.96% increase is reflected by the municipal population increasing by 6,721 (3.9%) in conjunction with total expenses increasing by \$15.3 million (7.1%).
Infrastructure per head of municipal population [Value of infrastructure / Municipal population]	\$5,046.30	\$5,858.10	\$6,992.26	\$6,820.13	While the total value of Council's infrastructure increased in 2023-24, the increase displayed is due to the municipal population increasing by 6,721 (3.9%) in 2023-24. It is noted that the ABS population figure decreasing from 184,707 in 2021-22 to 174,502 in 2022-23 resulted in a large increase in this figure in 2022-23.
Population density per length of road [Municipal population / Kilometres of local roads]	299.62	293.19	276.55	287.66	The increase is due to the increase in municipal population.
<b>Own-source revenue</b>					
Own-source revenue per head of municipal population [Own-source revenue / Municipal population]	\$985.51	\$1,084.21	\$1,210.90	\$1,212.50	The increase is primarily due to an increase in own-source revenue of \$8.6 million (4.1%) in 2023-24.
<b>Recurrent grants</b>					
Recurrent grants per head of municipal population [Recurrent grants / Municipal population]	\$100.64	\$112.40	\$115.91	\$86.92	The decrease is primarily attributable to the payment of 100% of the Commonwealth Financial Assistance Grant for 2023/24 being paid in June 2023 and no advance payment made for the Commonwealth Financial Assistance Grant for 2024/25.
<b>Disadvantage</b>					
Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage [Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage by decile]	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	There has been no change to relative socio-economic disadvantage over the past 4 years.

Service	Results				Comments
Indicator / measure [formula]	2021	2022	2023	2024	Material Variations and Comments
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	
<b>Workforce turnover</b>					
Percentage of staff turnover [Number of permanent staff resignations and terminations / Average number of permanent staff for the financial year] x100	14.7%	16.5%	15.9%	9.6%	This reporting period has seen a further decrease in staff turnover to 9.57%, which is the lowest percentage Council has seen in the last four years. This is a positive result given the sector's challenging and competitive labour market.

## **Notes to the accounts – Basis of preparation**

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

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

The performance statement presents the actual results for the current year and the previous three years, along with the current year's target, if mandated by the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020*. Additionally, for the prescribed financial performance indicators and measures, the performance statement includes the target budget for the current year and the results forecast for the period 2024-25 to 2027-28 by the council's financial plan.

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

## Definitions

Key term	Definition
<b>Aboriginal children</b>	means a child who is an Aboriginal person
<b>Aboriginal person</b>	has the same meaning as in the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006
<b>adjusted underlying revenue</b>	means total income other than: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• non-recurrent grants used to fund capital expenditure; and</li> <li>• non-monetary asset contributions; and</li> <li>• contributions to fund capital expenditure from sources other than those referred to above</li> </ul>
<b>adjusted underlying surplus (or deficit)</b>	means adjusted underlying revenue less total expenditure
<b>annual report</b>	means an annual report prepared by a council under section 98 of the Act
<b>asset renewal expenditure</b>	means expenditure on an existing asset or on replacing an existing asset that returns the service capability of the asset to its original capability
<b>asset upgrade expenditure</b>	means expenditure that— (a) enhances an existing asset to provide a higher level of service; or (b) extends the life of the asset beyond its original life
<b>critical non-compliance outcome notification</b>	means a notification received by council under section 19N(3) or (4) of the <i>Food Act 1984</i> , or advice given to council by an authorized officer under that Act, of a deficiency that poses an immediate serious threat to public health
<b>current assets</b>	has the same meaning as in the Australian Accounting Standards
<b>current liabilities</b>	has the same meaning as in the Australian Accounting Standards
<b>food premises</b>	has the same meaning as in the <i>Food Act 1984</i>
<b>intervention level</b>	means the level set for the condition of a road beyond which a council will not allow the road to deteriorate and will need to intervene
<b>local road</b>	means a sealed or unsealed road for which the council is the responsible road authority under the <i>Road Management Act 2004</i>
<b>major non-compliance outcome notification</b>	means a notification received by a council under section 19N(3) or (4) of the <i>Food Act 1984</i> , or advice given to council by an authorized officer under that Act, of a deficiency that does not pose an immediate serious threat to public health but may do so if no remedial action is taken
<b>MCH</b>	means the Maternal and Child Health Service provided by a council to support the health and development of children within the municipality



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

# Certification of the Performance Statement

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

Jemma Wightman

Signature:



Chief Financial Officer

Date:

01/10/2024

In our opinion the accompanying performance statement of the Merri-bek City Council for the year ended 30 June 2024 presents fairly the results of the council's performance in accordance with the Local Government Act 2020 and the Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020.

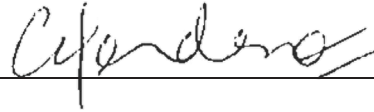
The performance statement contains the relevant performance indicators, measures and results in relation to service performance, financial performance and sustainable capacity.

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

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

Cathy Henderson

Signature:



Chief Executive Officer

Date:

1/ 10 / 2024

Cr Adam Pulford

Signature:



Mayor

Date:

1/ 10 / 2024

Cr Lambros Tapinos

Signature:



Deputy Mayor

Date:

1/ 10 / 2024

# Independent Auditor's Report

## To the Councillors of Merri-bek City Council

**Opinion** I have audited the accompanying performance statement of Merri-bek City Council (the council) which comprises the:

- description of municipality for the year ended 30 June 2024
- service performance indicators for the year ended 30 June 2024
- financial performance indicators for the year ended 30 June 2024
- sustainable capacity indicators for the year ended 30 June 2024
- notes to the accounts
- certification of the performance statement.

In my opinion, the performance statement of Merri-bek City Council in respect of the year ended 30 June 2024 presents fairly, in all material respects, in accordance with the performance reporting requirements of Part 4 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020.

**Basis for Opinion** I have conducted my audit in accordance with the *Audit Act 1994* which incorporates the Australian Standards on Assurance Engagements. I further describe my responsibilities under that Act and those standards in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the performance statement* section of my report.

My independence is established by the *Constitution Act 1975*. My staff and I are independent of the council in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to my audit of the performance statement in Victoria. My staff and I have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

**Councillors' responsibilities for the performance statement** The Councillors are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the performance statement in accordance with the performance reporting requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020* and Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020 and for such internal control as the Councillors determines is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a performance statement that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

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**Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the performance statement**

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

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

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

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MELBOURNE  
2 October 2024



Travis Derricott  
*as delegate for the Auditor-General of Victoria*

# Governance and management

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

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The Act is based on five principles:

- community engagement
- strategic planning
- financial management
- public transparency
- service performance.

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

We seek to apply good governance to:

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

## Council meetings

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

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

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

In accordance with Council's Governance Rules, we conducted council meetings from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 in a hybrid format, allowing for both in person and online attendance.

In 2023–24, the number of people watching council meetings online (live and the recordings) was 11,574, and the number watching planning meetings was 4,942.

## Councillor attendance at meetings

In 2023–24, we held:

- 12 council meetings (includes meeting to elect the Mayor)
- Two special council meetings
- 10 council meetings to consider planning and related matters.

Table A shows councillor attendance for 2023–24, for the period from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024.

**Table A**

Councillor	Council meetings (total 12)	Special council meetings (total 2)	Planning and related matters (total 10)
Cr Sue Bolton	12	2	10
Cr Annalivia Carli Hannan *(approved leave of absence – 6 meetings)	11	1	8
Cr James Conlan	11	2	6
Cr Helen Davidson	11	1	8
Cr Monica Harte *(approved leave of absence – 4 meetings)	12	2	10
Cr Angelica Panopoulos *(approved leave of absence – 1 meeting)	12	2	10
Cr Helen Pavlidis-Mihalakos *(approved leave of absence – 3 meetings)	12	1	10
Cr Adam Pulford	12	2	10
Cr Mark Riley	12	2	9
Cr Lambros Tapinos	12	2	9
Cr Oscar Yildiz JP *(approved leave of absence – 5 meetings)	11	2	10

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

## Major committees

### Audit and Risk Committee

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

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

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

The current committee consists of seven members, including an independent chair, John Watson, three independent members (Lisa Tripodi, Marilyn Kearney and Jeff Rigby), and three councillors (Cr Monica Harte, Cr Lambros Tapinos, and Cr Adam Pulford - Mayor).

During 2023–24, the committee held four meetings with the following councillor attendance:

- Tuesday 5 September 2023: Cr Adam Pulford
- Tuesday 28 November 2023: Cr Adam Pulford, Cr Angelica Panopoulos
- Tuesday 5 March 2024: Cr Adam Pulford
- Tuesday 4 June 2024: Cr Adam Pulford, Cr Monica Harte

### Delegated committees

Council has not established any delegated Committees.

## Councillor expenses and allowances

### Expenses

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

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

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

Councillor expenses for the 2023–24 year are outlined below.

Councillor	Travel / Mileage	Child / Family Care	Conferences/ training	Accommodation	Mobile and data	Events	Copying / Stationery	Totals
Cr Sue Bolton	\$45.45	-	-	-	\$431.01	-	-	\$476.46
Cr James Conlan	-	-	-	-	\$740.89	-	-	\$740.89
Cr Helen Davidson	\$931.10	-	\$5,563.18	\$576.36	\$430.55	-	-	\$3,782.79
Cr Annalivia Carli Hannan	-	-	-	-	\$378.16	-	-	\$378.16
Cr Monica Harte	-	-	-	-	\$1,772.04	-	-	\$1,772.04
Cr Angelica Panopoulos	\$991.08	-	\$5,563.18	\$576.36	\$378.16	-	-	\$7508.78
Cr Helen Pavlidis-Mihalakos	\$1,095.12	-	\$7,736.64 <sup>1</sup>	\$1135.26	\$378.16	\$203.82	-	\$10,549.00
Cr Adam Pulford	\$1,044.04	-	\$10,728.91	\$1000.47	\$378.16	\$119.69	-	\$13,271.27
Cr Mark Riley	\$1,482.62	-	\$8,847	-	\$518.15	-	-	\$10,847.77
Cr Lambros Tapinos	\$215.57	-	\$200	-	\$392.21	\$28.91	-	\$836.69
Cr Oscar Yildiz JP	\$107.89	-	\$1,251.18	\$666.98	\$1,557.79	-	-	\$3,583.84

<sup>1</sup> A refund of \$5,300 was received for withdrawing from the AICD Course



## Allowances

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

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

In accordance with Section 39 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, the Tribunal determined the following allowances for Category 3 councils (Merri-bek City Council being a Category 3) from 18 December 2023:

**Mayoral allowance:** \$130,390

**Deputy mayor's allowance:** \$65,195

**Councillor allowance:** \$39,390

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

## Councillor Code of Conduct

Our Councillor Code of Conduct was reviewed and adopted on 20 June 2023. It is available on our website: [merri-bek.vic.gov.au](https://merri-bek.vic.gov.au)

The code sets out the standards of conduct expected of councillors.

The code aims to empower councillors to model fair and respectful behaviour, to work together constructively in the best interests of the local community.

## Conflict of interest

Councillors as elected by residents and ratepayers are required to act in the best interests of the community. This is a position of trust that requires councillors to act in the public interest. Council officers must also act and prioritise public interests when undertaking their duties and functions.

There are two types of conflict of interest:

- **General conflict of interest** — a conflict between a councillor or an employee's public duty to act in the best interests of the community or organisation and their private interests.
- **Material conflict of interest** — where a councillor or employee would gain a benefit or suffer a loss depending on the outcome of the matter.

Conflicts of interest may be real, perceived, or potential. They may also arise from direct or indirect interests.

A conflict of interest must be declared and appropriately managed. This is to ensure that public interests are not compromised or undermined in any way.

A conflict of interest can exist even if no improper act results from it. These conflicts of interest must be declared. It is not important how the conflict of interest has arisen.

We are committed to delivering services to our community fairly and transparently, without favour or bias. Our integrity is critical to our reputation and effectiveness in the local community.

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

In general, managing conflicts of interest involve:

- disclosing the conflict in a specific way
- considering the duties of the declarant
- determining the risk associated with the conflict arising
- applying appropriate treatment.

This may require:

- removing the declarant from any decision-making on a specific matter
- restricting the declarant's involvement in the matter
- recruiting a disinterested or independent third party
- the declarant relinquishing the private interest.

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

During 2023–24, 10 conflict of interest disclosures were made at council meetings and councillor briefings.

In declaring a conflict of interest, the relevant Councillor would leave the meeting. This removed them from the decision-making process in relation to that matter.

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

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

- gifts
- benefits
- hospitality.

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

To prevent both real and perceived conflicts of interest in planning and development matters, Council adopted the Councillor Contact with Lobbyists, Developers and Submitters Policy (the Policy) at its 10 April 2024 meeting. The policy aims to ensure interactions between Council representatives and lobbyists, developers and submitters are conducted in an open, transparent and accountable manner.

## Governance and management checklist

Results of Merri-bek Council's assessment against the prescribed governance and management checklist as of 30 June 2024

Checklist Item	Governance and Management Item	Assessment	
1	<b>Community engagement policy</b> (policy under section 55 of the Act outlining Council's commitment to engaging with the community on matters of public interest)	<b>Current policy in operation and adopted in accordance with section 55 of the Act</b> <b>Reviewed and Adopted 20/6/2023</b> Merri-bek Community Engagement Policy was reviewed and adopted with minor amendments by Council on 20 June 2023 in accordance with section 55 of the Act.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2	<b>Community engagement guidelines</b> (guidelines to assist staff to determine when and how to engage with the community)	<b>Current guidelines in operation</b> <b>Operational: 9/12/2020</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3	<b>Financial plan</b> (plan under section 91 of the Act outlining the financial and non-financial resources required for at least the next 10 financial years)	<b>Adopted in accordance with section 91 of the Act</b> <b>Adopted 20/10/2021:</b> The 10-year financial plan was adopted by Council in October 2021. The budget includes an update to the 10-year outlook and was approved in 26 June 2024 in accordance with section 91 of the Act 2020. Strategic Resource Plan 2020-2025 is in place, since 8/07/2020.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4	<b>Asset plan</b> (plan under section 92 of the Act setting out the asset maintenance and renewal needs for key infrastructure asset classes for at least the next 10 years)	<b>Adopted in accordance with section 92 of the Act</b> <b>Adopted 23/06/2022:</b> 10-year Asset Plan adopted by Council on 23 June 2022 in accordance with section 92 of the Act 2020.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5	<b>Revenue and rating plan</b> (plan under section 93 of the Act setting out the rating structure of Council to levy rates and charges)	<b>Adopted in accordance with section 93 of the Act</b> <b>Adopted: 24/06/2021</b> The Revenue and Rating Plan was adopted by Council on 24 June 2021 in accordance with section 93 of the Act.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Checklist Item	Governance and Management Item	Assessment	
6	<b>Annual budget</b> (plan under section 94 of the Act setting out the services to be provided and initiatives to be undertaken during the budget year and the funding and other resources required)	<b>Budget adopted in accordance with section 94 of the Act</b> <b>Adopted: 26/06/2024</b> The annual budget was adopted by Council on 26 June 2024 in accordance with section 94 of the Act.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7	<b>Risk policy</b> (policy outlining Council's commitment and approach to minimising the risks to Council's operations)	<b>Current policy in operationOperational:</b> 6/12/2023	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8	<b>Fraud policy</b> (policy outlining Council's commitment and approach to minimising the risk of fraud)	<b>Current policy in operationOperational:</b> 20/12/22	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Checklist Item	Governance and Management Item	Assessment	
9	<b>Municipal emergency management planning</b> (Participation in meetings of the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC))	<b>MEMPC meetings attended by one or more representatives of Council (other than the chairperson) during the financial year</b>  <b>Date of MEMPC meetings attended:</b> 14 March 2023 9 May 2023 15 August 2023 14 November 2023 13 February 2024 14 May 2024	☑
10	<b>Procurement policy</b> (policy under section 108 of the Act outlining the principles, processes and procedures that will apply to all purchases of goods and services by the Council)	<b>Current policy in operation and adopted in accordance with section 108 of the Act</b> <b>Reviewed and Adopted 13/03/2024:</b> The procurement policy was reviewed and adopted by Council on 13 March 2024 in accordance with section 108 of the Act.	☑
11	<b>Business continuity plan</b> (plan setting out the actions that will be taken to ensure that key services continue to operate in the event of a disaster)	<b>Current plan in operation</b> <b>Operational</b> 28/05/2024	☑

Checklist Item	Governance and Management Item	Assessment	
12	<b>Disaster recovery plan</b> (plan setting out the actions that will be undertaken to recover and restore business capability in the event of a disaster)	<b>Current plan in operation</b> <b>Operational: 09/12/2023</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
13	<b>Complaint policy</b> (Policy under section 107 of the Act outlining Council's commitment and approach to managing complaints)	<b>Current policy in operation and adopted in accordance with section 107 of the Act</b>  <b>Date of commencement of policy: 06/07/2021</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
14	<b>Workforce plan</b> (Plan outlining Council's commitment and approach to planning the current and future workforce requirements of the organisation)	<b>Established in accordance with section 46 of the Act</b>  Date of commencement of current plan: 30 June 2021 Updated on: 27 March 2024	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
15	<b>Payment of rates and hardship policy</b> (Policy outlining Council's commitment and approach to assisting ratepayers experiencing financial hardship or difficulty paying their rates)	<b>Current policy in operation</b>  <b>Date of commencement of current policy: 1/10/22</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
16	<b>Risk management framework</b> (framework outlining Council's approach to managing risks to the Council's operations)	<b>Current framework in operation</b> <b>Operational: 30/06/20</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
17	<b>Audit and Risk Committee</b> (advisory committee of Council under section 53 and 54 of the Act whose role is to monitor the compliance of Council policies and procedures, monitor Council's financial reporting, monitor and provide oversight on internal and external audit functions)	<b>Established in accordance with section 53 of the Act</b> <b>Established: 13/05/2020</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Checklist Item	Governance and Management Item	Assessment	
18	<b>Internal audit</b> (independent accounting professionals engaged by the Council to provide analyses and recommendations aimed at improving Council's governance, risk and management controls)	<b>Internal auditor engaged</b> <b>Engaged: 1/09/2021</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
19	<b>Performance reporting framework</b> (a set of indicators measuring financial and non-financial performance, including the performance indicators referred to in section 98 of the Act)	<b>Current framework in operation</b> <b>Operational 26/06/2024:</b> <b>Framework described in the Annual Budget adopted 26/06/2024.</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
20	<b>Council plan report</b> (report reviewing the performance of the Council against the Council Plan, including the results in relation to the strategic indicators, for the first six months of the financial year)	<b>Current reports</b> <b>Reported 19/8/2023:</b> Council Action Plan 2022-23 – Fourth Quarter Performance Report.  <b>Reported 8/11/2023:</b> Council Action Plan 2023-24 – First Quarter Performance Report.  <b>Reported 14/02/2023:</b> Council Action Plan 2023-24 - Second Quarter Performance Report.  <b>Reported 8/05/2023:</b> Council Action Plan 2023-24 - Third Quarter Performance Report	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

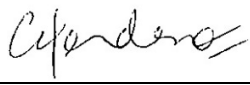
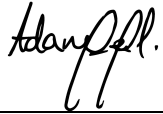
Checklist Item	Governance and Management Item	Assessment	
21	<b>Quarterly budget reports</b> (quarterly reports to Council under section 97 of the Act, comparing actual and budget results and an explanation of any material variations)	<b>Quarterly reports presented to Council in accordance with section 97 (1) of the Act</b> <b>Reported 6/12/2023:</b> 2023/24 First Quarter Financial Report. <b>Reported 13/03/2024:</b> 2023/24 Mid-Year Financial Report. <b>Reported 10/04/2024:</b> 2023/24 Third Quarter Financial Report.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
22	<b>Risk reporting</b> (six-monthly reports of strategic risks to Council's operations, their likelihood and consequences of occurring and risk minimisation strategies)	<b>Risk reports prepared and presented</b> A strategic Risk Review was presented to Executive on 28/10/2023, to the Audit and Risk Committee on 28 November 2023 and to Council at their meeting of 14 February 2024 meeting (included within the Governance report).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



Checklist Item	Governance and Management Item	Assessment	
23	<p><b>Performance reporting</b> (six-monthly reports of indicators measuring the results against financial and non-financial performance, including performance indicators referred to in section 98 of the Act)</p>	<p><b>Performance reports prepared</b>  <b>Reported 19/8/2023:</b> Council Action Plan 2022-23 – Fourth Quarter Performance Report.</p> <p><b>Reported 8/11/2023:</b> Council Action Plan 2023-24 – First Quarter Performance Report.</p> <p><b>Reported 6/12/2023:</b> 2023/24 First Quarter Financial Report.</p> <p><b>Reported 14/02/2023:</b> Council Action Plan 2023-24 - Second Quarter Performance Report.</p> <p><b>Reported 13/03/2024:</b> 2023/24 Mid-Year Financial Report.</p> <p><b>Reported 10/04/2024:</b> 2023/24 Third Quarter Financial Report.</p> <p><b>Reported 8/05/2023:</b> Council Action Plan 2023-24 - Third Quarter Performance Report</p>	☑
24	<p><b>Annual report</b> (annual report under sections 98 , 99 and 100 of the Act containing a report of operations and audited financial and performance statements)</p>	<p><b>Annual report considered at a meeting of Council in accordance with section 100 of the Act</b>  <b>Considered: 11/10/2023</b></p>	☑
25	<p><b>Councillor Code of Conduct</b> (Code under section 139 of the Act setting out the standards of conduct to be followed by Councillors and other matters)</p>	<p><b>Code of conduct reviewed and adopted in accordance with section 139 of the Act</b>  <b>Reviewed and Adopted: 20/6/2023.</b></p>	☑

Checklist Item	Governance and Management Item	Assessment	
26	<b>Delegations</b> (documents setting out the powers, duties and functions of Council and the Chief Executive Officer that have been delegated to members of staff, in accordance with sections 11 and 47 of the Act)	<b>Delegations reviewed in accordance with section 11(7) of the Act and a register kept in accordance with sections 11(8) and 47(7) of the Act</b> <b>Registered Reviewed: 07/05/2024.</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
27	<b>Meeting procedures</b> (Governance rules under section 60 of the Act governing the conduct of meetings of Council and delegated committees)	<b>Governance rules adopted in accordance with section 60 of the Act</b> <b>Reviewed and Adopted: 10/04/2024.</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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

<b>Cathy Henderson</b>	<b>Cr Adam Pulford</b>
<b>Chief Executive Officer</b>	<b>Mayor</b>
<b>Signature</b> 	<b>Signature</b> 
<b>Date: 1/ 10 / 2024</b>	<b>Date: 1/ 10 / 2024</b>

## Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures

Council is continuing its voluntary reporting following the recommendations of the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD). Disclosures support the management of systemic risks to the financial system due to climate change. In the public sector, assets and services delivered by Council to the community may be impacted by extreme weather and climate. Disclosures support accountability in climate-related decision making and financial sustainability in Council.

