

# Chief Executive Officer's message

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In 2021-22, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were still being felt across our municipality. Lockdowns were still a large part of our lives, as were other health measures that affected the way we delivered our services to the community.

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Our community handled a lot of challenges during these 12 months. From health to economic and social – even an earthquake! – our community banded together and looked after each other. And our council staff continued to work hard to deliver services and the goals of our Council Plan 2021-25 and our Community Vision.

In 2021-22, we:

- delivered 56,506 meals
- planted 4188 trees
- loaned 968,735 books and e-resources through our libraries
- swept 40,815km of roads
- collected nearly 30,000 tonnes of garbage, 15,000 tonnes of recycling and 13,000 tonnes of food and garden waste
- and we vaccinated 3738 children aged under 5 years, 2645 high school students and 901 adults.

We also implemented a range of economic development programs and activities to help businesses in 2021-22. Our business support included:

- the Love Moreland, Dine Local program
- the implementation of our \$975,000 share of the State Government's COVID-safe Outdoor Activation Fund
- \$3,000 grants to businesses for the installation of long-term parklets
- the reduction of fees payable by businesses for outdoor dining
- supporting registered food businesses by waiving registration fees for a further year throughout 2021-22
- a COVIDSafe business officer to support and educate businesses to be COVID-safe and compliant
- an ongoing campaign to encourage people to shop locally, called Love Moreland, Buy Local.

Thank you to our staff and everyone in our community for being kind to each other and working together to help each other during these difficult times.

## **Delivering good financial management in challenging times**

We have taken a prudent approach to managing our budget, to ensure we can meet the needs of the growing demands of our community

We have worked hard to ensure funding for important services for the community and upgrades to our ageing assets, while also investing in new facilities for the community. A new Community Infrastructure Plan was developed and adopted during 2021-22 so that we can plan in the long term for funding important community assets.

## **Building for our community**

Many great projects were delivered in 2021-22. Our total completed capital expenditure for the year was \$56.7 million. We invested this money across a range of projects.

We completed and opened the Glenroy Community Hub, a one-stop shop for residents to have access to Council and community-based services in our north. We completed construction on a new park in Cardinal Road, Glenroy, which features dedicated water play and a large, covered picnic seating area. This new open space is part of our A Park Close to Home program, which aims to ensure that all our residents live within 500m walking distance to a park or open space or within 300m for those living in our busiest areas. As part of this program, we also awarded a contract to construct a new heritage park at Frith Street, Brunswick, on the site of the former Fletcher Jones clothing factory and metal foundry. Construction on the project is scheduled to be completed in mid-2023. And our Service Street, Coburg, project completed community consultation in June 2022 with construction works on track for completion in December 2022. This new park will feature an inclusive play tower and community vegetable garden with raised wicking beds.

We endorsed a final concept plan for the redevelopment of 33 Saxon Street in Brunswick. This hub will meet the growing needs of our community by creating approximately 3,500sqm of floorspace with opportunities for artists, community members and creative industries. It will be a welcoming, socially inclusive space that celebrates our diversity, creativity and distinct culture.

We also gave the green light for a \$28 million upgrade of the Fawkner Leisure Centre, which will include a 50-metre outdoor swimming pool and many other community benefits. Construction is due to begin in 2023.

### **A health hub for Coburg**

A big highlight from the past 12 months is the approval of the Coburg Health Hub. This new health and community services precinct for Coburg will become a reality by 2025. It will bring much-needed health services to the community and create up to 1,000 new local jobs. The precinct will include a short-stay hospital, community health services, aged care, bulk-billed GPs, a mental health facility, childcare and more. We are also keeping the bluestone cottage in Council ownership. The cottage will remain home to the Coburg Historical Society and will be refurbished as part of the wider project.

We have achieved a lot in these past 12 months and have many more exciting plans for the future. Thank you to our Councillors, residents, businesses and other community members for supporting each other and for making Merri-bek a great place to live.

**Cathy Henderson**  
**Chief Executive Officer**