In July 2023, the TCFD has been transitioned to the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) S1 and S2 sustainability standards. While IFRS reporting is not mandatory for local governments in Australia, Council is keeping abreast with the developments as guided by the Department of Finance and the Australian Accounting Standards Board. In the meantime, Council will continue voluntary reporting following the TCFD recommendations. The following report is unaudited.

### Introduction

Merri-bek City Council is recognised for its leadership in environmental sustainability and climate action. We have been certified carbon neutral since 2011– 2012 through the nationally accredited scheme [Climate Active](#) reduced our carbon emissions from Council operations by 70% from a 2012 baseline. In 2018, we declared a climate emergency and committed to urgent action.

In our Community Vision for 2021 to 2031, we aim to promote an environmentally proactive Merri-bek with the goal:

'In 2031, Merri-bek is carbon neutral, embracing an entirely renewable energy system, innovative management of waste, and accessible active transport. We have a circular economy, energy-efficient housing, food security, and ample green spaces and canopy cover led by a well-informed proactive community. We are a community connected to Country with healthy flora and fauna, through protection of ecosystems'.

Our main climate-related strategies and actions plans are the Zero Carbon Merri-bek Framework and Climate Emergency Action Plan and the Climate Risk Strategy and Foundational Action Plan. These strategies and action plans are complemented by related [strategies, policies, and action plans](#) that enable and drive climate action, including:

- Council Plan and the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Urban Forest Strategy
- Integrated Water Management Strategy and Action Plan
- Merri-bek Nature Plan
- Open Space Strategy and Action Plan
- Circular Economy Strategy (under development)
- Moving around Merri-bek - Transport Strategy
- Environmentally Sustainable Design through the Merri-bek Planning Scheme
- Sustainable Buildings Policy (Council managed assets)
- Food Systems Strategy
- Plastic Wise Policy

Climate impacts are already being experienced in Merri-bek and in the Greater Melbourne Region. In the past 10 years, climate-related extreme events in Merri-bek including:

- During the 2014 heatwaves, Essendon Airport, the nearest weather station to Merri-bek, recorded maximum air temperatures above 43°C from 14 to 17 January. In Merri-bek, land surface temperature measurements reached more than 60°C in some built up areas. The Department of Health found that an estimated 167 deaths related to the heatwave in Victoria.

- In November 2016, Melbourne experienced a large thunderstorm asthma epidemic with a 672% increase in respiratory-related issues in public hospitals.
- Melbourne’s air quality reached hazardous levels in January 2020, amid the 2019–20 bushfires.
- The October 2022 heavy rainfall event resulted in high water levels along creeks. Despite pro-active drainage and street cleansing before the heavy rains, the event resulted in rubbish and silt in the waterways from water and debris carried by creeks from up catchment.
- In February 2024, after bushfires impacted western Victoria, storms caused major power outages in Victoria, affecting around half a million households.

We anticipate that extreme events and their impacts will worsen in both magnitude and frequency under various climate scenarios, reinforcing our commitment to preparing for and managing climate risks.

## Scenario analysis

TCFD requires scenario analysis to support strategic thinking and planning and enterprise risk management.

The scope of the TCFD reporting focuses on physical risks to Council and the community, such as impacts to assets, services, and health and wellbeing. Transition risks, which are risks that are related to the transition to a lower-carbon economy, which may cover policy and legal, technology, market, and reputational risks have not yet been fully assessed in Merri-bek and are beyond the scope of this report.

Merri-bek follows the approach of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), “In the context of climate change impacts, risks result from dynamic interactions between climate-related hazards with the exposure and vulnerability of the affected human or ecological system to the hazards”<sup>4</sup>.



**Figure 1.** Relationship between risk, hazard, vulnerability, and exposure

The main climate-related hazards impacting Merri-bek are extreme heat, extreme rainfall events that are more intense on average, overall decrease in rainfall amounts in winter and spring. This is based on the [Victorian Climate Projections 2019](#) (VCP19) prepared by CSIRO. Other hazards such as increased fire danger, sea level rise are expected for the Greater Melbourne Region, which may not directly impact Merri-bek. The moderate and high emissions scenarios, Representative Concentration Pathways 4.5 and 8.5 are generally used.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 1.** Climate Hazards and Climate Change Information

Climate Hazard	Risk Description	Sources of Climate Change Information
Extreme heat	<p>Extreme heat is the highest rated risk for Merri-bek under the Community Emergency Risk Assessment (CERA). In Australia, extreme heat results in more deaths than flood and fires combined. Older people especially those who live alone, young children and babies are particularly at risk.</p>	<p>Based on the VCP19 dataset,<sup>6</sup> the number of days exceeding 35°C is likely to increase from 10.2 days per year to 14 to 16.4 days by 2050. By 2070 in a high emission scenario, up to 2°C increase for mean maximum temperature is expected and the hottest days may be around 3.5°C hotter.</p> <p>Land surface temperature (LST) analysis was conducted for Merri-bek in 2014 and guided our Urban Heat Island Effect Action Plan. We sourced new LST data in 2023 and worked with RMIT through aerial and satellite imagery to better understand changes. Land surface temperatures are point-in-time conditions. While these do not tell us what future risk looks like, this gives a finer grained spatial assessment of heat risk, complementary to more general information from climate projections.</p> <p>The Australian Climate Services also recently released Heat-Health Risk Indices in beta version<sup>7</sup>. This dataset shows the interaction between land surface temperatures and factors that impact vulnerability and adaptive capacity such as certain demographic and socio-economic characteristics.</p>
Extreme rainfall events	<p>Storms and flood risk can cause damage to property and infrastructure as well as impact the safety of people. Intense rainfall and runoff events can also erode creeks, deposit sediment, and negatively impact wildlife. Secondary impacts such as power outages also cause disruption.</p>	<p>The <a href="#">stormwater flood hazard mapping</a> in Merri-bek was most recently updated in 2023 to include the risk of climate change, following the guidance of the Australian Rainfall and Runoff 2019 guidance of having increased rainfall intensity by about 18.5%.</p> <p>Managing flooding along waterways is the role of Melbourne Water as the floodplain management authority. Flood models that incorporate a planning horizon to the year 2100 and climate change forecasts have been developed. Melbourne Water has communicated plans to share the modelling with local government and to take next steps in making a formal request for a Planning Scheme Amendment, and to work with State Emergency Services and Council on public release and community</p>

		engagement.
Decreased rainfall and drought	Prolonged dry conditions, such as experienced during the Millennium Drought from 2001 – 2009, may impact the water supply. The public amenity offered by open spaces and the natural environment is also impacted. Drought conditions may also exacerbate the impacts of extreme heat. The lack of vegetation and evapotranspiration result in hotter land surface temperatures.	From the VCP19 projections, average annual rainfall is expected to decrease under moderate and high emission scenarios for 2050 and 2070 timelines. By 2070, it is expected to have between 9.2 to 11.1% less rainfall. The changes are most pronounced in spring, where up to 18% less rainfall may be expected.
Poor air quality	Bushfire-related air pollution has serious health impacts, particularly to infants, young children, pregnant women, older people, and people with underlying respiratory illnesses.  Conditions for thunderstorm asthma may also increase, as weather patterns that influence pollen growth change and convection thunderstorm risks increase. People who suffer from hay fever and rye grass pollen allergies are particularly at risk. People of South Asian or Southeast Asian background may also be more at risk, based on evidence from the 2016 epidemic thunderstorm asthma event in Melbourne.	The number of high bushfire risk days can triple in the future <sup>8</sup> , as high temperatures, low rainfall in spring, and increased intense weather conditions result in lightning.

Through our Climate Risk Foundational Action Plan, we are working on a vulnerability and exposure analysis in Merri-bek and mapping of areas that have the highest exposure, such as to high land surface temperatures and to waterway and stormwater flooding. This work can help us better identify risks in the municipality and to have an integrated approach to addressing them.

## Climate change governance

The roles of local government in climate change are described under the Victorian legislation and summarised by the Department of Energy, Environment, and Climate Action in [a fact sheet](#). The Climate Change Act 2017 requires that decision makers have a regard to climate change, including in preparing a Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, and the Local Government Act of 2020 requires local governments to plan for climate change risks. Governance and decision making in Merri-bek occurs at different levels described below.

### Council meetings and decisions

Among many other decisions, Councillors endorse strategies and action plans that guide resource allocation and officers' work. Councillors endorsed the Climate Risk Strategy in 2022 and the Foundational Action Plan in June 2023. The Zero Carbon Merri-bek 2040 Framework and Zero Carbon Merri-bek Climate Emergency Action Plan were also endorsed by Council in 2018 and 2019 respectively. Councillors are briefed by Council staff to keep them up to date on progress of the implementation of actions.

The 2026–30 Council Plan and its integrated Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan will be approved by the new Council after the October 2024 elections. New action plans for climate risk and climate emergency for 2025–26 to 2030 is also currently under development.

Councillors also discuss and decide on Planning and Related Matters through regular meetings.

**Audit and Risk Committee**

The Audit and Risk Committee provides oversight of climate risks. In 2023–24, biannual reports were submitted to the committee describing climate risk management processes and progress against the delivery of the Climate Risk Strategy. The committee is comprised of the Chief Executive Officer, Merri-bek Executives, Councillors, and independent and external members.

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

The Zero Carbon Merri-bek Project Control Board is comprised of the Place and Environment Director, Community Engagement Manager, and Sustainability and Climate Manager. It provides overall direction and management over the implementation of the Zero Carbon Merri-bek Climate Emergency Action Plan.

**Climate change strategy**

The Council Plan 2021–25 is a comprehensive overview of Council's values, commitments, and activities. It includes clear goals and objectives against which Council and its administration measure its performance. The Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan is integrated into the Council Plan. To demonstrate strategic integration of our climate response as required under the *Climate Change Act 2017*, we have used a symbol of the globe to signify climate change related priorities.

In September 2018, Merri-bek City Council declared a climate emergency. Through this declaration, we have committed to urgent action to respond to the climate emergency.

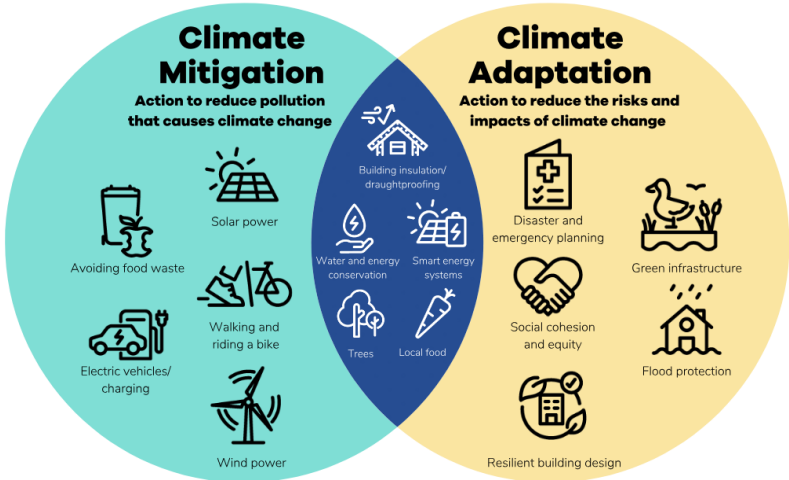


Figure 2. Climate change mitigation and adaptation action



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

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

Five goals were identified, around managing climate risk, improving the resilience of built and natural environments, improving the resilience of community services, supporting community and businesses with information to take action, and partnerships. Indicators have been developed to assess progress against these goals and reporting will commence after June 2025 at the completion of the Foundational Action Plan. To achieve the goals, objectives, and desired outcomes in the strategy, the Climate Risk Foundational Action Plan was developed and endorsed by Council in June 2023.

The first year of implementation of the Foundational Action Plan in financial year 2023–24 saw the completion of nearly half of the 36 actions and progress against most actions. The foundational actions are expected to improve our understanding of what climate change means across the municipality, particularly for the most vulnerable groups, and our organisational ability to manage climate risks.

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

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

It is Council's adopted goal for Merri-bek to achieve 75% emissions reduction by 2030 (against 2011–12 baseline), net zero by 2035 and drawdown ('negative emissions') by 2040. The Climate Emergency Action Plan includes action on both corporate and community emissions to meet this target. Taking stock of the outcomes and achievements in the past years, a new climate emergency action plan is in development for 2025–30.

## **Climate risk management**

### **Building Vulnerability Analysis**

In delivering the Council Action Plan and the Climate Risk Foundational Action Plan, Council undertook an assessment of building vulnerability to a range of climate hazards including increase in temperature, bushfire induced air pollution, low rainfall and drought, wind, storms and intense rainfall, and solar radiation.

In 2023, five buildings across the municipality were selected representing different functions and users, building age, and location. Five of the buildings and their assessments are illustrated below. We used the Victorian Climate Projections 2019 (VCP 19) high emission scenarios for 2030 and 2050. The assessment followed the guidance of the AS 5334-2013 Climate change adaptation for settlements and infrastructure - A risk-based approach.

The study found that many sustainability and energy efficiency solutions also yield resilience outcomes such as improving the building's thermal envelope, passive design upgrades, thermal zoning, and airtightness upgrades. These solutions result in improved thermal performance, and comfort to occupants, especially as we are likely to experience more frequent and intense heatwaves in the future. These types of solutions can be applied across multiple sites.

In some facilities, major infrastructure upgrades are recommended to improve building resilience, such as landscape regrading to reduce flood risk, and works on roofs and insulation to enhance thermal performance and reduce risk of water damage during extreme rainfall events.

In addition to structural solutions or modifications, there are also opportunities for improved planning, such as by improving emergency response plans to provide facility staff guidance in the event of emergencies as well as to integrate resilience in asset management planning. A cost-benefit analysis was included as part of the study and was used to inform the recommendations.



In 2024, Council completed a second round of building vulnerability analysis. This year's work expands the building types (and user groups) to include a sporting hall, kindergarten, senior citizens' centre, neighbourhood house, open space amenities including a playground and shade structure and a public toilet. A group of co-located facilities and services in Fawkner were also evaluated to look at benefits of coordinated management of a group of facilities.

The facility assessment continued to follow the *Australian Standard 5334-2013 Climate Change Adaptation for Settlements and Infrastructure – A Risk-based Approach*. The climate scenarios used were RCP 4.5 (moderate emission scenario) and RCP 8.5 (high emission scenario).

A recommendation from the previous round was to use at least two scenarios for more robust decision-

making following the recommendations of the TCFD. The time horizons were expanded from 2030 and 2050, to include 2070, as many Council buildings have an expected asset life of up to or beyond 2070.

A key innovation in the current project is to establish ‘resilience targets’ for building types across the portfolio, highlighting a baseline level of resilience Council should strive for against many different climate hazards. These resilience targets are based on the building type and its use, as well as user needs and vulnerability—a neighbourhood house with a community garden will have a higher resilience target for landscape than an administrative building. The recommended actions in the report aim to close identified gaps between the resilience target and actual resilience level observed.

The recommendations, together with the initial study are expected to inform the prioritisation of maintenance and works in the capital works program at Council.

**Service Risk Assessments**

As part of the delivery of the Foundational Action Plan, in 2023 we assessed how Council-provided and supported services operate under a changing climate. A consultant facilitated the assessment of the resilience of service delivery, staff, and clients to extreme heat. This involved different services across the community sector including early years, youth, aged and community services together with emergency management. This was completed through policy analysis, interviews with officers, and culminating in a scenario-based workshop.

This work produced 24 recommendations covering planning activities before summer, before heat events, and actions during heatwaves. Recommendations ranged from training and preparedness for power outages, to identifying vulnerable persons for enhanced support and cross-service planning.

Relevant procedures are in place across business units to ensure appropriate preparation and response during periods of high heat, with a focus on vulnerable clients.

**Metrics and targets**

**Climate risk strategy monitoring and evaluation**

Council has developed the following qualitative progress scorecards against the five goals of the strategy. Progress will be assessed at the end of the implementation period of the Foundational Action Plan.

Goal	Progress scorecard scale and Impact Indicators
<p><b>Goal 1:</b> By 2025, Council has iterative risk management, reporting and decision-making processes in place to manage climate-related risk to assets, service delivery, finances, and liabilities.</p>	<p><b>Progress scorecard</b></p> <p><u>Beginning to build capacity</u><sup>9</sup>: There is no information available to officers on climate risks in the municipality.</p> <p><u>Emerging capacity</u>: Information provided, and training delivered.</p> <p><u>Establishing capacity</u>: Information is used in risk management processes and service planning.</p> <p><u>Consolidating capacity</u>: Climate risk and resilience is well integrated into strategies, policies, and planning.</p> <p><u>Succeeding and obtaining resilience benefits</u>: Beyond integration into policies, robust climate risk and resilience integration into operational processes (e.g. budget planning, escalation risk escalations, and business cases) and resulting in more robust</p>

	<p>decision-making. Assessment of how robust decision-making is will be assessed by the CRIB.</p>
<p><b>Goal 2</b> By 2030, Council has improved the ability of its infrastructure, open spaces and natural environments to avoid, withstand and recover from climate impacts, while continuing to provide for community wellbeing, amenity and ecosystem services.</p>	<p><b>Progress scorecard</b></p> <p><u>Beginning to build capacity:</u> There are no initiatives and investment in understanding climate impacts to the infrastructure, open spaces, and natural environments.</p> <p><u>Emerging capacity:</u> Infrastructure vulnerability assessments are conducted to understand climate impacts.</p> <p><u>Establishing capacity:</u> Some trial works (upgrades and refurbishment) delivered to improve building and infrastructure performance to satisfactory service levels for high-risk buildings and infrastructure.</p> <p><u>Consolidating capacity:</u> Council has developed a work program to improve resilience in built environment and open space and environment.</p> <p><u>Succeeding and obtaining resilience benefits:</u> Processes and systems are in place to address climate risk in capital works delivery of investments into infrastructure, open spaces, and natural environments.</p>
<p><b>Goal 3:</b> By 2030, Council services are resilient to climate impacts such that we can support our community through the shocks and stressors associated with climate change.</p>	<p><b>Progress scorecard</b></p> <p><u>Beginning to build capacity:</u> There are no Council initiatives and investment in understanding climate impacts to services.</p> <p><u>Emerging capacity:</u> Service assessments for a sample of core services are conducted.</p> <p><u>Establishing capacity:</u> Service assessments and planning for an expanded number of core services are conducted.</p> <p><u>Consolidating capacity:</u> Recommendations from assessments are delivered through operational plans.</p> <p><u>Succeeding and obtaining resilience benefits:</u> Services are reporting high adaptive capacity (using the adaptive capacity <a href="#">checklist</a> developed by the Victorian Climate Resilient Councils).</p>
<p><b>Goal 4:</b> By 2030, Merri-bek residents and businesses have access to relevant and appropriate information and support from Council to take meaningful action to adapt and build resilience to climate change.</p>	<p><b>Progress scorecard</b></p> <p><u>Beginning to build capacity:</u> No initiatives or partnerships related to climate.</p> <p><u>Emerging capacity:</u> Baseline community adaptive capacity is assessed.</p> <p><u>Establishing capacity:</u> Opportunities for information sharing and support are mapped out.</p> <p><u>Consolidating capacity:</u> Community and businesses are informed on climate risks and adaptation actions to reduce risks.</p>

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

A suite of 22 indicators were also developed or linked to the Climate Risk Strategy relating to risk management, adaptive capacity, service performance, integrated water management, and others. Some of the same applicable indicators from the Council Action Plan were used to avoid duplication (e.g. percentage of tree canopy cover, capacity of water harvesting systems for re-use and irrigation, and area of catchment treated by large-scale water sensitive urban design approaches)

### **CDP-ICLEI reporting**

The [CDP - ICLEI](#) (Carbon Disclosure Project Cities track) provides a platform for cities and towns to report on how they are tackling climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and building climate resilience. This helps local governments better understand opportunities for climate action and to benchmark its performance.

For the 2023 report, Merri-bek City Council obtained scores of 'B' for mitigation and adaptation. This gives a Management rating for Merri-bek, based on three levels on Awareness, Management and Leadership. This means that Council understands the main local risks and impacts of climate change and has plans and actions in place to adapt to and/or reduce these effects. This is comparable with other reporting cities in the Oceania region, and better than the global average of C. To have a rating of A, Leadership and additional criteria must be met. Officers will continue to work towards improvement for subsequent reporting periods as we continue to implement our Zero Carbon Merri-bek and Climate Risk Action Plans. Merri-bek City Council will complete CDP – ICLEI reporting in 2025.

## Council emissions

For Council (corporate/operational) emissions we have a highly ambitious target range of between 80% and 100% reduction by 2030 (precluding offsets, against 2011–12 baseline). Council achieved a 70% reduction in carbon emissions by 2020–21. Council currently achieves carbon neutrality through offsets, while continuing with ambitious targets to achieve net zero and draw down.

Council emissions reporting (Scope 1, Scope 2, and Scope 3) has been certified by [Climate Active](#) most recently in 2022–23. Greenhouse gas emissions were 10% higher in 2022–23 compared to 2021–22. The increase is largely due to changes in the published emission factor for diesel oil and changes in reporting guidelines on electricity. Analysis for 2022–23 provides a total of 7,387.51 tCO<sub>2</sub>-e for offsetting, compared with 6,597 tCO<sub>2</sub>-e in 2021–22.

## Community emissions

In 2021 Council increased the ambition of its carbon targets. The updated target for the Merri-bek community is to achieve 75% emissions reduction by 2030 (against 2011/12 baseline), net zero by 2035 and drawdown ('negative emissions') by 2040.

The latest data on community emissions are captured in Figure 3 below for financial year 2021–22. Our major emissions source is electricity consumption, due to the community's scale of population and commercial activity. The second largest source of emissions is gas consumption.

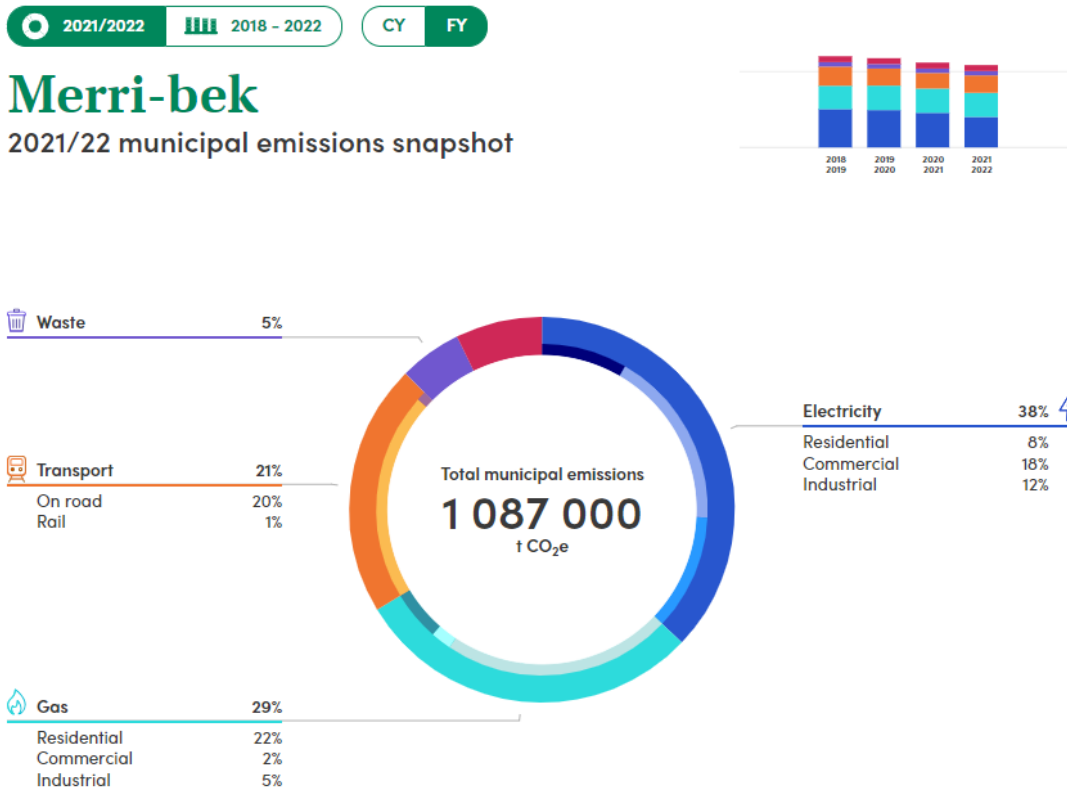


Figure 3. Snapshot Tool estimate of 2021–22 Merri-bek Community Emissions<sup>10</sup>

# Statutory information

## Victorian and Federal Government investigations

Merri-bek City Council was not the subject of any Victorian State or Federal Government investigations in 2023–24.

### Documents available for public inspection

We are committed to open and transparent governance under the Local Government Act 2020. We have a Public Transparency Policy in place. This outlines our commitment to being accountable to the community through:

- transparency of information
- service data
- performance
- decision-making.

We deliver a range of services to residents, business, and visitors to Merri-bek. Our services and functions are documented. We will publish information about our services and administration activities on our website. We will also make this available on request.

The following documents are available on Council's website:

1. Council and Delegated Committee meeting agendas and minutes
2. Reporting from Advisory Committees in accordance with the governance rules
3. Audit and Risk Committee performance reporting
4. Details of Advisory Committees
5. Terms of Reference for Advisory Committees and Audit and Risk Committee Charter
6. Registers of gifts, benefits and hospitality offered to Councillors or Council staff
7. Registers of Councillor attendance at Council Meetings, Delegated Committee Meetings and meetings arranged to brief Councillors
8. Registers of travel undertaken by Councillors or Council staff
9. Registers of conflict of interest disclosed by Councillors or Council staff
10. Submissions made by Council to state or federal processes
11. Details of any Memorandum of Understanding entered into by Council that is not subject to confidentiality clauses
12. Registers of donations and grants made by Council
13. Registers of leases entered into by Council, as lessor and lessee
14. Register of delegations
15. Register of Authorised Officers
16. Register of election campaign donations
17. Summary of personal interests.

## Freedom of Information

The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the 'Act') gives the community a legal right to access certain council documents.

The Act has four basic principles:

1. The public has a legal right of access to information.
2. Local governments are required to publish information on the documents they hold.
3. People may request inaccurate, incomplete, out-of-date or misleading information in their personal records be amended.
4. People may appeal against a decision not to give access to the information or not to amend a personal record.

We respond to requests that are directly related to our operations. In 2023–24, we received 42 Freedom of Information (FOI) applications, compared to 35 applications received in 2022–23.

Of the 42 applications received in 2023–24:

- In 7 cases applicants were granted access to documents in full
- 11 requests for documents were partially granted
- 4 requests were processed outside of the FOI Act
- 1 request was refused in full
- 1 request was withdrawn
- 18 requests were pending as at 30 June 2024, to be reported in the 2024–25 annual report.

The most common reason why parts of a document were redacted was to prevent the unreasonable disclosure of information relating to the personal affairs of a person.

Many other requests for information did not eventuate as FOI applications, as we were able to provide the information sought outside of the FOI process.

Under the Act, we have submitted our report on the operation of the Act for inclusion in the annual report of the Freedom of Information Commissioner to Parliament.

## Accessing Freedom of Information

Requests to access Freedom of Information must be in writing and accompanied by an application fee.

We must decide about the release of documents within 30 days of receiving a valid application. This is unless an extension of time is agreed. Where a decision is made to refuse or defer access, we will notify the applicant in writing of the reasons for the refusal. We will outline the procedures available to appeal our decision.

More information about Freedom of Information can be found at [www.ovic.vic.gov.au](http://www.ovic.vic.gov.au) and on our website at [merri-bek.vic.gov.au](http://merri-bek.vic.gov.au)



## Local laws

Merri-bek City Council has two local laws.

The purpose of *General Local Law 2018* is to:

- Promote a physical and social environment that is accessible and free from hazards to health, in which the residents of, and visitors to, the municipality can enjoy a quality of life which meets the general expectations of the community.
- Protect the use of public places and control activities in, on or near them.
- Provide for safety in public places.
- Control, protect and conserve the environment and maintain the amenity of the municipality.
- Provide for, control and manage the use of premises and vehicles in specific circumstances.
- Regulate the number and manner of the keeping of animals.
- Control, prevent and abate nuisances.
- Provide for the peace, order, and good government of the municipality.

The *Meeting Procedure Local Law 2018* was established to achieve several objectives, which include:

- Procedures governing the conduct of Council meetings.
- The process for electing the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.
- Setting behavioural rules for meeting participants and attendees.
- Providing guidelines for appointing councillor office holders and assigning them to committees, both internal and external.

Most of Council's existing *Meeting Procedure Local Law 2018* is now superseded by Council's Governance Rules. There are some remaining provisions of the Local Law which persist for the purposes of governing the use of Council's Common Seal and establishing penalties for infringements.

## Public Interest Disclosures

The *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012* (the 'Act') encourages and facilitates the making of disclosures of improper conduct by public officers and public bodies. It also established a system for matters to be investigated.

The Act provides protection from detrimental action to any person affected by a protected disclosure. This is whether the person makes a disclosure, is a witness or is a person who is the subject of an investigation.

The Act provides protection to whistleblowers who make disclosures under certain requirements. It also aims to ensure disclosures are investigated. Council adopted a Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower) Policy in December 2023.

Under the requirements of the Act, we have established a Public Interest Disclosure Procedure. This is supported by a series of guidelines.

During the reporting period, we received 1 disclosure. Internal or external whistleblowers can contact our Public Interest Disclosures Coordinator on 9240 1111.

## **Information Privacy and Health Records Policy**

The responsible handling of personal information is a key aspect of good governance practices. It is also key to accountable democratic processes. We are committed to protecting every individual's right to privacy and their personal information.

We are committed to full compliance with our statutory obligations under:

- the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
- the Health Records Act 2001 (the 'Acts').

We comply with and handle personal information in line with the Information Privacy Principles and Health Privacy Principles in the Acts.

Our policy applies to all personal information we collect, handle and store. Our current policy was authorised and implemented on 7 January 2022.

Our Information Privacy and Health Records Policy applies to all our:

- employees
- Councillors
- agents (consultants, agency staff and volunteers)
- contractors.

It refers to all information collected by Council in the course of our duties.

We ensure personal information is protected through:

- training and awareness sessions
- local procedures
- guidance through our Information Privacy and Health Records policy (publicly available).

We have strong security frameworks in place around the use and disclosure of personal information.

Anyone who wants to access their personal information should first contact the area of Council that collected it. If you believe your personal information is inaccurate, incomplete, or out of date, you may request we correct the information.

If you feel aggrieved by our handling of your personal information, you may make a complaint to our Privacy Officer. We take all complaints seriously. We will investigate your complaint and provide you with a timely response.

You can also make a complaint to the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC). During the reporting period, there was one complaint referred to us by OVIC. This complaint was resolved satisfactorily.

## Community engagement

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

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

In 2023–24 Council carried out more than 234 planned engagement processes.

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

- Open Space Strategy
- Moving Around Merri-bek – Transport Strategy
- A Park Close to Home – 14 Frith Street, Brunswick
- A Park Close to Home – York Street, Pascoe Vale South
- Saxon Street Brunswick Community & Cultural Hub
- The Coburg Conversation

## Legislative environment

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

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

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

We have highlighted some key Acts.

## Local Government Act

### Community vision, council plan, asset plan

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

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

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

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

A Council Action Plan 2023–24 was also adopted to support the implementation of the Council Plan 2021–25 for the third financial year of the four-year period. It identified the priority actions for delivering the strategies and major initiatives contained in the Council Plan 2021–25.

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

### **Chief Executive Officer employment and remuneration policy**

To meet our legislative obligations, Council reviewed the Chief Executive Officer Employment and Remuneration Matters Policy on 12 July 2023. This policy remained current during the 2023–24 period.

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

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

### **Governance rules**

Council reviewed the Governance Rules adopted on 10 August 2022 and made amendments to provisions relating to special meetings, the chairperson's duties, questions of council and community statements, petitions and joint letters, prohibited items, quorum, moving a motion, keeping of minutes, notices of rescission, urgent business, conflict of interest Council records and the election period policy.

Council invited written submissions from the community on the revised Governance Rules between the period 14 August 2023 to 11 September 2023, and again between the period of 16 February 2024 and 8 March 2024. The amended Governance Rules were adopted at the 10 April 2024 meeting.

### **Planning and Environment Act 1987**

The *Planning and Environment Act 1987* provides the legal framework and governs the processes involved to determine what land can be used for – open space, industry, homes, for example. It also governs the processes for permits to develop certain land. During 2023–24, there were no significant changes to this legislation.

### **Freedom of Information Act 1982**

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

### **Domestic Animal Management Plan**

The *Domestic Animals Act 1994* requires all councils in Victoria to develop a domestic animal management plan. This plan must outline Council services, programs and policies established to address the administration of the Act and Council's management of cat and dog issues in the community.

This plan is an overarching strategic document relating to domestic animals and is prepared at four-year intervals. It sets out:

- the method we use for evaluating whether the animal control services provided are effective and achieve the requirements under the Act and Regulations
- training programs for authorised officers

- programs to promote and encourage responsible pet ownership and compliance with relevant legislation and associated codes of practice
- programs, services and strategies to address over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats; encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats; minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance; minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals; ensure that dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs are compliant with the Act and Regulations
- to ensure that domestic animal businesses are complying with the Act, the Regulations and the related Code of Practice.

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

### **Road Management Plan**

The Road Management Act 2004 requires each council to review its road management plan within 6 months after a general election or by the next 30 June.

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

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

### **Contracts**

Compliance with contract management requirements as articulated in Procurement Policy 2021–25 made under Section 108 of the Local Government Act 2020 (Vic) remained strong in 2023–24. The following breaches were identified and reported in the Audit and Risk Committee Report on 5 March 2024:

- security services expenditure on guarding services with one of the service providers without a contract.
- telephony and data services expenditure without a contract.
- sanitary and Hazardous waste services contract expired and was not renewed on time.
- Corporate Catering Panel contract expired and was not renewed on time.
- solar street lighting expenditure with a service provider without a contract.

Resolution of breaches:

- on 14 February 2024 Council meeting approved a Collaborative Procurement Arrangement with Procurement Australia to engage a panel of security service providers.
- on 8 November 2023 Council meeting authorised to engage Telstra Limited under the State Purchase Contract to provide telecommunication services.
- a public tender was issued to the market and on 10 May 2024, and the CEO authorised the appointment of a sanitary and hazard waste services provider.
- a public tender was issued to the market and on 12 June 2024 and Council awarded a panel contract for the provision of catering services.
- a public tender was issued to the market and on 12 June 2024 and Council awarded a panel contract for the provision of solar public lighting.

In line with our contract management framework, contract managers regularly assess supplier performance for all contracts. Contract review, including assessing supplier performance against contract Key Performance Indicators, are a mandatory process for contract extensions.

The Procurement Unit is currently working to leverage technology by integrating our contract management and finance systems to reduce the risk of contract overspend and improve compliance

reporting. The new system is expected to be operational in the second half of 2024.

There were no matters requiring disclosure or significant compliance issues.

## **Disability access and inclusion plan**

During 2023–24, Council continued to deliver actions to remove barriers and discrimination experienced by people with disabilities. These actions sit under the five key areas of the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2022–26.

### **Equal access to all areas of community life**

- commenced first phase of a pilot project to install accessible charging stations for electric vehicles.
- conducted multiple disability access audits at activity centres, including a major access audit of Coburg Activity Centre.
- developed a major report based on community feedback of the physical access barriers people experience in Merri-bek. The report includes 12 recommendations which will guide our work to remove access barriers.
- established an internal working group of multiple staff across Council to focus on improving footpath accessibility and removing access barriers.
- commenced first phase of 'Communication Access' accreditation for Customer Service.
- implemented second year of the Arts Merri-bek Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2022–26.
- significantly increased disability arts programming and disability audience participation at events and exhibitions.
- developed internal guidelines for locating, building and maintaining public toilets in Merri-bek.
- completed accessibility assessments and surveys of all neighbourhood houses in Merri-bek to inform building project decisions and prioritisation of neighbourhood houses.
- completed access audits of Brunswick Baths and Coburg Leisure Centre and recommendations are currently under consideration.

### **Employment, education and economic security**

- delivered work experience program for students with mild intellectual disabilities in partnership with Kangan Bendigo TAFE.
- obtained data relating to staff with disability - number of staff with disability, and type of disability.
- delivered training to hiring managers about recruiting people with disabilities and supporting staff with disabilities.
- developed formal working relationship with Commonwealth-funded agency, Job Access, to support and increase employment of people with disabilities. Job Access resources are shared with Human Resources team.
- commenced promoting Council job advertisements to local Disability Employment Services providers.

### **Inclusion and participation in the community**

- expanded sensory-friendly hours at Brunswick and Coburg libraries daily from 9am – 10am.
- delivered second year of The Art Connection, which is a free art program at Coburg and Glenroy libraries for people with disabilities.
- exhibition of artwork produced by The Art Connection was held on the International Day of People with Disability.
- received a nomination at the National Disability Awards 2023 for The Art Connection program.
- implemented Attendant Support Initiative (ASI) Program at Merri-bek leisure centres to support people with disabilities to access the facilities including entering the pool and using gym equipment.

- commenced partnership with Sport4All, a program established by Paralympian Dylan Alcott, to increase sport participation for people with disabilities. A Sport4All staff member is based at Council.
- convened the Merri-bek Disability Reference Group.
- convened the Merri-bek Disability Service Provider Network.
- chaired the Northern Metro Local Government Disability Planners' Network.
- leadership committee member of the Victorian Local Government Disability Planners Network.
- celebrated multiple events for International Day of People with Disability.
- hosted 'Masquerade Ball', a large social dance event, at Coburg Town Hall in partnership with Merri Health for over 150 residents of Supported Residential Services.
- reviewed major policies and strategies including the Open Space Strategy, Transport Strategy, Revitalising Coburg, and Public Toilets in Merri-bek, identifying disability access and inclusion as main priorities.
- provided advice and resources to community organisations to develop their Disability Action Plans including Shirley Robertson Children's Centre and Sussex Neighbourhood House.
- submitted joint grant application with Merri Health to the Victorian Government for improving participation of autistic children in sport.

### **Changing attitudes and practices that lead to discrimination**

- delivered disability related training for staff including:
  - deaf awareness training
  - disability awareness training
  - Mental Health Awareness in the Workplace training
  - Mental Health First Aid
- two sessions of disability awareness training for library staff
- two sessions of Plain English training
- provided advice and responded to more than 500 internal and external enquiries and complaints relating to disability.
- advocated for accessible tram stops along Sydney Road through public rallies, petitions, public notices and media statements.
- developed an Accessible and Inclusive Communications Toolkit and Guidelines for staff to improve the way we communicate with the community.
- re-launched the 'Invisible disabilities' campaign with videos of personal stories of residents and redistributed decals throughout the municipality.
- hosted a talk by Sam Drummond who is a disability advocate, author and lawyer, about his book 'Broke' at Brunswick Library.

### **Supporting health, wellbeing and safety**

- provided regular in-home and community support services for over 180 residents with disabilities under the age of 65. The services included personal care, general home care, assisted shopping, respite, delivered meals, community transport and social support groups.
- more than 65 unpaid carers accessed Council's Support for Carers program which offers a range of support services for people who provide unpaid care for a loved one.
- hosted a trauma-informed yoga session at Coburg Library, facilitated by Carly Dober, an experienced psychologist and yoga teacher who teaches trauma-informed yoga to complement mental health treatments.
- hosted 'Speechie Library Talk' at Campbell Turnbull Library in Brunswick West. A Merri Health speech pathologist talked about developing language and literacy skills to 16 children and 14 adults.

## **Domestic animal management**

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

We endorsed our Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021–25 on 10 November 2021. It was submitted to the Victorian Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions on 15 November 2021.

The plan was developed through a sector-leading partnership with two neighbouring councils, Darebin and Whittlesea.

Key objectives in the plan include:

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

Implementation of the plan is spread across four years with specific actions planned for each year. As required under the Domestic Animals Act, a report on progress with the actions is provided to Council in December each year. Highlights of the actions delivered in 2023–24 are:

- Desexing 252 cats to address overpopulation through education campaigns.
- 942 Merri-bek animals were cared for at the wat djerring Animal Facility
- extending our cat desexing program to non-concession-card holders for a co-payment of \$50 to receive desexing, microchipping, first year registration free (for cats not already registered) and assistance with transport to and from the clinic if required
- received the highest number of animal registrations in Merri-bek's history (8,546 cats and 13,996 dogs), following a greater focus on education, follow up of registrations, the desexing program and work of Council staff in administering the Domestic Animals Act and delivering actions in the DAMP 2021–25.

## **Food Act ministerial directions**

In accordance with section 7E of the *Food Act 1984*, there were no ministerial directions received by Merri-bek City Council in 2023–24.

## **Road Management Act ministerial directions**

In accordance with section 22 of the *Road Management Act 2004*, we must publish a copy or summary of any ministerial direction in our annual report. We did not receive any ministerial directions in 2023–24.

## **Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities commitment**

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

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



- make laws
- develop policies
- provide services.

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

Potential breaches of human rights were added to Council's risk register with the following controls in place to manage the risk:

- Gender Equality Statement of Commitment and Statement of Commitment to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in Merri-bek
- Gender Equity Action Plan 2022–25
- Gender Impact Assessments
- Human Rights Advisory Committee
- Human Rights Charter Assessment Training available through Corporate Training Calendar
- Human rights implementation plan
- LGBTIQ+ Reference Group
- Merri-bek Human Rights Policy 2016–26,
- Staff are required to complete a Human Rights online learning module
- Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2022–26
- First Peoples Employment Plan 2022–25
- Social Cohesion Plan
- Child Safe Policy
- Child Safe Statement of Commitment
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Steering Committee
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Working Group
- Gender Equality Working Group.

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

The First Progress Report was submitted in February 2024 to the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector about Council's first Gender Equality Action Plan (2022). We completed 13 Gender Impact Assessments and actions taken in 2021–23 to 11 policies and two programs.

Feedback from the Commission is expected after September 2024. Gender Impact Assessment 101 staff training was delivered by consultants GenderWorks who also facilitated a review of Council's current process and templates, to inform our implementation plan 2024–25.

Human rights charter training provided by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission is now compulsory for all staff. Over 100 staff participated in human rights capacity building training including:

- Active Bystander training
- Indigenous Cultural Awareness Training and Building Aboriginal Cultural Competency workshop
- Disability Inclusion training
- Deaf Awareness training
- Introduction to Gender and Sexuality training

Council has Advisory Committee and Reference Groups to guide the Human Rights Policy and associated plans and strategies, with more than 70 community members with diverse lived experience across these groups:

- First Nations Advisory Committee
- Human Rights and Inclusion Advisory Committee

- Environmental Sustainability Advisory Group
- LGBTQIA+ Reference Group
- Gender Equality Reference Group
- Disability Reference Group
- Affordable Housing Advisory Committee
- Age Friendly Reference Group

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

## **Social Cohesion**

Under the Social Cohesion Plan 2020–25, Council continued to fund the Merri-bek Democracy Lab, a partnership between Council and The Public Value Studio to build community leadership skills. The 'Seeds of Change' program was also successful in supporting community members build on the skills and networks they developed during the eight-week Democracy Lab program.

The Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre (ASWC) in Brunswick received funding to work with a consumer-led Advisory Group and host Refugee Week, while under the Economic Participation theme, the "Women in the Driver's Seat in Merri-bek" project enabled 10 women from migrant and refugee backgrounds to gain education and skills in driving and road safety.

The Merri-bek Interfaith Network hosted the Victorian Interfaith Festival where 300 faith leaders and representatives from across the State served as a platform to foster collaboration and understanding among different faith communities, with a focus on 'Treaty, Voice and Truth'.

Council participated in a state-wide project funded by VicHealth titled "Understanding reporting barriers and support needs for those experiencing racism in Victoria", led by Victoria University. Findings of the project were shared during Cultural Diversity Week and on 21 March 2024 to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Local service providers explored how to make the reporting process more simplified and accessible in Merri-bek.

## **Reconciliation**

In 2023–24, Council officers continued monthly consultations with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders. The Statement of Commitment to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities of the City of Merri-bek, states Council will undertake cultural consultations with them about seeking to include Woi-wurrung names in the naming and renaming of spaces, places, roads, and parks in the City of Merri-bek.

This work is also supported by the Council's Community Engagement Policy 2023, which states that "Traditional Owners are an important stakeholder group that Council looks to for advice on a range of Council projects. When Council initiates a project that may impact Traditional Owners, we will engage Traditional Owners early and at various stages in the development of the project."

Some notable achievements include:

- Adoption of new Woi-wurrung names, such as Kirrip-biik Park in Coburg.
- Inclusion of Wurundjeri seasons in the new Merri-bek First Peoples' Wellbeing Calendar
- Significant Traditional Owner's input into the Coburg Conversation First Nations' Engagement Insights Report prepared for Council by Greenshoot Consulting.

- Deep engagement on the newly adopted 2024 Merri-bek Open Space Strategy, which now includes Traditional Owners' Commitment recognising open space and its management can play a role in achieving self-determination and local, regional, or national Treaty or Treaties.

The Merri-bek First Nations' Advisory Committee currently has 12 members, with up to three Councillors, one as Co-Chair, and eight First Nations' community members, one as Co-Chair. This includes two positions for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders.

In 2023–24, this committee met seven times. Community members receive \$80 per meeting to recognise the multiple responsibilities First Nations' people have to their cultural obligations through their work roles and wider community responsibilities.

Some notable achievements include:

- Supporting the Ballerit Mooroop project by successfully advocating for additional investments.
- Creation of the Ballerit Mooroop First Peoples' Projects Coordinator in 2023.
- Additional investment into the development of the Ballerit Mooroop business case in 2024.

An event was held on site for Reconciliation Week attracting over 400 people and engaging local and First Nations' communities.

## **Commitment to socially responsible procurement**

Council is dedicated to integrating sustainable procurement principles into our purchasing decisions, with an emphasis on achieving economic, environmental, and social benefits for the community.

Our updated Procurement Policy 2021–25 aspires to increase the involvement of priority group suppliers and other local businesses. The revised policy encourages Council to consider local, social, and/or First Nations suppliers depending on availability.

The policy allows direct appointment of a First Nations' business where the value of the expenditure does not exceed \$300,000 (excluding GST) and allows for the direct appointment of suitable businesses where the risk is considered low.

The aim is to increase First Nations' Procurement to 1% of expenditure by June 2025. To further these goals, we established partnerships with Supply Nation and the Kinaway Chamber of Commerce. These organisations support First Nations' business owners at the national and the Victorian levels. This year, 47 First Nations' businesses registered as active suppliers to Council.

Our Procurement Policy is consistent with Council's Human Rights Policy. The policy and processes already include requirements for suppliers to comply with *Modern Slavery Act 2018*, respect for human rights, the rule of law and international standards of behaviour.

For example:

- When suppliers submit bids, the items are assessed as part of risk assessment and supplier due diligence.
- Suppliers are required to complete a modern slavery questionnaire and demonstrate they have processes and procedures to reduce the risk of modern slavery in their supply chain.
- The procurement process requires suppliers to demonstrate compliance with Fair Work Act 2009 by not exploiting workers and paying fair wages.

We updated our procurement policy and processes to ensure we do not procure goods and services from suppliers engaged in manufacturing, supply and distribution of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, landmines, cluster munitions and other weapons used in war and to harm civilians. Council endorsed this update on 13 March 2024.

## **Gender Equality**

The First Progress Report was submitted to the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector in February 2024. The submission included Council's first [Gender Equality Action Plan 2022](#) and 13 Gender Impact Assessments completed, and actions taken 2021–23 in relation to 11 policies and two programs.

Gender Impact Assessment 101 staff training was delivered by consultants GenderWorks who also facilitated a review of Council's current process and templates, which will inform our implementation plan 2024–25.

We collaborated with our community partners during the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence and took part in the annual Walk Against Family Violence in the city.

We provided 'Consent Matters' training for youth and community workers and held a community screening of the 'Equal the Contest' documentary, which promoted gender equity and challenged stereotypes and old sporting traditions.

Our International Women's Day event in March was held in Fawkner promoting women's leadership and gender equity in community sports. The event featured sporting activities for community members, including many families. Speeches were made by local community sports equity and inclusion leaders which was supported by Merri Health and eight local sporting clubs and Council.

## **LGBTIQA+ communities**

Council's commitment to supporting LGBTIQA+ people continue to grow, by responding to our diverse community's needs and increased rates of discrimination.

This year marked the second year of Merri-bek's first LGBTIQA+ Action Plan which provides a framework to develop activities to improve the wellbeing of LGBTIQA+ people across the city.

The Action Plan was developed in collaboration with members of Council's LGBTIQA+ reference group, who provided guidance and direction throughout the process.

Council maintained an active role in the LGBTIQA+ space across the community through several events and advocacy days including:

- Council's IDAHOBIT event in May 2024 was attended by 63 people. The event featured a panel discussion at Brunswick Town Hall which explored how to end discrimination faced by LGBTIQA+ communities.
- Trans Awareness Week in November was recognised with a community event which elevated the voices of transgender community members.
- Council hosted a film screening of 'Equal the Contest' to advance non-binary and gender diverse people in sport, building on our previous work in this space.
- The Merri-bek LGBTIQA+ network was convened for the first time to improve networks and partnerships with local service providers in the LGBTIQA+ space.
- We advocated to the Federal Government for amendments to include anti-vilification protections for LGBTIQA+ people in legislation and inclusion of all-gender sanitary facilities within the National Construction Code.

Council understands the urgent need to support trans and gender diverse people within our communities, recognising these groups are at increased risk of discrimination.

Council held trans, gender diverse and non-binary training for community organisations within Merri-bek to support local service providers to improve their capacity to deliver safe and accessible programs.

Transgender Victoria facilitated the session with staff and volunteers from neighbourhood houses, food relief organisations and community health providers to increase their capacity to support transgender and gender diverse clients, visitors and volunteers.

This program successfully worked towards meeting the objectives of the LGBTIQ+ action plan of improving social cohesion, increasing community capacity and celebrating the diversity of LGBTIQ+ communities in Merri-bek.

## **Older people and communities**

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day was recognised in June 2024. Council supported the Northern Elder Abuse Prevention Network to host an event for older people at Coburg Town Hall. The event was attended by more than 100 people with information and panel speakers on the topic of taking control of your finances.

Aged and Community Support and Early Years were recognised with 'Highly Commended' at the LGPro Positive Ageing Awards for the positive social outcomes for older and younger people through the Merri-bek Intergenerational Program with Early Years Centres. The program supports older adults to engage in meaningful community participation with early childhood centre families and staff.

The Age Friendly (Older Persons) reference group has 10 active participants and in 2024 we recruited five more vacant positions. Older people and carers have provided feedback on several Council policies and issues about pedestrian accessibility, informing internal processes to address infrastructure issues.

## **Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum**

The Local Government Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum has been advocating for the rights of people seeking asylum to the Federal and Victorian Government.

Merri-bek is an executive member, taking a lead role in the taskforce with members from more than 40 Councils nationwide. The taskforce is speaking up for the many hundreds of people living without support while their claims for refugee status are being processed.

Merri-bek City Council Mayor Adam Pulford attended a delegation to Canberra meeting with relevant Government Ministers to call on the Federal Government for better support for all people seeking asylum in our communities. The 'Back Your Neighbour' campaign is run by the Local Government Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum.

The taskforce coordinates joint state-wide advocacy by Australian Local Governments, shares resources and practical responses by communities to the issues caused by negative policies towards people seeking asylum. This year the taskforce advocated for:

- reinstatement of basic incomes, health and essential services for people seeking asylum
- campaigning for timely and fair processing of applications
- abolishing temporary visas and provide permanent protection visa to people seeking asylum.

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

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

## National Competition Policy annual statement of compliance

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

During the 2023–24 financial year, Council complied with the requirements of the National Competition Policy and did not receive any complaints in relation to competitive neutrality.

### Infrastructure and development contributions

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

For 2023–24 the following information about development contributions is disclosed.

Table 1 – Total Development Contributions Plan (DCP) levies received in 2023–24

DCP name and year approved	Levies received in 2023-24 financial year
Merri-bek DCP (2015)	\$1,123,104
Total	\$1,123,104

Table 2 – DCP land, works, services/facilities accepted as works-in-kind in 2023–24

DCP name and year approved	Project ID	Project description	Item purpose	Project value (\$)
Merri-bek DCP (2015)	Nil	N/A	N/A	\$0
Total				\$0

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

DCP name and year approved	Total levies received (\$)	Total levies expended (\$)	Total works-in-kind accepted (\$)	Total DCP contributions received (levies and works-in-kind) (\$)
Merri-bek DCP (gazetted 10 September 2015)	\$13,880,930	\$11,854,111	\$0	\$13,880,930
Total	\$13,880,930	\$11,854,111	\$0	\$13,880,930

On 24 March 2023, notice of Planning Scheme Amendment C221More's approval was published in the Victorian Government Gazette. This amendment materially changed the allowable value of DCP contributions to each project, as well as removing and adding projects to the project listing.

Several adjustments were required at the conclusion of the 2022–23 financial year to previously completed projects to comply with the amendment. Some further minor adjustments are required.

These are reported by category below under the section of the table titled 'Adjustments - C221More' Adjustments – C221More

Charge Area	Project Type	DCP name (Year approved)	DCP fund adjusted
CA5 - Pascoe Vale South	CI - Community Facilities	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	-\$3,211
CA7 - Pascoe Vale	DI - Roads	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	-\$2,281

Table 4 - Land, works, services or facilities delivered in 2023-24 financial year from DCP levies collected

Project description	Project ID	DCP name and year approved	DCP fund expended (\$)	Works-in-kind accepted (\$)	Council's contribution (\$)	Other contributions (\$)	Total project expenditure (\$)	Percentage of item delivered
Planning/Interest	PL01	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	142,567	-	-	-	142,567	-
White Street (Engeny Hot Spot No 37), Brunswick East, drainage works	DR100N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	193	0	282,681	0	282,874	74%
Lygon Street, Brunswick Road to Barkly Street, right carriageway Brunswick East	RD0442	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	4,582	0	12,749	0	17,331	22%
Brunswick Activity Centre upgrade works—Stewart Street, Brunswick East, streetscape reconstruction	RD1280N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	70,569	0	76,343	0	146,912	10%
Programmed footpath renewals, Brunswick East/Fitzroy North	RD3005N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	16,900	0	0	0	16,900	4%
Clifton Park–Pavilion–Soccer 377 Albert Street Brunswick	CF064	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	14,079	0	0	0	14,079	6%
Fallon Street from Union Street to Collier Crescent left carriageway, Brunswick, drainage works	DR131N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	643	0	0	0	643	1%
Fallon Street from Union Street to Collier Crescent right carriageway, Brunswick, drainage works	DR132N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	333	0	0	0	333	1%
Fallon Street from Union Street to Collier Crescent, Brunswick, road reconstruction	RD0297NR	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	780	0	0	0	780	1%
Fallon Street from Union Street to Collier Crescent left carriageway, Brunswick, road reconstruction	RD0299NR	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	1,500	0	0	0	1,500	1%

Fallon Street from Union Street to Collier Crescent, right carriageway, Brunswick, road reconstruction	RD0313NR	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	776	0	0	0	776	1%
Brunswick Activity Centre upgrade works—Wilson Ave, Brunswick, streetscape reconstruction	RD1287N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	10,832	0	0	0	10,832	1%
Programmed footpath renewals, Brunswick	RD3006N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	202,410	0	0	0	202,410	22%
Programmed roads resurfacing, Brunswick	RD3014N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	56,866	0	12,984	0	69,850	35%
Programmed footpath renewals, Brunswick West	RD3007N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	38,011	0	34,849	0	72,860	66%
Parker Reserve—Pavilion South 2 Keady Street Coburg	CF080	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	14,772	0	79,751	0	94,523	100%
Coburg Olympic Pool, Coburg, swimming pool equipment upgrade	CF142N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	37,638	0	0	0	37,638	10%
Carlisle Street, Coburg, drainage works	DR142N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	23,532	0	236,468	0	260,000	100%
De Carle Street, The Avenue—The Grove Coburg	RD0217	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	7,891	0	324,117	0	332,008	100%
Kendall Street/Harding Street Footbridge over Merri Creek BR070, Coburg, Footbridge	RD1291N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	36,596	0	19,001	0	55,597	14%
Preston Street from Munro Street to Reynard Street, Coburg, road resurfacing	RD1296N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	9,742	0	63,258	0	73,000	100%
Programmed footpath renewals, Coburg	RD3008N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	60,530	0	80,720	0	141,250	40%
Doris Blackburn Kindergarten, Shore Reserve Reynard Street, Pascoe Vale South, community facility upgrade	CF145N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	373	0	49,553	0	49,926	10%



Programmed footpath renewals, Pascoe Vale South	RD3009N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	4,934	0	37,746	0	42,680	9%
Peterson Avenue from Jackson Parade to Outlook Road, Coburg North, drainage works	DR137N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	186	0	104,414	0	104,600	64%
Mehegan Avenue from Murray Road to Peterson Avenue, Coburg North, road reconstruction	RD0671NR	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	66,237	0	91,201	0	157,438	54%
Dawson Street from Bakers Road kerb line to French Street centre line, Coburg North, road resurfacing	RD2039N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	3,827	0	48,433	0	52,260	100%
Boyne Street from east end Ballard Avenue centre line to west end Ronald Street, centre line, Coburg North, road resurfacing	RD2040N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	3,251	0	41,146	0	44,398	100%
Charles Street from Mercier Street centre line to Dawson Street roundabout kerb line, Coburg North, road resurfacing	RD2044N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	2,951	0	37,342	0	40,293	100%
Charles Street from Dawson Street roundabout kerb line to Williams Road centre line, Coburg North, road resurfacing	RD2045N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	2,768	0	35,032	0	37,800	100%
Carr Street from Sydney Road kerb line to Convent Court centre line, Coburg North, road resurfacing	RD2047N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	2,071	0	26,204	0	28,275	100%
Gould Street from Spry Street kerb line to Keady Street kerb line, Coburg North, road resurfacing	RD2048N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	2,190	0	27,710	0	29,900	100%
Mathieson Street from Manly Court centre line to dead end, Coburg North, road resurfacing	RD2049N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	2,466	0	41,004	0	43,470	100%

Stennis Street from Lyking Street to Gaffney Street, Pascoe Vale, drainage works	DR114N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	18,027	0	175,623	0	193,650	106%
Shedden Street from Derby Street to Sussex Street, Pascoe Vale, drainage works	DR118N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	18,027	0	177,208	0	195,235	98%
Shedden Street from Derby Street to Sussex Street, Pascoe Vale, road reconstruction	RD1254N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	94,543	0	361,004	0	455,548	98%
Stennis Street from Lyking Street to Gaffney Street, Pascoe Vale, road reconstruction	RD1255N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	86,440	0	365,410	0	451,849	100%
Waratah Street from Erica Street to Derby Street, Pascoe Vale, road reconstruction	RD1256N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	90,329	0	259,104	0	349,433	98%
Waratah Street from Derby Street to Erica Street, Pascoe Vale, road reconstruction	RD1257N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	78,320	0	250,723	0	329,043	95%
Rayner Reserve-Cricket and Soccer 46a Devon Road, Oak Park	CF101	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	12,858	0	88,764	0	101,622	34%
718 Pascoe Vale Road (7 and 12 Clyde Court), Oak Park, drainage works	DR125N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	1,389	0	289,134	0	290,523	100%
Grevillia Road, Snell Grove —Albert Street, Oak Park	RD0069	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	9,123	0	39,747	0	48,870	100%
Murphy Street from Marie Street centre line to Xavier Street centre line, Oak Park, road resurfacing	RD2009N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	3,489	0	0	0	3,489	19%
Victoria Street from Pascoe Vale Road kerb line to Sim Crescent centre line, Oak Park, road resurfacing	RD2010N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	4,156	0	0	0	4,156	19%
Station Road from Kiama Street centre line to Cartwright Street centre line, Oak Park, road resurfacing	RD2013N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	11,345	0	0	0	11,345	19%

Strachan Street from Pascoe Vale Road kerb line to Station Road kerb line, Oak Park, road resurfacing	RD2014N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	4,057	0	0	0	4,057	19%
Programmed footpath renewals, Oak Park	RD3011N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	22,147	0	0	0	22,147	22%
Athens Place from Devereaux Street to dead end, Oak Park, road resurfacing	RD4000N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	7,796	0	0	0	7,796	22%
Bonwick Street Toilets, 115 Jukes Road, Fawkner, public toilets renewal	CF155N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	27,380	0	258,749	0	286,128	100%
Lorne Street from Kiddle Street to Wilson Street, Fawkner, road reconstruction	RD0688NR	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	90,116	0	563,982	0	654,097	100%
Albert Street from Argyle Street kerb line to Queens Parade kerb line, Fawkner, road resurfacing	RD1336N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	2,592	0	28,591	0	31,184	100%
Lynch Road from Mutton Road centre line to Tyrrell Crescent centre line, Fawkner, road resurfacing	RD1363N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	5,149	0	56,791	0	61,940	100%
Margaret Street from McDougall Street kerb line to Hume Highway kerb line, Fawkner, road resurfacing	RD1365N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	1,986	0	53,190	0	55,176	100%
Hadfield Sporting Club Scoreboard, Hadfield, sporting facility upgrade	CF147N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	266	0	294,646	0	294,912	100%
West Street Neighbourhood streetscape centre, Hadfield, streetscape reconstruction	RD1380N	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	41,961	0	80,979	0	122,941	4%
Trevannion Street from Melbourne Avenue to Corrigan Street, Glenroy, road reconstruction	RD0312NR	Merri-bek DCP (2015)	19,928	0	339,344	0	359,272	65%

## **A plain English guide to the Financial Report**

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

Our report complies with:

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

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

### **What is in the Annual Financial Report?**

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

There are five statements and 10 notes which are:

- prepared by our staff
- audited by the Victorian Auditor-General
- examined by our Audit Committee.

Council approves in principle the Annual Financial Report and authorises its certification.

The five statements are in the first few pages of the report including:

- comprehensive income statement
- balance sheet
- statement of changes in equity
- statement of cash flows
- statement of capital works.

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

### **Comprehensive income statement**

The comprehensive income statement shows:

- the sources of our revenue by income category
- the expenses incurred in running Council during the year.

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

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

### **Balance sheet**

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

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

### **Current and non-current assets**

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

### **Current and non-current liabilities**

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

### **Net assets**

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

### **Total equity**

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

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

### **Statement of changes in equity**

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

The main reasons for a change in equity stem from:

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

## **Statement of cash flows**

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

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

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

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

## **Statement of capital works**

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

It categorises capital works expenditure into:

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

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

## **Notes to the accounts**

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

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

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

### **Notes include:**

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

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

### **Statements by Principal Accounting Officer and Councillors**

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

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

### **Auditor General's report**

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

### **Our main office**

90 Bell Street, Coburg

### **External auditor**

Auditor-General of Victoria

### **Internal auditor**

Crowe Australasia

### **Solicitors**

Various

### **Bankers**

Westpac Banking Corporation

### **Website address**

[merri-bek.vic.gov.au](http://merri-bek.vic.gov.au)

# Merri-bek City Council

ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT  
for the year ended 30 June 2024

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## Annual Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2024

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for the year ended 30 June 2024

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## Content Overview

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

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

These financial statements were authorised for issue by the Council on 30 September 2024  
Council has the power to amend and reissue these financial statements.

Annual Financial Report  
for the year ended 30 June 2024

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Certification of the Financial Statements

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



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**Jemma Wightman**

**Chief Financial Officer**

**Dated:** 1/10/2024

Coburg, Victoria

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly the financial transactions of Merri-bek City Council for the year ended 30 June 2024 and the financial position of the Council as at that date.

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

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



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**Adam Pulford**

**Mayor**

**Dated:** 1/ 10 / 2024

Coburg, Victoria




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**Lambros Tapinos**

**Deputy Mayor**

**Dated:** 1/ 10 / 2024

Coburg, Victoria



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**Cathy Henderson**

**Chief Executive Officer**

**Dated:** 1/ 10 / 2024

Coburg, Victoria

# Independent Auditor's Report

## To the Councillors of Merri-bek City Council

**Opinion** I have audited the financial report of Merri-bek City Council (the council) which comprises the:

- balance sheet as at 30 June 2024
- comprehensive income statement for the year then ended
- statement of changes in equity for the year then ended
- statement of cash flows for the year then ended
- statement of capital works for the year then ended
- notes to the financial statements, including material accounting policy information
- certification of the financial statements.

In my opinion the financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the council as at 30 June 2024 and their financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the financial reporting requirements of Part 4 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, the Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020 and applicable Australian Accounting Standards.

**Basis for Opinion** I have conducted my audit in accordance with the *Audit Act 1994* which incorporates the Australian Auditing Standards. I further describe my responsibilities under that Act and those standards in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of my report.

My independence is established by the *Constitution Act 1975*. My staff and I are independent of the council in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to my audit of the financial report in Victoria. My staff and I have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

**Councillors' responsibilities for the financial report** The Councillors of the council are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards, the *Local Government Act 2020* and the Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020, and for such internal control as the Councillors determine is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, the Councillors are responsible for assessing the council's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless it is inappropriate to do so.

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**Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial report**

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

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

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

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

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MELBOURNE  
2 October 2024



Travis Derricott  
*as delegate for the Auditor-General of Victoria*

## Comprehensive Income Statement

for the year ended 30 June 2024

	Note	2024 \$ '000	2023 \$ '000
<b>Income / Revenue</b>			
Rates and charges	3.1	185,236	179,422
Statutory fees and fines	3.2	16,035	16,401
User fees	3.3	8,210	7,190
Grants - operating	3.4	17,172	22,234
Grants - capital	3.4	4,788	5,103
Contributions - monetary	3.5	11,405	10,617
Contributions - non monetary	3.5	1,887	6,061
Fair value increment on investment properties	6.3	375	–
Other income	3.7	9,878	7,866
<b>Total income / revenue</b>		<b>254,986</b>	<b>254,894</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Employee costs	4.1	111,724	102,950
Materials and services	4.2	69,723	66,936
Depreciation	4.3	38,736	32,391
Depreciation - Right of use assets		347	331
Net loss on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	3.6	3,309	6,917
Allowance for impairment losses	4.4	3,967	2,809
Borrowing costs		712	692
Finance Costs - Leases		3	4
Fair value decrement on investment properties	6.3	–	180
Other expenses	4.5	704	748
<b>Total expenses</b>		<b>229,225</b>	<b>213,958</b>
<b>Surplus for the year</b>		<b>25,761</b>	<b>40,936</b>
<b>Other comprehensive income:</b>			
<b>Items that will not be reclassified to surplus or deficit in future periods</b>			
Net asset revaluation loss	9.1	(22,858)	119,579
<b>Total items which will not be reclassified subsequently to the operating result</b>		<b>(22,858)</b>	<b>119,579</b>
<b>Total other comprehensive income</b>		<b>(22,858)</b>	<b>119,579</b>
<b>Total comprehensive result</b>		<b>2,903</b>	<b>160,515</b>

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

## Balance Sheet

as at 30 June 2024

	Note	2024 \$ '000	2023 \$ '000
<b>Assets</b>			
<b>Current assets</b>			
Cash and cash equivalents	5.1	22,387	24,282
Trade and other receivables	5.1	44,237	38,638
Other financial assets	5.1	84,000	93,000
Inventories		659	248
Prepayments		2,429	2,263
Non-current assets classified as "held for sale"	6.1	11,019	2,625
Other assets		2,208	783
<b>Total current assets</b>		<b>166,939</b>	<b>161,839</b>
<b>Non-current assets</b>			
Investments in associates, joint arrangements and subsidiaries		2	2
Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	6.2	2,811,430	2,803,639
Investment property	6.3	36,024	28,690
Right-of-use assets		600	947
<b>Total non-current assets</b>		<b>2,848,056</b>	<b>2,833,278</b>
<b>Total assets</b>		<b>3,014,995</b>	<b>2,995,117</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>			
<b>Current liabilities</b>			
Trade and other payables	5.2	18,678	14,828
Trust funds and deposits	5.2	6,165	6,057
Contract liabilities	5.2	6,898	1,823
Provisions	5.4	22,195	21,146
Interest-bearing liabilities	5.3	1,997	1,338
Lease liabilities		109	111
<b>Total current liabilities</b>		<b>56,042</b>	<b>45,303</b>
<b>Non-current liabilities</b>			
Interest-bearing liabilities	5.3	27,821	21,818
Provisions	5.4	2,603	2,262
Lease liabilities		20	128
<b>Total non-current liabilities</b>		<b>30,444</b>	<b>24,208</b>
<b>Total liabilities</b>		<b>86,486</b>	<b>69,511</b>
<b>Net assets</b>		<b>2,928,509</b>	<b>2,925,606</b>
<b>Equity</b>			
Accumulated surplus		785,732	750,053
Reserves	9.1	2,142,777	2,175,553
<b>Total Equity</b>		<b>2,928,509</b>	<b>2,925,606</b>

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

## Statement of Changes in Equity

for the year ended 30 June 2024

	Note	Total \$ '000	Accumulated Surplus \$ '000	Revaluation Reserves \$ '000	Other Reserves \$ '000
<b>2024</b>					
<b>Balance at beginning of the financial year</b>		2,925,606	750,053	2,089,066	86,487
<b>Surplus for the year</b>		25,761	25,761	–	–
<b>Other comprehensive income</b>					
Net asset revaluation loss	9.1	(22,858)	–	(22,858)	–
<b>Other comprehensive income</b>		(22,858)	–	(22,858)	–
<b>Total comprehensive income</b>		2,903	25,761	(22,858)	–
Transfers to other reserves	9.1	–	(47,443)	–	47,443
Transfers from other reserves	9.1	–	57,361	–	(57,361)
<b>Balance at end of the financial year</b>		2,928,509	785,732	2,066,208	76,569
<b>2023</b>					
<b>Balance at beginning of the financial year</b>		2,765,091	710,485	1,969,487	85,119
<b>Surplus for the year</b>		40,936	40,936	–	–
<b>Other comprehensive income</b>					
Net asset revaluation loss	9.1	119,579	–	119,579	–
<b>Other comprehensive income</b>		119,579	–	119,579	–
<b>Total comprehensive income</b>		160,515	40,936	119,579	–
Transfers to other reserves	9.1	–	(51,779)	–	51,779
Transfers from other reserves	9.1	–	50,411	–	(50,411)
<b>Balance at end of the financial year</b>		2,925,606	750,053	2,089,066	86,487

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



## Statement of Cash Flows

for the year ended 30 June 2024

	Note	2024 Inflows/ (Outflows) \$ '000	2023 Inflows/ (Outflows) \$ '000
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>			
Rates and charges		183,131	179,125
Statutory fees and fines		12,316	14,994
User fees		8,454	10,162
Grants - operating		17,172	21,867
Grants - capital		9,619	3,925
Contributions - monetary		11,405	10,617
Interest received		5,529	3,627
Trust funds and deposits taken		40,706	44,870
Other receipts		1,518	2,926
Net GST payment		(911)	(560)
Employee costs		(110,334)	(102,867)
Materials and services		(67,528)	(67,315)
Trust funds and deposits repaid		(40,598)	(44,278)
Other payments		(1,051)	(748)
<b>Net cash provided by operating activities</b>	9.2	<u>69,428</u>	<u>76,345</u>
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>			
Payments for property, infrastructure, plant and equipment		(86,770)	(71,422)
Proceeds from sale of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment		235	424
Payments for investments		(40,625)	(37,000)
Proceeds from sale of investments		50,000	41,000
<b>Net cash used in investing activities</b>		<u>(77,160)</u>	<u>(66,998)</u>
<b>Cash flows from financing activities</b>			
Finance costs		(712)	(692)
Proceeds from borrowings		8,000	-
Repayment of borrowings		(1,338)	(1,326)
Interest paid - lease liability		(3)	(4)
Repayment of lease liabilities		(110)	(94)
<b>Net cash flow provided by/(used in) financing activities</b>		<u>5,837</u>	<u>(2,116)</u>
<b>Net Increase/Decrease in cash and cash equivalents</b>		<u>(1,895)</u>	<u>7,231</u>
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year		<u>24,282</u>	<u>17,051</u>
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year</b>		<u>22,387</u>	<u>24,282</u>
Financing arrangements	5.5	30,107	23,377

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

## Statement of Capital Works

for the year ended 30 June 2024

	2024 \$ '000	2023 \$ '000
<b>Property</b>		
Land	59	17,926
<b>Total land</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>17,926</b>
Buildings	41,923	14,388
Building improvements	4,194	1,426
<b>Total buildings</b>	<b>46,117</b>	<b>15,814</b>
<b>Total property</b>	<b>46,176</b>	<b>33,740</b>
<b>Plant and equipment</b>		
Plant, machinery and equipment	872	1,727
Fixtures, fittings and furniture	147	370
Computers and telecommunications	653	978
Artworks	28	–
Library books	1,062	1,040
<b>Total plant and equipment</b>	<b>2,762</b>	<b>4,115</b>
<b>Infrastructure</b>		
Roads	12,535	10,566
Bridges	229	486
Footpaths and cycleways	3,972	3,026
Drainage	2,241	1,582
Waste management	58	5,502
Parks, open space and streetscapes	16,391	11,767
Other infrastructure	3,278	638
<b>Total infrastructure</b>	<b>38,704</b>	<b>33,567</b>
<b>Total capital works expenditure</b>	<b>87,642</b>	<b>71,422</b>
<b>Represented by:</b>		
New asset expenditure	15,659	32,997
Asset renewal expenditure	47,225	30,253
Asset upgrade expenditure	24,758	8,084
<b>Total capital works expenditure</b>	<b>87,642</b>	<b>71,422</b>

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

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

### Note 1. Overview

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#### Introduction

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

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

#### Statement of compliance

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

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

#### Accounting policy information

##### 1.1 Basis of accounting

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

### Note 1. Overview (continued)

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#### **Goods and Services Tax (GST)**

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

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

## Note 2. Analysis of our results

## Note 2.1 Performance against budget

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

The budget figures detailed below are those adopted by Council on 20 June 2023. The budget was based on assumptions that were relevant at the time of adoption of the budget. Council sets guidelines and parameters for revenue and expense targets in this budget in order to meet Council's planning and financial performance targets for both the short and long term. The budget did not reflect any changes to equity resulting from asset revaluations, as their impacts were not considered predictable.

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

	Budget 2024 \$ '000	Actual 2024 \$ '000	Variance \$ '000	Variance %	Ref
<b>2.1.1 Income / Revenue and expenditure</b>					
<b>Income / Revenue</b>					
Rates and charges	184,495	185,236	741	0.40%	
Statutory fees and fines	17,462	16,035	(1,427)	(8.17)%	
User fees	7,006	8,210	1,204	17.19%	1
Grants - operating	19,827	17,172	(2,655)	(13.39)%	2
Grants - capital	10,994	4,788	(6,206)	(56.45)%	3
Contributions - monetary	10,455	11,405	950	9.09%	
Contributions - non monetary	-	1,887	1,887	100%	4
Net gain on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	3,861	-	(3,861)	(100.00)%	5
Fair value increment on investment properties	-	375	375	100%	6
Other income	7,434	9,878	2,444	32.88%	7
<b>Total income / revenue</b>	<b>261,534</b>	<b>254,986</b>	<b>(6,548)</b>	<b>(2.50)%</b>	
<b>Expenses</b>					
Employee costs	108,807	111,724	(2,917)	(2.68)%	
Materials and services	68,416	69,723	(1,307)	(1.91)%	
Depreciation	33,104	38,736	(5,632)	(17.01)%	8
Depreciation - right of use assets	236	347	(111)	(47.03)%	9
Allowance for impairment losses	2,960	3,967	(1,007)	(34.02)%	10
Borrowing costs	917	712	205	22.36%	11
Finance costs - leases	-	3	(3)	100%	
Net loss on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	2,119	3,309	(1,190)	(56.16)%	12
Other expenses	745	704	41	5.50%	
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>217,304</b>	<b>229,225</b>	<b>(11,921)</b>	<b>(5.49)%</b>	
<b>Surplus/(deficit) for the year</b>	<b>44,230</b>	<b>25,761</b>	<b>(18,469)</b>	<b>(41.76)%</b>	

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

## Note 2.1 Performance against budget (continued)

## (i) Explanation of material variations

**Variance Ref Explanation**

1. The variance is primarily attributable to the better than anticipated return on the operation of Council's aquatic and leisure centres and an increase in tree establishment fees.
2. The variance is primarily attributable to the payment of 96% of the Commonwealth Financial Assistance Grant for 2023/24 being paid in June 2023 and no advance payment made for the Commonwealth Financial Assistance Grant for 2024/25.
3. The variance primarily stems from the timing of grants being recognised including grants for Saxon Street Community and Cultural Hub, Oak Kindergarten, Derby Street Kindergarten Children's Centre, and Fawkner Leisure Centre Redevelopment.
4. The variance is primarily attributed to the recognition of unbudgeted contributed assets including buildings, roads, drains, kerb and channel.
5. The variance is primarily attributed to planned property sales not finalised within the 2023/24 financial year. The relevant assets have remained as assets held for sale, detailed in note 6.
6. The variance is primarily attributed to the outcomes of market valuations conducted by qualified valuers.
7. The variance is primarily attributable to favourable interest income, which has been influenced by higher interest rates on Council's investments. At the time of budget adoption Council anticipated 4.5% interest rate compared to the actual rates of 4.9% achieved over 2023/24.
8. The increase in depreciation variance is primarily attributable to infrastructure assets revalued at 30 June 2023.
9. The variance is primarily attributable to the amortisation on the Council's printing and copier devices.
10. The increase in bad and doubtful debts is primarily attributed to the increase in parking infringement provision for 2023/24.
11. The variance is primarily attributed to borrowing costs being less than anticipated due to a later than anticipated draw down of \$8.0m of new borrowings.
12. The variance is primarily attributed to the disposal of infrastructure and other assets during the year is not budgeted annually due to its ad hoc nature. The variance primarily arises from the replacement of roads and other infrastructure assets, resulting in the write-off of undepreciated balances.

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

## Note 2.1 Performance against budget (continued)

	Budget 2024 \$ '000	Actual 2024 \$ '000	Variance \$ '000	Variance %	Ref
<b>2.1.2 Capital works</b>					
<b>Property</b>					
Land	–	59	59	100%	
<b>Total land</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>100%</b>	
Buildings	56,111	41,923	(14,188)	(25.29)%	1
Building improvements	8,009	4,194	(3,815)	(47.63)%	2
<b>Total buildings</b>	<b>64,120</b>	<b>46,117</b>	<b>(18,003)</b>	<b>(28.08)%</b>	
<b>Total property</b>	<b>64,120</b>	<b>46,176</b>	<b>(17,944)</b>	<b>(27.99)%</b>	
<b>Plant and equipment</b>					
Plant, machinery and equipment	4,341	872	(3,469)	(79.91)%	3
Fixtures, fittings and furniture	347	147	(200)	(57.64)%	4
Computers and telecommunications	701	653	(48)	(6.85)%	
Artworks	–	28	28	100%	
Library books	1,061	1,062	1	0.09%	
<b>Total plant and equipment</b>	<b>6,450</b>	<b>2,762</b>	<b>(3,688)</b>	<b>(57.18)%</b>	
<b>Infrastructure</b>					
Roads	17,320	12,535	(4,785)	(27.63)%	5
Bridges	421	229	(192)	(45.61)%	6
Footpaths and cycleways	5,880	3,972	(1,908)	(32.45)%	7
Drainage	2,363	2,241	(122)	(5.16)%	
Waste management	1,199	58	(1,141)	(95.16)%	8
Parks, open space and streetscapes	24,147	16,391	(7,756)	(32.12)%	9
Other infrastructure	1,288	3,278	1,990	154.50%	10
<b>Total infrastructure</b>	<b>52,618</b>	<b>38,704</b>	<b>(13,914)</b>	<b>(26.44)%</b>	
<b>Total capital works expenditure</b>	<b>123,188</b>	<b>87,642</b>	<b>(35,546)</b>	<b>(28.86)%</b>	
<b>Represented by:</b>					
New asset expenditure	29,923	15,659	(14,264)	(47.67)%	
Asset renewal expenditure	62,775	47,225	(15,550)	(24.77)%	
Asset upgrade expenditure	30,490	24,758	(5,732)	(18.80)%	
<b>Total capital works expenditure</b>	<b>123,188</b>	<b>87,642</b>	<b>(35,546)</b>	<b>(28.86)%</b>	

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

## Note 2.1 Performance against budget (continued)

**(i) Explanation of material variations****Variance Ref Explanation**

1. The variance is primarily attributable to the timing of spend on Council's key significant projects, Saxon Street Cultural & Community hub and Fawkner Leisure Centre.
2. The variance is primarily attributable to key projects such as Brunswick baths and the Hadfield depot works being deferred to 2024/25.
3. The variance is primarily attributable to delays in receiving key fleet purchases such as waste trucks and sweepers.
4. The variance is primarily attributable to accommodation changes that were deferred to 2024/25.
5. The variance is primarily attributable delays in the design works of two key retaining wall works and one road reconstruction project; construction is yet to commence.
6. The variance is primarily attributable to delays on the Kendall/Harding bridge replacement project which is being delivered in partnership with Darebin City Council.
7. The variance is primarily attributable to delays in active transport projects relating to shared zones, or transport trial sites. The delays are primarily as a result of technical and design complexities.
8. The variance is primarily attributable to bin purchases relating to the implementation of the 4-stream kerbside waste collection. Additional purchases were anticipated to be made in 2023/24, being deferred to 2024/25.
9. The variance is primarily attributable to delays in projects as a result of latent conditions, other key projects such as the Glenroy Activity Centre and Richards Reserve Turf projects were deferred to 2024/25.
10. Project expenditure that was budgeted as roads or parks, open space and streetscapes was reclassified to other infrastructure.



## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

## Note 2.2 Analysis of Council results by program

## 2.2.1 Analysis of Council results by program

Council delivers its functions and activities through the following programs.

**Chief Executive Officer Management**

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

**City Infrastructure**

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

**Business Transformation**

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

**Community**

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

**Place and Environment**

Place and Environment is responsible for influencing development within Merri-bek. Place and Environment responds to population growth, environment change within Merri-bek and supporting economic development investment and attraction. The directorate advances city-shaping major partnership projects, delivers holistic place-based outcomes and manages Council-owned properties.

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

Functions/activities	Income / Revenue \$ '000	Expenses \$ '000	Surplus / (Deficit) \$ '000	Grants included in income / revenue \$ '000	Total assets \$ '000
<b>2024</b>					
Chief Executive Officer Management	–	723	(723)	–	8
City Infrastructure	45,837	81,530	(35,693)	6,510	2,472,944
Business Transformation	174,191	76,283	97,908	344	237,051
Place and Environment	16,651	20,644	(3,993)	604	39,243
Community	18,307	50,045	(31,738)	14,503	265,749
<b>Total functions and activities</b>	<b>254,986</b>	<b>229,225</b>	<b>25,761</b>	<b>21,961</b>	<b>3,014,995</b>
<b>2023</b>					
Chief Executive Officer Management	–	762	(762)	–	45
City Infrastructure	46,300	69,600	(23,300)	5,917	2,496,260
Business Transformation	174,344	74,738	99,606	6,892	192,423
Place and Environment	16,902	20,447	(3,545)	800	59,845
Community	17,348	48,411	(31,063)	13,728	246,542
<b>Total functions and activities</b>	<b>254,894</b>	<b>213,958</b>	<b>40,936</b>	<b>27,337</b>	<b>2,995,115</b>

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

## Note 3. Funding for the delivery of our services

	2024	2023
	\$ '000	\$ '000

## 3.1 Rates and charges

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

The valuation base used to calculate general rates for 2023/24 was \$70.7 billion (2022/23: \$72.2 billion).

General rates	159,532	152,082
Waste management charge	22,364	23,726
Special rates and charges	595	513
Supplementary rates and rate adjustments	2,214	2,443
Interest on rates and charges	531	658
<b>Total rates and charges</b>	<b>185,236</b>	<b>179,422</b>

The date of the general revaluation of land for rating purposes within the municipal district was 1 January 2023 and the valuation was first applied in the rating year commencing 1 July 2023.

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

## 3.2 Statutory fees and fines

Infringements and costs	9,519	10,149
Court recoveries	860	831
Town planning fees	1,710	1,758
Land information certificates	467	398
Other fines	824	610
Permits	2,340	2,217
Parking	315	438
<b>Total statutory fees and fines</b>	<b>16,035</b>	<b>16,401</b>

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

## 3.3 User fees

Aged and health services	1,956	1,866
Leisure centre and recreation	998	246
Registration and other permits	2,262	2,323
Building services	376	400
Valuation fees	67	48
Waste management services	233	248
Other fees and charges	2,301	2,032
Town planning fees	17	27
<b>Total user fees</b>	<b>8,210</b>	<b>7,190</b>

**User fees by timing of revenue recognition**

User fees recognised at a point in time	8,210	7,190
<b>Total user fees</b>	<b>8,210</b>	<b>7,190</b>

User fees are recognised as revenue at a point in time, or over time, when (or as) the performance obligation is satisfied. Recognition is based on the underlying contractual terms.

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

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

	2024 \$ '000	2023 \$ '000
<b>3.4 Funding from other levels of government</b>		
Grants were received in respect of the following:		
<b>Summary of grants</b>		
Commonwealth funded grants	10,685	15,931
State funded grants	11,275	11,406
<b>Total grants received</b>	<b>21,960</b>	<b>27,337</b>
<b>(a) Operating Grants</b>		
<b>Recurrent - Commonwealth Government</b>		
Financial Assistance Grants	252	6,610
Family day care	593	584
Aged care	8,210	6,334
<b>Recurrent - State Government</b>		
Home help	1,088	1,385
Families and Children	3,794	3,456
Food Services	22	42
Libraries	1,183	1,206
<b>Total recurrent operating grants</b>	<b>15,142</b>	<b>19,617</b>
<b>Non-recurrent - State Government</b>		
Employment Assistance	–	674
Libraries	123	203
Community welfare	13	298
Other	1,894	1,442
<b>Total non-recurrent operating grants</b>	<b>2,030</b>	<b>2,617</b>
<b>Total operating grants</b>	<b>17,172</b>	<b>22,234</b>
<b>(b) Capital Grants</b>		
<b>Recurrent - Commonwealth Government</b>		
Roads to recovery	609	609
<b>Total recurrent capital grants</b>	<b>609</b>	<b>609</b>
<b>Non-recurrent - Commonwealth Government</b>		
Local Roads Community Infrastructure	939	662
Buildings	82	661
Recreation	–	100
Community Safety	–	371
<b>Non-recurrent - State Government</b>		
Buildings	2,484	628
Community Safety	13	285
Recreation	8	1,243
Other	653	544
<b>Total non-recurrent capital grants</b>	<b>4,179</b>	<b>4,494</b>
<b>Total capital grants</b>	<b>4,788</b>	<b>5,103</b>

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

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

	2024	2023
	\$ '000	\$ '000

**(c) Recognition of grant income**

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

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

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

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

<b>Income recognised under AASB 1058 Income of Not-for-Profit Entities</b>		
General purpose	15,170	19,778
Specific purpose grants to acquire non-financial assets	82	1,422
Other specific purpose grants	5,334	4,265
<b>Revenue recognised under AASB 15 Revenue from Contracts with Customers</b>		
Specific purpose grants	1,375	1,873
	<u>21,961</u>	<u>27,338</u>

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

Balance at start of year	1,527	2,362
Received during the financial year and remained unspent at balance date	355	1,416
Received in prior years and spent during the financial year	(579)	(2,251)
<b>Balance at year end</b>	<u>1,303</u>	<u>1,527</u>

**Capital**

Balance at start of year	793	2,731
Received in prior years and spent during the financial year	(562)	(1,938)
<b>Balance at year end</b>	<u>231</u>	<u>793</u>

Unspent grants are determined and disclosed on a cash basis.

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

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

	2024 \$ '000	2023 \$ '000
<b>3.5 Contributions</b>		
<b>Monetary contributions</b>		
Monetary	11,405	10,617
<b>Total monetary contributions</b>	<b>11,405</b>	<b>10,617</b>
<b>Non-monetary contributions</b>		
Non-monetary	1,887	6,061
<b>Total non-monetary contributions</b>	<b>1,887</b>	<b>6,061</b>
<b>Total contributions</b>	<b>13,292</b>	<b>16,678</b>

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

Infrastructure	1,887	6,061
<b>Total non-monetary contributions</b>	<b>1,887</b>	<b>6,061</b>

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

### 3.6 Net loss on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment

<b>Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment</b>		
Proceeds of sale	235	424
Written down value of assets disposed (plant & equipment)	(29)	(302)
Written down value of assets disposed (infrastructure)	(3,515)	(7,039)
<b>Total net loss on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment</b>	<b>(3,309)</b>	<b>(6,917)</b>
<b>Total net loss on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment</b>	<b>(3,309)</b>	<b>(6,917)</b>

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

### 3.7 Other income

Interest	5,529	3,628
Investment property rental	1,336	1,304
Other rent	1,207	1,331
Recoveries	944	640
Sales	580	334
Other	277	307
Road occupancy/ Right of way closures	5	322
<b>Total other income</b>	<b>9,878</b>	<b>7,866</b>

Interest is recognised as it is earned.

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

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

## Note 4. The cost of delivering services

	2024	2023
	\$ '000	\$ '000
<b>4.1 Employee costs</b>		
<b>(a) Employee costs</b>		
Wages and salaries	92,364	86,681
Casual staff	5,060	4,322
WorkCover	3,989	2,715
Superannuation	9,957	8,842
Fringe benefits tax	111	115
Other	243	275
<b>Total employee costs</b>	<b>111,724</b>	<b>102,950</b>

**(b) Superannuation**

Council made contributions to the following funds:

**Defined benefit fund**

Employer contributions to Local Authorities Superannuation Fund (Vision Super)	241	392
	<b>241</b>	<b>392</b>

**Accumulation funds**

Employer contributions to Local Authorities Superannuation Fund (Vision Super)	3,907	3,687
Employer contributions - other funds	5,809	4,763
	<b>9,716</b>	<b>8,450</b>

Employer contributions payable at reporting date	756	978
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Contributions made exclude amounts accrued at balance date. Refer to note 9.3 for further information relating to Council's superannuation obligations.

**4.2 Materials and services**

General maintenance	15,292	13,377
Utilities	4,306	4,200
Cleaning and waste removal	19,177	17,712
Leisure management fees	–	1,143
Legal costs	685	871
Minor equipment and supplies	1,228	1,021
Office administration	2,593	2,609
Information technology and telecommunications	5,258	4,548
Insurance	2,858	2,782
Consultants and Contractors	9,464	8,921
Other materials and supplies	7,044	7,853
Council grants and contributions	1,818	1,899
<b>Total materials and services</b>	<b>69,723</b>	<b>66,936</b>

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

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

## Note 4. The cost of delivering services (continued)

	2024 \$ '000	2023 \$ '000
<b>4.3 Depreciation</b>		
<b>Property</b>		
Buildings - specialised	6,931	6,989
<b>Total depreciation - property</b>	<b>6,931</b>	<b>6,989</b>
<b>Plant and equipment</b>		
Plant machinery and equipment	383	329
Fixtures fittings and furniture	208	205
Computers and telecomms	944	773
Library books	1,007	990
Motor vehicles	1,938	2,047
<b>Total depreciation - plant and equipment</b>	<b>4,480</b>	<b>4,344</b>
<b>Infrastructure</b>		
Bridges	454	435
Footways and cycleways	4,246	4,098
Drainage	3,545	3,076
Road surface	3,685	2,876
Road pavement	4,372	3,886
Kerb and channel	1,741	1,556
Other infrastructure	9,282	5,131
<b>Total depreciation - infrastructure</b>	<b>27,325</b>	<b>21,058</b>
<b>Total depreciation</b>	<b>38,736</b>	<b>32,391</b>

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

	2024 \$ '000	2023 \$ '000
<b>4.4 Allowance for impairment losses</b>		
Parking fine debtors	4,076	2,629
Other debtors	(109)	180
<b>Total allowance for impairment losses</b>	<b>3,967</b>	<b>2,809</b>
<b>Movement in allowance for impairment losses in respect of debtors</b>		
Balance at the beginning of the year	20,110	18,270
New allowances recognised during the year	2,510	2,899
Amounts already allowed for and written off as uncollectible	(5,645)	(1,059)
<b>Balance at end of year</b>	<b>16,975</b>	<b>20,110</b>

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

	2024 \$ '000	2023 \$ '000
<b>4.5 Other expenses</b>		

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

## Note 4. The cost of delivering services (continued)

	2024	2023
	\$ '000	\$ '000
Auditors' remuneration - VAGO - audit of the financial statements, performance statement and grant acquittals	75	71
Auditors' remuneration - Internal Audit	142	207
Councillors' allowances	487	470
<b>Total other expenses</b>	<b>704</b>	<b>748</b>



## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

## Note 5. Investing in and financing our operations

	2024 \$ '000	2023 \$ '000
<b>5.1 Financial assets</b>		
<b>(a) Cash and cash equivalents</b>		
<b>Current</b>		
Cash on hand	5	5
Cash at bank	22,382	24,277
<b>Total current cash and cash equivalents</b>	<b>22,387</b>	<b>24,282</b>
<b>Total cash and cash equivalents</b>	<b>22,387</b>	<b>24,282</b>
<b>(b) Other financial assets</b>		
<b>Current</b>		
Term deposits	84,000	93,000
<b>Total current other financial assets</b>	<b>84,000</b>	<b>93,000</b>
<b>Total other financial assets</b>	<b>84,000</b>	<b>93,000</b>
<b>Total current financial assets</b>	<b>106,387</b>	<b>117,282</b>
<b>Total cash and cash equivalents and other financial assets</b>	<b>106,387</b>	<b>117,282</b>

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

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

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

**(c) Trade & Other Receivables****Current***Statutory receivables*

Rates debtors	27,154	25,049
Parking Infringement debtors	18,588	21,966
Net GST receivable	3,278	2,367
Fire Services Property Levy Debtors	2,668	2,426
Allowance for expected credit loss - Parking infringements	(13,220)	(16,241)

*Non-statutory receivables*

Other debtors	9,524	6,940
Allowance for expected credit loss - Other debtors	(3,755)	(3,869)

**Total current trade and other receivables**

<b>44,237</b>	<b>38,638</b>
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**Total trade and other receivables**

<b>44,237</b>	<b>38,638</b>
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Short term receivables are carried at invoice amount. An allowance for expected credit losses is recognised based on past experience and other objective evidence of expected losses. Long term receivables are carried at amortised cost using the effective interest rate method.

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

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

	2024	2023
	\$ '000	\$ '000

**(d) Ageing of receivables**

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

Current (not yet due)	3,416	1,819
Past due by up to 30 days	977	520
Past due between 31 and 180 days	252	134
Past due between 181 and 365 days	22	12
Past due by more than 1 year	1,102	586
<b>Total trade and other receivables</b>	<b>5,769</b>	<b>3,071</b>

**(e) Ageing of individually impaired receivables**

At balance date, other debtors representing financial assets with a nominal value of \$3,755,272 (2023: \$3,869,164) were impaired. The amount of the allowance raised against these debtors was \$3,755,272 (2023: \$3,869,164). They individually have been impaired as a result of their doubtful collection. Many of the long outstanding past due amounts have been lodged with Council's debt collectors or are on payment arrangements.

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

Current (not yet due)	26	27
Past due by up to 30 days	92	95
Past due between 31 and 180 days	693	714
Past due between 181 and 365 days	810	834
Past due by more than 1 year	2,134	2,199
<b>Total trade and other receivables</b>	<b>3,755</b>	<b>3,869</b>

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

	2024	2023
	\$ '000	\$ '000

## 5.2 Payables, trust funds and deposits and contract and other liabilities

**(a) Trade and other payables****Current***Non-statutory payables*

Trade payables	5,223	2,773
Accrued expenses	13,455	12,055
<b>Total current trade and other payables</b>	<b>18,678</b>	<b>14,828</b>

**(b) Trust funds and deposits****Current**

Refundable deposits	878	725
Trust funds	679	668

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

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

	2024	2023
	\$ '000	\$ '000
Fire services levy	4,137	4,065
Retention amounts	399	364
Other refundable deposits	72	235
<b>Total current trust funds and deposits</b>	<b>6,165</b>	<b>6,057</b>

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

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

	2024 \$ '000	2023 \$ '000
<b>(c) Contract liabilities</b>		
<b>Contract liabilities</b>		
<b>Current</b>		
<b>Grants received in advance:</b>		
Grants received in advance - operating	50	50
Grants received in advance - capital	6,050	1,219
<b>Total grants received in advance</b>	<b>6,100</b>	<b>1,269</b>
<b>User fees received in advance:</b>		
Other	798	554
<b>Total user fees received in advance</b>	<b>798</b>	<b>554</b>
<b>Total current contract liabilities</b>	<b>6,898</b>	<b>1,823</b>

*Trust funds and deposits*

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

*Contract liabilities*

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

**Purpose and nature of items**

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

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

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

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

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

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

	2024 \$ '000	2023 \$ '000
<b>5.3 Interest-bearing liabilities</b>		
<b>Current</b>		
Treasury Corporation of Victoria borrowings - secured	1,577	918
Other borrowings - secured	420	420
<b>Total current interest-bearing liabilities</b>	<b>1,997</b>	<b>1,338</b>
<b>Non-current</b>		
Treasury Corporation of Victoria borrowings - secured	13,131	6,708
Other borrowings - secured	14,690	15,110
<b>Total non-current interest-bearing liabilities</b>	<b>27,821</b>	<b>21,818</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>29,818</b>	<b>23,156</b>
<b>Borrowings are secured by the rates of the Council</b>		
<b>a) The maturity profile for Council's borrowings is:</b>		
Not later than one year	1,997	1,338
Later than one year and not later than five years	20,873	17,820
Later than five years	6,948	3,998
	<b>29,818</b>	<b>23,156</b>

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

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

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

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

	Employee provisions \$ '000	Total \$ '000
<b>5.4 Provisions</b>		
<b>2024</b>		
Balance at the beginning of the financial year	23,408	23,408
Additional provisions	7,023	7,023
Amounts used	(9,143)	(9,143)
Change in the discounted amount arising because of time and the effect of any change in the discount rate	3,510	3,510
<b>Balance at the end of the financial year</b>	<b>24,798</b>	<b>24,798</b>
<b>Provisions</b>		
Provisions - current	22,195	22,195
Provisions - non-current	2,603	2,603
<b>Total Provisions</b>	<b>24,798</b>	<b>24,798</b>
<b>2023</b>		
Balance at the beginning of the financial year	23,325	23,325
Additional provisions	7,636	7,636
Amounts used	(9,749)	(9,749)
Change in the discounted amount arising because of time and the effect of any change in the discount rate	2,196	2,196
<b>Balance at the end of the financial year</b>	<b>23,408</b>	<b>23,408</b>
<b>Provisions</b>		
Provisions - current	21,146	21,146
Provisions - non-current	2,262	2,262
<b>Total Provisions</b>	<b>23,408</b>	<b>23,408</b>
	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
	<b>\$ '000</b>	<b>\$ '000</b>
<b>(a) Employee provisions</b>		
<b>Current provisions expected to be wholly settled within 12 months</b>		
Annual leave	7,257	6,833
Long service leave	2,445	2,069
	<b>9,702</b>	<b>8,902</b>
<b>Current provisions expected to be wholly settled after 12 months</b>		
Annual leave	2,531	2,388
Long service leave	9,928	9,823
Other	34	33
	<b>12,493</b>	<b>12,244</b>
<b>Total current employee provisions</b>	<b>22,195</b>	<b>21,146</b>
<b>Non-Current</b>		
Long service leave	2,603	2,262
<b>Total Non-Current Employee Provisions</b>	<b>2,603</b>	<b>2,262</b>

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

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

	2024	2023
	\$ '000	\$ '000
Aggregate Carrying Amount of Employee Provisions:		
Current	22,195	21,146
Non-current	2,603	2,262
<b>Total Aggregate Carrying Amount of Employee Provisions</b>	<b>24,798</b>	<b>23,408</b>

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

*Annual leave*

A liability for annual leave is recognised in the provision for employee benefits as a current liability because the Council does not have an unconditional right to defer settlement of the liability. Liabilities for annual leave are measured at:

- nominal value if the Council expects to wholly settle the liability within 12 months
- present value if the Council does not expect to wholly settle within 12 months.

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

*Long service leave*

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

## Key assumptions:

- discount rate	4.35%	4.09%
- index rate	4.45%	3.85%

## 5.5 Financing arrangements

The Council has the following funding arrangements in place as at 30 June 2024.

Credit card facilities	289	220
Treasury Corporation of Victoria facilities	14,708	7,627
Other facilities	15,110	15,530
<b>Total Facilities</b>	<b>30,107</b>	<b>23,377</b>
Used facilities	30,048	23,233
<b>Used facilities</b>	<b>30,048</b>	<b>23,233</b>
<b>Unused facilities</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>144</b>

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

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

## 5.6 Commitments

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

## (a) Commitments for expenditure

	Not later than 1 year \$ '000	Later than 1 year and not later than 2 years \$ '000	Later than 2 years and not later than 5 years \$ '000	Later than 5 years \$ '000	Total \$ '000
<b>2024</b>					
<b>Operating</b>					
Garbage collection	112	–	–	–	112
Consultancies	135	–	–	–	135
IT Systems Supports	2,970	982	108	–	4,060
Animal Welfare	473	473	473	–	1,419
Building Management	348	–	–	–	348
Parking	708	692	718	–	2,118
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,746</b>	<b>2,147</b>	<b>1,299</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>8,192</b>
<b>Capital</b>					
Consultancies	240	–	–	–	240
Works	10,017	–	–	–	10,017
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,257</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>10,257</b>
<b>2023</b>					
<b>Operating</b>					
Garbage collection	112	–	–	–	112
IT Systems Supports	2,538	39	43	–	2,620
Animal Welfare	473	473	947	–	1,893
Building Management	110	60	–	–	170
Parking	748	665	2,128	–	3,541
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,981</b>	<b>1,237</b>	<b>3,118</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>8,336</b>
<b>Capital</b>					
Consultancies	19	–	–	–	19
Works	49,124	7,544	–	–	56,668
<b>Total</b>	<b>49,143</b>	<b>7,544</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>56,687</b>

## Note 6. Assets we manage

	2024 \$ '000	2023 \$ '000
<b>6.1 Current assets classified as "held for sale"</b>		
<b>Current</b>		
Fair value of assets	11,019	2,625
<b>Total current assets classified as held for sale</b>	<b>11,019</b>	<b>2,625</b>



## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

### Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

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Assets held for sale relate to 1/6 Sutherland Street, Coburg, and 2-12 Wilkinson Street, Brunswick, from the previous financial year, as part of the Affordable Housing Project. Additionally, 737 Pascoe Vale Road, Glenroy (Glenroy Library) and 2 Spry Street, Coburg North, have been recently added this financial year.

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

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

## Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

## 6.2 Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment

Summary of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	Carrying amount 30 June 2023 \$ '000	Additions \$ '000	Contributions \$ '000	Revaluation \$ '000	Disposal \$ '000	Depreciation \$ '000	Write-off \$ '000	Transfers \$ '000	Carrying amount 30 June 2024 \$ '000
Property	1,873,206	7,145	1,514	(22,993)	(2)	(6,931)	–	(11,132)	1,840,807
Plant and equipment	19,410	2,522	–	–	(29)	(4,480)	–	416	17,839
Infrastructure	882,717	13,701	372	135	(3,516)	(27,325)	–	8,016	874,100
Work in progress	28,306	64,274	–	–	–	–	(1,244)	(12,652)	78,684
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,803,639</b>	<b>87,642</b>	<b>1,886</b>	<b>(22,858)</b>	<b>(3,547)</b>	<b>(38,736)</b>	<b>(1,244)</b>	<b>(15,352)</b>	<b>2,811,430</b>

Summary of Work in Progress	Opening WIP \$ '000	Additions \$ '000	Write-off \$ '000	Transfers \$ '000	Closing WIP \$ '000
Property	11,749	41,379	(109)	(4,220)	48,799
Plant and equipment	499	348	(85)	(416)	346
Infrastructure	16,058	22,547	(1,050)	(8,016)	29,539
<b>Total</b>	<b>28,306</b>	<b>64,274</b>	<b>(1,244)</b>	<b>(12,652)</b>	<b>78,684</b>

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

### Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

	Land specialised \$ '000	Land non specialised \$ '000	Land under Roads \$ '000	Total land and land improve- ments \$ '000	Buildings specialised \$ '000	Total buildings \$ '000	Work in progress \$ '000	Total property \$ '000
<b>Property</b>								
At fair value 1 July 2023	1,218,063	360,587	4,825	<b>1,583,475</b>	449,147	<b>449,147</b>	11,749	<b>2,044,371</b>
Accumulated depreciation at 1 July 2023	–	–	–	–	(159,416)	<b>(159,416)</b>	–	<b>(159,416)</b>
	<u>1,218,063</u>	<u>360,587</u>	<u>4,825</u>	<u><b>1,583,475</b></u>	<u>289,731</u>	<u><b>289,731</b></u>	<u>11,749</u>	<u><b>1,884,955</b></u>
<b>Movements in fair value</b>								
Additions	780	1,023	–	<b>1,803</b>	9,554	<b>9,554</b>	41,379	<b>52,736</b>
Contributions	–	–	–	–	1,515	<b>1,515</b>	–	<b>1,515</b>
Revaluation	(10,077)	(5,380)	118	<b>(15,339)</b>	(37,745)	<b>(37,745)</b>	–	<b>(53,084)</b>
Write-off	–	–	–	–	–	–	(109)	<b>(109)</b>
Transfers	(1,737)	(4,908)	–	<b>(6,645)</b>	(8,708)	<b>(8,708)</b>	(4,220)	<b>(19,573)</b>
	<u>(11,034)</u>	<u>(9,265)</u>	<u>118</u>	<u><b>(20,181)</b></u>	<u>(35,384)</u>	<u><b>(35,384)</b></u>	<u>37,050</u>	<u><b>(18,515)</b></u>
<b>Movements in accumulated depreciation</b>								
Depreciation and amortisation	–	–	–	–	(6,931)	<b>(6,931)</b>	–	<b>(6,931)</b>
Accumulated depreciation on revaluation	–	–	–	–	30,093	<b>30,093</b>	–	<b>30,093</b>
	<u>–</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>23,162</u>	<u><b>23,162</b></u>	<u>–</u>	<u><b>23,162</b></u>
At fair value 30 June 2024	1,207,029	351,324	4,943	<b>1,563,296</b>	413,764	<b>413,764</b>	48,801	<b>2,025,861</b>
Accumulated depreciation at 30 June 2024	–	–	–	–	(136,255)	<b>(136,255)</b>	–	<b>(136,255)</b>
<b>Carrying amount</b>	<u>1,207,029</u>	<u>351,324</u>	<u>4,943</u>	<u><b>1,563,296</b></u>	<u>277,509</u>	<u><b>277,509</b></u>	<u>48,801</u>	<u><b>1,889,606</b></u>

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

## Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

	Motor vehicles \$ '000	Plant and equipment \$ '000	Furniture and fittings \$ '000	Computer equipment \$ '000	Library books \$ '000	Artwork \$ '000	Total \$ '000	Work in progress \$ '000	Total plant and equipment \$ '000
<b>Plant and Equipment</b>									
At fair value 1 July 2023	22,808	4,416	2,479	5,401	11,683	1,904	<b>48,691</b>	499	<b>49,190</b>
Accumulated depreciation at 1 July 2023	(14,828)	(2,784)	(1,132)	(3,901)	(6,636)	–	<b>(29,281)</b>	–	<b>(29,281)</b>
	<u>7,980</u>	<u>1,632</u>	<u>1,347</u>	<u>1,500</u>	<u>5,047</u>	<u>1,904</u>	<b>19,410</b>	<u>499</u>	<b>19,909</b>
<b>Movements in fair value</b>									
Additions	598	482	74	693	1,061	31	<b>2,939</b>	348	<b>3,287</b>
Disposal	(900)	(50)	–	(2,747)	–	–	<b>(3,697)</b>	–	<b>(3,697)</b>
Write-off	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	(85)	<b>(85)</b>
Transfers	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	(416)	<b>(416)</b>
	<u>(302)</u>	<u>432</u>	<u>74</u>	<u>(2,054)</u>	<u>1,061</u>	<u>31</u>	<b>(758)</b>	<u>(153)</u>	<b>(911)</b>
<b>Movements in accumulated depreciation</b>									
Depreciation and amortisation	(1,938)	(383)	(208)	(944)	(1,007)	–	<b>(4,480)</b>	–	<b>(4,480)</b>
Accumulated depreciation of disposals	885	44	–	2,738	–	–	<b>3,667</b>	–	<b>3,667</b>
	<u>(1,053)</u>	<u>(339)</u>	<u>(208)</u>	<u>1,794</u>	<u>(1,007)</u>	<u>–</u>	<b>(813)</b>	<u>–</u>	<b>(813)</b>
At fair value 30 June 2024	22,506	4,850	2,551	3,346	12,744	1,935	<b>47,932</b>	346	<b>48,278</b>
Accumulated depreciation at 30 June 2024	(15,880)	(3,125)	(1,339)	(2,106)	(7,643)	–	<b>(30,093)</b>	–	<b>(30,093)</b>
<b>Carrying amount</b>	<u>6,626</u>	<u>1,725</u>	<u>1,212</u>	<u>1,240</u>	<u>5,101</u>	<u>1,935</u>	<b>17,839</b>	<u>346</u>	<b>18,185</b>

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

### Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

	Road surface \$ '000	Road pavement \$ '000	Drainage \$ '000	Footpaths \$ '000	Kerb and channel \$ '000	Bridges/ retaining walls \$ '000	Other infra- structure \$ '000	Total \$ '000	Work in progress \$ '000	Total infra- structure \$ '000
<b>Infrastructure</b>										
At fair value 1 July 2023	114,349	435,587	326,335	194,298	122,828	35,830	221,489	<b>1,450,716</b>	16,058	<b>1,466,774</b>
Accumulated depreciation at 1 July 2023	(39,902)	(172,618)	(130,516)	(57,866)	(25,684)	(15,821)	(125,592)	<b>(567,999)</b>	–	<b>(567,999)</b>
	<u>74,447</u>	<u>262,969</u>	<u>195,819</u>	<u>136,432</u>	<u>97,144</u>	<u>20,009</u>	<u>95,897</u>	<b>882,717</b>	<u>16,058</u>	<b>898,775</b>
<b>Movements in fair value</b>										
Additions	3,798	4,519	2,296	3,052	1,111	267	6,674	<b>21,717</b>	22,547	<b>44,264</b>
Contributions	–	21	351	–	–	–	–	<b>372</b>	–	<b>372</b>
Revaluation	(37)	(53)	131	35	12	70	(23)	<b>135</b>	–	<b>135</b>
Disposal	(1,757)	(1,258)	(382)	(2,181)	(606)	(52)	(3,127)	<b>(9,363)</b>	–	<b>(9,363)</b>
Write-off	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	(1,050)	<b>(1,050)</b>
Transfers	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	(8,016)	<b>(8,016)</b>
	<u>2,004</u>	<u>3,229</u>	<u>2,396</u>	<u>906</u>	<u>517</u>	<u>285</u>	<u>3,524</u>	<b>12,861</b>	<u>13,481</u>	<b>26,342</b>
<b>Movements in accumulated depreciation</b>										
Depreciation and amortisation	(3,685)	(4,372)	(3,545)	(4,246)	(1,741)	(454)	(9,282)	<b>(27,325)</b>	–	<b>(27,325)</b>
Accumulated depreciation of disposals	1,404	698	204	934	143	29	2,437	<b>5,849</b>	–	<b>5,849</b>
	<u>(2,281)</u>	<u>(3,674)</u>	<u>(3,341)</u>	<u>(3,312)</u>	<u>(1,598)</u>	<u>(425)</u>	<u>(6,845)</u>	<b>(21,476)</b>	–	<b>(21,476)</b>
At fair value 30 June 2024	116,354	438,819	328,753	195,200	123,345	36,185	225,021	<b>1,463,677</b>	29,539	<b>1,493,216</b>
Accumulated depreciation at 30 June 2024	(42,184)	(176,294)	(133,881)	(61,174)	(27,282)	(16,316)	(132,446)	<b>(589,577)</b>	–	<b>(589,577)</b>
<b>Carrying amount</b>	<u>74,170</u>	<u>262,525</u>	<u>194,872</u>	<u>134,026</u>	<u>96,063</u>	<u>19,869</u>	<u>92,575</u>	<b>874,100</b>	<u>29,539</u>	<b>903,639</b>

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

## Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

*Acquisition*

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

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

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

**Asset recognition thresholds and depreciation periods**

	<b>Depreciation Period years</b>	<b>Threshold Limit \$ '000</b>
<b>Land and land improvements</b>		
land	n/a	–
land improvements	n/a	–
<b>Buildings</b>		
buildings	20-260 years	1
building and leasehold improvements	N/A	1
<b>Plant and Equipment</b>		
plant, machinery and equipment	3-10 years	1
furniture and fittings	3-10 years	1
computer equipment	3-10 years	1
library books	3-10 years	1
motor vehicles	up to 10 years	3
artwork	not applicable	1
<b>Infrastructure</b>		
roads surface	Up to 40 years	1
roads pavement	Up to 100 years	1
drainage	Up to 100 years	1
footpaths and cycleways	Up to 100 years	1
kerb and channel	Up to 100 years	1
bridges	Up to 200 years	1
<b>Other infrastructure</b>		
street furniture	10 to 20 years	1
recreational, leisure and community facilities	10 to 50 years	1
parks, open space and streetscapes	10 to 100 years	1
playground equipment and other structures	10 to 100 years	1
<b>Right of use assets</b>		
right of use assets	1-10 years	1

*Land under roads*

Land under roads acquired after 30 June 2008 is brought to account using the fair value basis. Council does not recognise land under roads that it controlled prior to that period in its financial report.

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

## Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

*Depreciation and amortisation*

Buildings, land improvements, plant and equipment, infrastructure, and other assets having limited useful lives are systematically depreciated over their useful lives to the Council in a manner which reflects consumption of the service potential embodied in those assets. Estimates of remaining useful lives and residual values are made on a regular basis with major asset classes reassessed annually. Depreciation rates and methods are reviewed annually.

Where assets have separate identifiable components that are subject to regular replacement, these components are assigned distinct useful lives and residual values and a separate depreciation rate is determined for each component.

Road earthworks are not depreciated on the basis that they are assessed as not having a limited useful life.

Straight line depreciation is charged based on the residual useful life as determined each year.

Depreciation periods used are listed above and are consistent with the prior year unless otherwise stated.

*Repairs and maintenance*

Where the repair relates to the replacement of a component of an asset and the cost exceeds the capitalisation threshold the cost is capitalised and depreciated. The carrying value of the replaced asset is expensed.

*Leasehold improvements*

Leasehold improvements are recognised at cost and are amortised over the unexpired period of the lease or the estimated useful life of the improvement, whichever is the shorter.

Valuation of land and buildings were undertaken by a qualified independent valuer Tom Kennedy (Qualified CPV valuer) from Opteon Property Group. The valuation of land and buildings is at fair value, being market value based on highest and best use permitted by relevant land planning provisions. The review methodology included analysis of recent land sales to determine the movement in values as displayed by the market. To ascertain a level of market value movement, Opteon Property Group reviewed the sales data throughout Merri-bek City Council to determine the material change in the underlying land value of each property sector. The property sectors referred to include residential, commercial and industrial property classifications. Where land use is restricted through existing planning provisions the valuation is reduced to reflect this limitation. This adjustment is an unobservable input in the valuation. The adjustment has no impact on the comprehensive income statement.

Specialised land is valued at fair value using site values adjusted for englobo (undeveloped and/or unserved) characteristics, access rights and private interests of other parties and entitlements of infrastructure assets and services. This adjustment is an unobservable input in the valuation. The adjustment has no impact on the comprehensive income statement.

Any significant movements in the unobservable inputs for land and land under roads will have a significant impact on the fair value of these assets.

The date and type of the current valuation is detailed in the following table.

Details of the Council's land and buildings and information about the fair value hierarchy as at 30 June 2024 are as follows:

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Date of valuation	Type of Valuation
Non-specialised Land	–	351,324	–	Mar-24	Revaluation
Specialised land	–	–	1,207,029	Mar-24	Revaluation
Buildings	–	–	277,509	Mar-24	Revaluation
<b>Total</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>351,324</b>	<b>1,484,538</b>		

*Valuation of Infrastructure*

Fair value assessments have been performed at 28th February 2024 for Infrastructure. This assessment demonstrated that fair value was materially similar to carrying value, and therefore a full revaluation was not required this year. The next scheduled full revaluation for this purpose will be conducted in 2024-25

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

## Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Date of valuation	Type of Valuation
Road surface	–	–	74,170	Jun-23	Index
Road pavement	–	–	262,525	Jun-23	Index
Kerbs	–	–	96,063	Jun-23	Index
Bridges	–	–	19,869	Jun-23	Index
Footpaths and cycleways	–	–	134,026	Jun-23	Index
Drainage	–	–	194,872	Jun-23	Index
Recreational, leisure & community facilities	–	–	20,450	Jun-23	Index
Parks, open space & streetscapes	–	–	45,777	Jun-23	Index
Other Infrastructure	–	–	26,348	Jun-23	Index
<b>Total</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>874,100</b>		

**Description of significant unobservable inputs into level 3 valuations**

**Specialised land and land under roads** is valued using a market based direct comparison technique. Significant unobservable inputs include the extent and impact of restriction of use and the market cost of land per square metre. The extent and impact of restrictions on use varies and results in a reduction to surrounding land values between 10% and 95%. The market value of land varies significantly depending on the location of the land and the current market conditions. Currently land values range between \$4 and \$6,500 per square metre.

**Specialised buildings** are valued using a current replacement cost technique. Significant unobservable inputs include the current replacement cost and remaining useful lives of buildings. Current replacement costs are calculated on a square metre basis and ranges from \$350 to \$15,000 per square metre. The remaining useful lives of buildings are determined on the basis of the current condition of buildings and vary from 2 years to 260 years. Replacement cost is sensitive to changes in market conditions, with any increase or decrease in cost flowing through to the valuation. Useful lives of buildings are sensitive to changes in expectations or requirements that could either shorten or extend the useful lives of buildings.

**Infrastructure assets** are valued based on the current replacement cost. Significant unobservable inputs include the current replacement cost and remaining useful lives of infrastructure. The remaining useful lives of infrastructure assets are determined on the basis of the current condition of the asset and vary from 1 year to 200 years. Replacement cost is sensitive to changes in market conditions, with any increase or decrease in cost flowing through to the valuation. Useful lives of infrastructure are sensitive to changes in use, expectations or requirements that could either shorten or extend the useful lives of infrastructure assets.

**Reconciliation of specialised land**

	2024 \$ '000	2023 \$ '000
Land under roads	4,943	4,825
Parks and reserves	1,207,029	1,218,063
<b>Total specialised land</b>	<b>1,211,972</b>	<b>1,222,888</b>

## 6.3 Investment property

	2024 \$ '000	2023 \$ '000
Balance at beginning of financial year	28,690	28,870
Additions	6,959	–
Fair value increment	375	–
Fair value decrement	–	(180)



## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

## Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

	2024 \$ '000	2023 \$ '000
<b>Balance at end of financial year</b>	<b>36,024</b>	<b>28,690</b>

Investment property is held to generate long-term rental yields. Investment property is measured initially at cost, including transaction costs. Costs incurred subsequent to initial acquisition are capitalised when it is probable that future economic benefit in excess of the originally assessed performance of the asset will flow to the Council. Subsequent to initial recognition at cost, investment property is carried at fair value, determined annually by independent valuers. Changes to fair value are recorded in the comprehensive income statement in the period that they arise.

*Valuation of investment property*

Valuation of investment property has been determined in accordance with an independent valuation by Opteon Property Group who has recent experience in the location and category of the property being valued. The valuation is at fair value, based on the current market value for the property.

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

## Note 7. People and relationships

## 7.1 Council and key management remuneration

**(a) Related Parties***Parent entity*

Merri-bek City Council is the parent entity.

*Subsidiaries and Associates*

Procurement Australasia Ltd

**(b) Key Management Personnel**

Key management personnel (KMP) are those people with the authority and responsibility for planning, directing and controlling the activities of Merri-bek City Council. The Councillors, Chief Executive Officer and Directors are deemed KMP.

Details of KMP at any time during the year are:

**Councillors**

Mayor Adam Pulford (from 15/11/23)  
 Deputy Mayor Lambros Tapinos (from 15/11/23)  
 Councillor Angelica Panopolus (Mayor from 1/7/23 to 15/11/23)  
 Councillor Mark Riley  
 Councillor Annalivia Carli Hannan  
 Councillor James Conlan  
 Councillor Oscar Yildiz  
 Councillor Helen Davidson  
 Councillor Sue Bolton  
 Councillor Helen Pavlidis  
 Councillor Monica Harte

**Key Management Personnel**

Chief Executive Officer Cathy Henderson  
 Director City Infrastructure Anita Curnow  
 Director Business Transformation Sue Vujcevic  
 Director Place and Environment Joseph Tabacco (until 3/5/24)  
 Acting Director Place and Environment Victoria Hart (from 6/5/24)  
 Director Community Eamonn Fennessy

	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
	<b>No.</b>	<b>No.</b>
<b>Total Number of Councillors</b>	11	11
<b>Total of Chief Executive Officer and other Key Management Personnel</b>	5	5
<b>Total Number of Key Management Personnel</b>	16	16

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

## Note 7. People and relationships (continued)

**(c) Remuneration of Key Management Personnel**

Remuneration comprises employee benefits including all forms of consideration paid, payable or provided by Council, or on behalf of the Council, in exchange for services rendered. Remuneration of Key Management Personnel and Other senior staff is disclosed in the following categories.

**Short-term employee benefits** include amounts such as wages, salaries, annual leave or sick leave that are usually paid or payable on a regular basis, as well as non-monetary benefits such as allowances and free or subsidised goods or services.

**Other long-term employee benefits** include long service leave, other long service benefits or deferred compensation.

**Post-employment benefits** include pensions, and other retirement benefits paid or payable on a discrete basis when employment has ceased.

**Termination benefits** include termination of employment payments, such as severance packages.

	2024 \$ '000	2023 \$ '000
Total remuneration of key management personnel was as follows:		
Short-term employee benefits	1,974	1,981
Other long-term employee benefits	13	22
Post-employment benefits	188	184
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,175</b>	<b>2,187</b>

	2024 No.	2023 No.
The numbers of key management personnel whose total remuneration from Council and any related entities, fall within the following bands:		
\$30,000 - \$39,999	7	7
\$40,000 - \$49,999	1	2
\$50,000 - \$59,999	1	-
\$70,000 - \$79,999	1	1
\$80,000 - \$89,999	-	1
\$90,000 - \$99,999	1	-
\$270,000 - \$279,999	1	-
\$290,000 - \$299,999	2	-
\$300,000 - \$309,999	-	1
\$310,000 - \$319,999	1	1
\$320,000 - \$329,999	-	2
\$360,000 - \$369,999	1	-
\$390,000 - \$399,999	-	1
	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>

Please note that the brackets may shift from year to year due to leave taken throughout the year.

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

## Note 7. People and relationships (continued)

**(d) Remuneration of other senior staff**

Other senior staff are officers of Council, other than Key Management Personnel, whose total remuneration exceeds \$170,000 and who report directly to a member of the KMP.

Total remuneration of other senior staff was as follows:

	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
	<b>\$ '000</b>	<b>\$ '000</b>
Short-term employee benefits	3,070	4,176
Other long-term employee benefits	49	56
Post-employment benefits	331	401
Termination benefits	–	–
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,450</b>	<b>4,633</b>

The number of other senior staff are shown below in their relevant income bands:

	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
	<b>No.</b>	<b>No.</b>
Income Range:		
\$160,000 - \$169,999	–	1
\$170,000 - \$179,999	–	1
\$180,000 - \$189,999	6	5
\$190,000 - \$199,999	5	6
\$200,000 - \$209,999	2	3
\$210,000 - \$219,999	2	4
\$220,000 - \$229,999	1	1
\$240,000 - \$249,999	–	1
\$250,000 - \$259,999	1	–
\$260,000 - \$269,999	–	1
	<b>17</b>	<b>23</b>

	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
	<b>\$ '000</b>	<b>\$ '000</b>
Total remuneration for the reporting year for other senior staff included above, amounted to:	3,401	4,633

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

### Note 7. People and relationships (continued)

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#### 7.2 Related party disclosure

##### **(a) Transactions with related parties**

During the year Council entered into related party transactions totalling \$72,718.00. The nature of the transactions are related to subscriptions, seminars and memberships with Local Government Professionals Inc.

##### **(b) Outstanding balances with related parties**

There are no outstanding balances at the end of the reporting period in relation to transactions with related parties

##### **(c) Loans to/from related parties**

The aggregate amount of loans in existence at balance date that have been made, guaranteed or secured by the council to a related party are nil as at 30 June 2024.

##### **(d) Commitments to/from related parties**

The aggregate amount of commitments in existence at balance date that have been made, guaranteed or secured by the council to a related party are nil as at 30 June 2024.

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

### Note 8. Managing uncertainties

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#### 8.1 Contingent assets and liabilities

##### (a) Contingent assets

Contingent assets and contingent liabilities are not recognised in the Balance Sheet, but are disclosed and if quantifiable, are measured at nominal value. Contingent assets and liabilities are presented inclusive of GST receivable or payable, respectively. As at 30 June 2024 there were no Contingent Assets identified by Council.

##### (b) Contingent liabilities

Contingent liabilities are:

- possible obligations that arise from past events, whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence or non-occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the Council; or
- present obligations that arise from past events but are not recognised because:
- it is not probable that an outflow of resources embodying economic benefits will be required to settle the obligation; or
- the amount of the obligation cannot be measured with sufficient reliability.

As at 30 June 2024, the following Contingent Liabilities have been identified by Council.

##### Superannuation

Council has obligations under a defined benefit superannuation scheme that may result in the need to make additional contributions to the scheme, matters relating to this potential obligation are outlined below. As a result of the volatility in financial markets the likelihood of making such contributions in future periods exists.

##### Insurance claims

Council is presently involved in several confidential insurance matters, which are being conducted through Council's insurer. As these matters are yet to be finalised, and the financial outcomes are unable to be reliably estimated, no allowance for these contingencies has been made in the financial report.

##### Legal matters

Council is presently involved in several confidential legal matters, which are being conducted through Council's solicitors. As these matters are yet to be finalised, and the financial outcomes are unable to be reliably estimated, no allowance for these contingencies has been made in the financial report.

#### 8.2 Change in accounting standards

Certain new Australian Accounting Standards and interpretations have been published that are not mandatory for the 30 June 2024 reporting period. Council assesses the impact of these new standards.

In December 2022 the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB) issued AASB 2022-10 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards - Fair Value Measurement of Non-Financial Assets of Not-for-Profit Public Sector Entities to modify AASB 13 Fair Value Measurement. AASB 2022-10 amends AASB 13 Fair Value Measurement for fair value measurements of non-financial assets of not-for-profit public sector entities not held primarily for their ability to generate net cash inflows. The AASB 13 modifications:

- are applicable only to not-for-profit public sector entities;
- are limited to fair value measurements of non-financial assets not held primarily for their ability to generate net cash inflows;
- are to be applied prospectively for annual periods beginning on or after 1 January 2024;
- would not necessarily change practice for some not-for-profit public sector entities; and
- do not indicate that entities changing practice in how they measure relevant assets made an error in applying the existing requirements of AASB 13.

Council will assess any impact of the modifications to AASB 13 ahead of the 2024-25 reporting period.

In December 2022 the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB) issued AASB 2022-6 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards - Non-current Liabilities with Covenants. AASB 2022-6 amends AASB 101 Presentation of Financial Statements to improve the information an entity provides in its financial statements about long term liabilities with covenants where the entity's right to defer settlement of those liabilities for at least twelve months after the reporting period is subject to the entity complying with conditions specified in the loan arrangement. The amendments in AASB 2022-6 are effective for annual periods beginning on or after 1 January 2024.

Council will assess any impact of the modifications to AASB 101 ahead of the 2024-25 reporting period.

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

### Note 8. Managing uncertainties (continued)

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#### 8.3 Financial instruments

##### (a) Objectives and policies

The Council's principal financial instruments comprise cash assets, term deposits, receivables (excluding statutory receivables), payables (excluding statutory payables) and bank and TCV borrowings. Details of the material accounting policy information and methods adopted, including the criteria for recognition, the basis of measurement and the basis on which income and expenses are recognised, in respect of each class of financial asset, financial liability and equity instrument is disclosed in the notes of the financial statements. Risk management is carried out by senior management under policies approved by the Council. These policies include identification and analysis of the risk exposure to Council and appropriate procedures, controls and risk minimisation.

##### (b) Market risk

Market risk is the risk that the fair value or future cash flows of Council financial instruments will fluctuate because of changes in market prices. The Council's exposure to market risk is primarily through interest rate risk with only insignificant exposure to other price risks and no exposure to foreign currency risk.

##### **Interest rate risk**

Interest rate risk refers to the risk that the value of a financial instrument or cash flows associated with the instrument will fluctuate due to changes in market interest rates. Council's interest rate liability risk arises primarily from long term loans and borrowings at fixed rates which exposes Council to fair value interest rate risk. Council does not hold any interest bearing financial instruments that are measured at fair value, and therefore has no exposure to fair value interest rate risk. Cash flow interest rate risk is the risk that the future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market interest rates. Council has minimal exposure to cash flow interest rate risk through its cash and deposits that are at floating rates.

Investment of surplus funds is made with approved financial institutions under the *Local Government Act 2021*. Council manages interest rate risk by adopting an investment policy that ensures:

- diversification of investment product;
- monitoring of return on investment; and
- benchmarking of returns and comparison with budget.

There has been no significant change in the Council's exposure, or its objectives, policies and processes for managing interest rate risk or the methods used to measure this risk from the previous reporting period.

Interest rate movements have not been sufficiently significant during the year to have an impact on the Council's year end result.

##### (c) Credit risk

Credit risk is the risk that a contracting entity will not complete its obligations under a financial instrument and cause Council to make a financial loss. Council has exposure to credit risk on some financial assets included in the balance sheet. Particularly significant areas of credit risk exist in relation to outstanding fees and fines as well as loans and receivables from sporting clubs and associations. To help manage this risk:

- Council has a policy for establishing credit limits for the entities Council deals with;
- Council may require collateral where appropriate; and
- Council only invests surplus funds with financial institutions which have a recognised credit rating specified in Council's investment policy.

Receivables consist of a large number of customers, spread across the ratepayer, business and government sectors. Credit risk associated with the Council's financial assets is minimal because the main debtor is secured by a charge over the rateable property.

There are no material financial assets which are individually determined to be impaired.

Council may also be subject to credit risk for transactions which are not included in the balance sheet, such as when Council provides a guarantee for another party. Details of our contingent liabilities are disclosed in Note 8.1(b).

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

### Note 8. Managing uncertainties (continued)

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The maximum exposure to credit risk at the reporting date to recognised financial assets is the carrying amount, net of any allowance for impairment of those assets, as disclosed in the balance sheet and notes to the financial statements. Council does not hold any collateral.

#### (d) Liquidity risk

Liquidity risk includes the risk that, as a result of Council's operational liquidity requirements it will not have sufficient funds to settle a transaction when required or will be forced to sell a financial asset at below value or may be unable to settle or recover a financial asset.

To help reduce these risks Council:

- has a liquidity policy which targets a minimum and average level of cash and cash equivalents to be maintained;
- has readily accessible standby facilities and other funding arrangements in place;
- has a liquidity portfolio structure that requires surplus funds to be invested within various bands of liquid instruments;
- monitors budget to actual performance on a regular basis; and
- sets limits on borrowings relating to the percentage of loans to rate revenue and percentage of loan principal repayments to rate revenue.

The Council's maximum exposure to liquidity risk is the carrying amounts of financial liabilities as disclosed on the face of the balance sheet and the amounts related to financial guarantees disclosed in Note 8.1(c), and is deemed insignificant based on prior periods' data and current assessment of risk.

There has been no significant change in Council's exposure, or its objectives, policies and processes for managing liquidity risk or the methods used to measure this risk from the previous reporting period.

With the exception of borrowings, all financial liabilities are expected to be settled within normal terms of trade. Details of the maturity profile for borrowings are disclosed at Note 5.3.

Unless otherwise stated, the carrying amounts of financial instruments reflect their fair value.

#### (e) Sensitivity disclosure analysis

Taking into account past performance, future expectations, economic forecasts, and management's knowledge and experience of the financial markets, Council believes the following movements are 'reasonably possible' over the next 12 months:

- A parallel shift of + 0.75% and + 0.75% in market interest rates (AUD) from year-end rates of 4.90%.

These movements will not have a material impact on the valuation of Council's financial assets and liabilities, nor will they have a material impact on the results of Council's operations.

### 8.4 Fair value measurement

#### *Fair Value Hierarchy*

Council's financial assets and liabilities are not valued in accordance with the fair value hierarchy, Council's financial assets and liabilities are measured at amortised cost.

Council measures certain assets and liabilities at fair value where required or permitted by Australian Accounting Standards. AASB 13 Fair value measurement, aims to improve consistency and reduce complexity by providing a definition of fair value and a single source of fair value measurement and disclosure requirements for use across Australian Accounting Standards.

All assets and liabilities for which fair value is measured or disclosed in the financial statements are categorised within a fair value hierarchy, described as follows, based on the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement as a whole:

- Level 1 — Quoted (unadjusted) market prices in active markets for identical assets or liabilities
- Level 2 — Valuation techniques for which the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement is directly or indirectly observable; and
- Level 3 — Valuation techniques for which the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement is unobservable.



## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

### Note 8. Managing uncertainties (continued)

For the purpose of fair value disclosures, Council has determined classes of assets and liabilities on the basis of the nature, characteristics and risks of the asset or liability and the level of the fair value hierarchy as explained above.

In addition, Council determines whether transfers have occurred between levels in the hierarchy by re-assessing categorisation (based on the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement as a whole) at the end of each reporting period.

#### *Revaluation*

Subsequent to the initial recognition of assets, non-current physical assets, other than plant and equipment, are measured at their fair value, being the price that would be received to sell an asset (or paid to transfer a liability) in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. (For plant and equipment carrying amount is considered to approximate fair value given short useful lives). At balance date, the Council reviewed the carrying value of the individual classes of assets measured at fair value to ensure that each asset materially approximated its fair value. Where the carrying value materially differed from the fair value at balance date, the class of asset was revalued.

Fair value valuations are determined in accordance with a valuation hierarchy. Changes to the valuation hierarchy will only occur if an external change in the restrictions or limitations of use of an asset result in changes to the permissible or practical highest and best use of the asset. In addition, Council undertakes a formal revaluation of land, buildings, and infrastructure assets on a regular basis ranging from 1 to 4 years. The valuation is performed either by experienced council officers or independent experts. The following table sets out the frequency of revaluations by asset class.

<b>Asset Class</b>	<b>Revaluation frequency</b>
Land	1 to 2 years
Buildings	1 to 2 years
Roads	2 to 4 years
Bridges	2 to 4 years
Footpaths and cycleways	2 to 4 years
Drainage	2 to 4 years
Recreational, leisure and community facilities	2 to 4 years
Waste management	2 to 4 years
Parks, open space and streetscapes	2 to 4 years
Other infrastructure	2 to 4 years

Where the assets are revalued, the revaluation increases are credited directly to the asset revaluation reserve except to the extent that an increase reverses a prior year decrease for that class of asset that had been recognised as an expense in which case the increase is recognised as revenue up to the amount of the expense. Revaluation decreases are recognised as an expense except where prior increases are included in the asset revaluation reserve for that class of asset in which case the decrease is taken to the reserve to the extent of the remaining increases. Within the same class of assets, revaluation increases and decreases within the year are offset.

#### *Impairment of assets*

At each reporting date, the Council reviews the carrying value of its assets to determine whether there is any indication that these assets have been impaired. If such an indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset, being the higher of the asset's fair value less costs of disposal and value in use, is compared to the assets carrying value. Any excess of the assets carrying value over its recoverable amount is expensed to the comprehensive income statement, unless the asset is carried at the revalued amount in which case, the impairment loss is recognised directly against the revaluation surplus in respect of the same class of asset to the extent that the impairment loss does not exceed the amount in the revaluation surplus for that same class of asset.

### 8.5 Events occurring after balance date

No matters have occurred after balance date that require disclosure in the financial report.

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

## Note 9. Other matters

	Balance at beginning of reporting period \$ '000	Increase (decrease) \$ '000	Balance at end of reporting period \$ '000
<b>9.1 Reserves</b>			
<b>(a) Asset revaluation reserves</b>			
<b>2024</b>			
<b>Property</b>			
Land and land improvements	1,234,554	(15,337)	1,219,217
Buildings	118,322	(7,657)	110,665
	<u>1,352,876</u>	<u>(22,994)</u>	<u>1,329,882</u>
<b>Plant and equipment</b>			
Artwork	468	1	469
	<u>468</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>469</u>
<b>Infrastructure</b>			
Bridges	13,435	70	13,505
Footpaths and cycleways	111,365	35	111,400
Drainage	144,426	131	144,557
Road surface	74,564	(37)	74,527
Road pavement	213,075	(53)	213,022
Kerb and channel	86,791	12	86,803
Other infrastructure	92,065	(23)	92,042
	<u>735,721</u>	<u>135</u>	<u>735,856</u>
<b>Total asset revaluation reserves</b>	<u>2,089,065</u>	<u>(22,858)</u>	<u>2,066,207</u>
<b>2023</b>			
<b>Property</b>			
Land and land improvements	1,234,094	460	1,234,554
Buildings	118,322	–	118,322
	<u>1,352,416</u>	<u>460</u>	<u>1,352,876</u>
<b>Plant and equipment</b>			
Artwork	468	–	468
	<u>468</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>468</u>
<b>Infrastructure</b>			
Bridges	12,428	1,007	13,435
Footpaths and cycleways	108,666	2,699	111,365
Drainage	111,958	32,468	144,426
Road surface	61,805	12,759	74,564
Road pavement	185,379	27,696	213,075
Kerb and channel	77,156	9,635	86,791
Other infrastructure	59,210	32,855	92,065
	<u>616,602</u>	<u>119,119</u>	<u>735,721</u>
<b>Total asset revaluation reserves</b>	<u>1,969,486</u>	<u>119,579</u>	<u>2,089,065</u>

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

## Note 9. Other matters (continued)

The asset revaluation reserve is used to record the increased (net) value of Council's assets over time.

	Balance at beginning of reporting period \$ '000	Transfer from Accumulated Surplus \$ '000	Transfer to Accumulated Surplus \$ '000	Balance at end of reporting period \$ '000
<b>(b) Other reserves</b>				
<b>2024</b>				
Waste Charge Reserve (restricted)	3,504	–	(953)	2,551
Public resort and recreation land fund (restricted)	19,595	8,916	(8,203)	20,308
Social & affordable housing reserve	397	99	–	496
Defined benefits superannuation reserve	13,500	–	–	13,500
Significant Projects reserve	23,597	14,306	(28,070)	9,833
Local Government Funding Vehicle reserve	4,210	2,369	–	6,579
Developer Contribution Plan reserve (restricted)	2,392	982	(1,348)	2,026
Carry Forward Reserve	19,292	20,771	(18,787)	21,276
<b>Total Other reserves</b>	<b>86,487</b>	<b>47,443</b>	<b>(57,361)</b>	<b>76,569</b>
<b>2023</b>				
Waste Charge Reserve (restricted)	1,880	1,624	–	3,504
Public resort and recreation land fund (restricted)	32,740	9,149	(22,294)	19,595
Social & affordable housing reserve	571	69	(243)	397
Leisure centre development reserve	1,370	–	(1,370)	–
Defined benefits superannuation reserve	13,500	–	–	13,500
Significant Projects reserve	10,010	18,256	(4,669)	23,597
Local Government Funding Vehicle reserve	2,405	1,805	–	4,210
Developer Contribution Plan reserve (restricted)	4,180	1,585	(3,373)	2,392
Carry Forward Reserve	18,462	19,292	(18,462)	19,292
<b>Total Other reserves</b>	<b>85,118</b>	<b>51,780</b>	<b>(50,411)</b>	<b>86,487</b>

The Waste Charge Reserve, factoring in under or over expenditure on the provision of kerbside waste services. The reserve is then used to offset the future waste charge calculation of service delivery, strategic projects, compliance, and long-term planning for Council's waste management responsibilities.

The Public Resort and Recreation Land Fund accumulates holds the balance of open space contributions paid to Council by developers and is utilised to fund the development of new open space and recreation assets, as well as upgrade or expansion of existing assets.

The Social and Affordable Housing Strategic Reserve provides funds for the purchase of community housing projects along with other housing initiatives.

The Leisure Centre Development Reserve accumulates funds from the savings derived from the outsourcing of the leisure centre facilities. These funds are and will continue to be used to maintain and upgrade these facilities. This reserve was closed at the completion of the 2022/23 financial year with the balance transferred to the Significant Projects Reserve.

Merri-bek Defined Benefit Reserve provides funds for payments requested by Vision Super to meet our superannuation obligations under the defined benefit scheme.

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

## Note 9. Other matters (continued)

The Significant Projects Reserve accumulates funds to assist with the development of major Council assets. Currently the reserve is utilised to fund the redevelopment of Fawkner Leisure Centre and the construction of the Saxon Street Community Hub.

The Local Government Funding Vehicle reserve accumulates funds to be used to reduce the LGFV bonds held by Council. LGFV is a group borrowing scheme with interest only repayments.

The Developers Contribution Plan Reserve (DCP) accumulates development contributions paid to Council in respect of developments within particular Plan areas and is used to contribute towards delivery of a ten-year Capital works program with each of the twelve DCP areas.

Carry Forward Reserve is used to set aside funding for incomplete operating or capital works projects carried forward from the current financial year to future financial years.

	2024 \$ '000	2023 \$ '000
<b>9.2 Reconciliation of cash flows from operating activities to surplus/(deficit)</b>		
Surplus for the year	25,761	40,936
<b>Non-cash adjustments:</b>		
Depreciation/amortisation	39,083	32,722
Loss on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	3,309	6,917
Fair value adjustments for investment property	(375)	180
Contributions - Non-monetary assets	(1,887)	(6,061)
Amounts disclosed in financing activities	715	696
<b>Change in assets and liabilities:</b>		
(Increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables	(5,599)	(174)
(Increase)/decrease in inventories	(411)	46
(Increase)/decrease in prepayments	(1,244)	(106)
Increase/(decrease) in contract assets	5,075	(1,449)
Increase/(decrease) in other assets	(347)	(527)
Increase/(decrease) in trade and other payables	3,850	2,491
Increase/(decrease) in provisions	1,390	82
Increase/(decrease) in trust funds	108	592
<b>Net cash provided by operating activities</b>	<b>69,428</b>	<b>76,345</b>

## 9.3 Superannuation

Council makes the majority of its employer superannuation contributions in respect of its employees to the Local Authorities Superannuation Fund Vision Super (the Fund). This Fund has two categories of membership, accumulation and defined benefit, each of which is funded differently. Obligations for contributions to the Fund are recognised as an expense in the Comprehensive Income Statement when they are made or due.

**Accumulation**

The Fund's accumulation category, Vision MySuper/Vision Super Saver, receives both employer and employee contributions on a progressive basis. Employer contributions are normally based on a fixed percentage of employee earnings (for the year ended 30 June 2024, this was 11.0% as required under Superannuation Guarantee (SG) legislation (2023: 10.5%)).

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

### Note 9. Other matters (continued)

#### Defined Benefit

Council does not use defined benefit accounting for its defined benefit obligations under the Fund's Defined Benefit category. This is because the Fund's Defined Benefit category is a pooled multi-employer sponsored plan.

There is no proportional split of the defined benefit liabilities, assets or costs between the participating employers as the defined benefit obligation is a floating obligation between the participating employers and the only time that the aggregate obligation is allocated to specific employers is when a call is made. As a result, the level of participation of Merri-bek City Council in the Fund cannot be measured as a percentage compared with other participating employers. Therefore, the Fund Actuary is unable to allocate benefit liabilities, assets and costs between employers for the purposes of AASB 119.

#### Funding Arrangements

Council makes employer contributions to the Defined Benefit category of the Fund at rates determined by the Trustee on the advice of the Fund Actuary. A triennial actuarial investigation for the Defined Benefit category as at 30 June 2023 was conducted and completed by 31 December 2023. The vested benefit index (VBI) of the Defined Benefit category as at 30 June 2023 was 104.1%. Council was notified of the 30 June 2023 VBI during August 2023. The financial assumptions used to calculate the 30 June 2023 VBI were:

Net investment returns 5.7% pa

Salary information 3.5% pa

Price inflation (CPI) 2.8% pa.

The VBI is used as the primary funding indicator. Because the VBI was above 100%, the 30 June 2023 actuarial investigation determined the Defined Benefit category was in a satisfactory financial position and that no change was necessary to the Defined Benefit category's funding arrangements from prior years.

#### Employer contributions

##### (a) Regular contributions

On the basis of the results of the 2023 triennial actuarial investigation conducted by the Fund Actuary, Council makes employer contributions to the Fund's Defined Benefit category at rates determined by the Fund's Trustee. For the year ended 30 June 2024, this rate was 11.0% of members' salaries (10.5% in 2022/23). This rate is expected to increase in line with any increases in the SG contribution rate and was reviewed as part of the 30 June 2023 triennial valuation.

In addition, Council reimburses the Fund to cover the excess of the benefits paid as a consequence of retrenchment above the funded resignation or retirement benefit.

##### (b) Funding calls

If the Defined Benefit category is in an unsatisfactory financial position at an actuarial investigation or the Defined Benefit category's VBI is below its shortfall limit at any time other than the date of the actuarial investigation, the Defined Benefit category has a shortfall for the purposes of SPS 160 and the Fund is required to put a plan in place so that the shortfall is fully funded within three years of the shortfall occurring. The Fund monitors its VBI on a quarterly basis and the Fund has set its shortfall limit at 97%.

In the event that the Fund Actuary determines that there is a shortfall based on the above requirement, the Fund's participating employers (including Council) are required to make an employer contribution to cover the shortfall.

Using the agreed methodology, the shortfall amount is apportioned between the participating employers based on the pre-1 July 1993 and post-30 June 1993 service liabilities of the Fund's Defined Benefit category, together with the employer's payroll at 30 June 1993 and at the date the shortfall has been calculated.

Due to the nature of the contractual obligations between the participating employers and the Fund, and that the Fund includes lifetime pensioners and their reversionary beneficiaries, it is unlikely that the Fund will be wound up. If there is a surplus in the Fund, the surplus cannot be returned to the participating employers.

In the event that a participating employer is wound-up, the defined benefit obligations of that employer will be transferred to that employer's successor.

#### The 2023 triennial actuarial investigation surplus amounts

An actuarial investigation is conducted annually for the Defined Benefit category of which Council is a contributing employer. Generally, a full actuarial investigation is conducted every three years and interim actuarial investigations are conducted for each intervening year. A full investigation was conducted as at 30 June 2023.

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

## Note 9. Other matters (continued)

The Fund's actuarial investigations identified the following for the Defined Benefit category of which Council is a contributing employer:

	2023 (Triennial) \$m	2022 (Interim) \$m
- A VBI Surplus	84.7	44.6
- A total service liability surplus	123.6	105.8
- A discounted accrued benefits surplus	141.9	111.9

The VBI surplus means that the market value of the fund's assets supporting the defined benefit obligations exceed the vested benefits that the defined benefit members would have been entitled to if they had all exited on 30 June 2023.

The total service liability surplus means that the current value of the assets in the Fund's Defined Benefit category plus expected future contributions exceeds the value of expected future benefits and expenses as at 30 June 2023.

The discounted accrued benefit surplus means that the current value of the assets in the Fund's Defined Benefit category exceeds the value of benefits payable in the future but accrued in respect of service to 30 June 2023.

**The 2024 interim actuarial investigation**

An interim actuarial investigation is being conducted for the Fund's position as at 30 June 2024 as the Fund provides lifetime pensions in the Defined Benefit category. It is anticipated that this actuarial investigation will be completed by October 2024.

The VBI of the Defined Benefit category was 105.4% as at 30 June 2024. The financial assumptions used to calculate the 30 June 2024 VBI were:

Net investment returns 5.6% pa  
Salary information 3.5% pa  
Price inflation (CPI) 2.7% pa

Council was notified of the 30 June 2024 VBI during August 2024.

Because the VBI was above 100%, the Defined Benefit category was in a satisfactory financial position at 30 June 2024 and it is expected that the actuarial investigation will recommend that no change will be necessary to the Defined Benefit category's funding arrangements from prior years.

**The 2020 triennial investigation**

The last triennial actuarial investigation conducted prior to 30 June 2023 was at 30 June 2020. This actuarial investigation was completed by 31 December 2020. The financial assumptions for the purposes of that investigation was:

	2020 Triennial investigation \$m	2023 Triennial investigation \$m
Net investment return	5.6% pa 2.5% pa for two years and 2.75% pa thereafter	5.7% pa 3.50% pa
Salary inflation		
Price inflation	2.0% pa	2.8% pa

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

## Note 9. Other matters (continued)

**Superannuation contributions**

Contributions by Council (excluding any unfunded liability payments) to the above superannuation plans for the financial year ended 30 June 2024 are detailed below:

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Type of scheme</b>	<b>Rate</b>	<b>2024 \$ '000</b>	<b>2023 \$ '000</b>
Vision Super	Defined benefits	11.0% (2023:10.5%)	241	392
Vision Super	Accumulation	11.0% (2023:10.5%)	3,907	3,687
Australian Super	Accumulation	11.0% (2023:10.5%)	1,055	867
Hesta Super	Accumulation	11.0% (2023:10.5%)	615	506
Hostplus	Accumulation	11.0% (2023:10.5%)	648	454
First State	Accumulation	11.0% (2023:10.5%)	477	279
Aust Ethical Retail	Accumulation	11.0% (2023:10.5%)	298	237
CBus	Accumulation	11.0% (2023:10.5%)	313	218
UniSuper	Accumulation	11.0% (2023:10.5%)	271	230
Retail Employees Trust	Accumulation	11.0% (2023:10.5%)	168	176
Other Funds	Accumulation	11.0% (2023:10.5%)	1,963	1,797

There were no contributions outstanding and no loans issued from or to the above schemes as at 30 June 2024.

The expected contributions to be paid to the Defined Benefit category of Vision Super for the year ending 30 June 2024 is \$380,000.

Council has no unfunded liability payments to Vision Super during both 2023/24 and 2022/23 years.

## Note 10. Changes in accounting policies

There have been no changes to accounting policies in the 2023-24 year.