Merri-bek City Council Annual Report 2024-25

Merri-bek
City Council

Welcome

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

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

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

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

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

Acknowledgement of Country

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

Council Plan

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Mayor's message

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

Here are some highlights from the past year.

Investing in community facilities and public spaces

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

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

Advocating for aged care services, transport and housing

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

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

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

Improving core services

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

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

Cr Helen Davidson
MAYOR

Chief Executive Officer's message

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cathy Henderson
Chief Executive Officer

About our municipality

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

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

The City of Merri-bek includes the following suburbs:
- Brunswick
- Brunswick East
- Brunswick West
- Coburg
- Coburg North
- Fawkner
- Fitzroy North (part)
- Glenroy
- Gowanbrae
- Hadfield
- Oak Park
- Parkville (part)
- Pascoe Vale
- Pascoe Vale South
- Tullamarine (part)

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

Challenges and future outlook

A growing population

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

We have strategies on our key challenges:
- transport and how we move around our city
- maintaining and increasing parks and open spaces
- reaching our zero carbon targets by 2040
- housing accessibility and affordability.

A diverse population

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

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

Through our Community Connector program, we recruit volunteers to help facilitate meaningful engagement and communication between Council and our culturally diverse communities. Our Connectors ask our community what information they need, share information from Council and tell us how to improve our messages and translations. This year, Council piloted a Youth Connectors program, which is now integrated into the wider Connectors program.

Merri-bek households

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

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

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

How we move around

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

Open space

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

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

The climate emergency

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

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

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

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

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

Support for older people

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

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

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

Achievements of the year

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

Strategic objective 1: An environmentally proactive Merri-bek

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

Achievements:

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

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

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

Achievements:

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

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

Strategic objective 3: A healthy and caring Merri-bek

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

Achievements:

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

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

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

Achievements:

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

Strategic objective 5: An empowered, collaborative Merri-bek

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

Achievements:

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

Financial overview

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

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

Operating income

Our total income for the year was $281.1 million.

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

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

Operating expenses

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

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

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

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

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

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

Operating expenditure profile for 2024-25

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

Capital expenses

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

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

Capital works by category delivered in 2024-25

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

Delivering services to you

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

Here are key figures about the services provided to our community from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025:
- waste management
- delivering meals
- libraries and leisure centres
- parks and open spaces
- supporting local businesses
- regulating traffic
- supporting older people in their homes
- overseeing the planning permit process
- animal registrations
- street cleaning
- children and family services.

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

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

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

Snapshot of key services in 2024–25

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

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

Community satisfaction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Awards and citations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Our council

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

Councillors

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

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

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

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

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

Our Councillors for the 2024-25 year were:

Bababi Djinanang Ward
Councillor Sue Bolton

Box Forest Ward
Councillor Chris Miles

Brunswick West Ward
Councillor Ella Svensson

Bulleke-bek Ward
Councillor Dr Jay Iwasaki

Djirri-Djirri Ward
Councillor / Mayor Helen Davidson

Harmony Park Ward
Councillor / Deputy Mayor Helen Politis

Pascoe Vale South Ward
Councillor Oscar Yildiz JP

Pentridge Ward
Councillor Nat Abboud

Randazzo Ward
Councillor Liz Irvin

Warrk-Warrk Ward
Councillor Adam Pulford

Westbreen Ward
Councillor Katerine Theodosis

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

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

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

Councillors, committees and responsibilities during 2024-25

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

Mayor, Cr Helen Davidson

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

Advisory committees: Audit and Risk Committee, Coburg Revitalisation Oversight Committee, Community Planning – Councillor Reference Group, Glenroy Advisory Group
External committees: Municipal Association of Victoria (substitute), M9 Committee, Northern Councils Alliance
Councillor responsible for: Sport and Recreation
M 0403 709 948
E hdavidson@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Deputy Mayor, Cr Helen Politis

Elected to Council in 2024 and elected Deputy Mayor in 2024.
Advisory committees: Audit and Risk Committee, Coburg Revitalisation Oversight Committee, Coburg Advisory Group, Merri-bek Community Recognition Committee (Merri-bek Awards)
External committees: Nil
Councillor responsible for: Economic Development, Multiculturalism, Sport and Recreation
M 0456 357 280
E hpolitis@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Cr Nat Abboud

Elected to Council in 2016 and 2024. Elected Deputy Mayor in 2017 and Mayor in 2018.

Advisory committees: Arts Advisory Committee, Coburg Advisory Group, Coburg Revitalisation Oversight Committee, Community Planning – Councillor Reference Group, Human Rights and Inclusion Advisory Committee, Gender Equality Reference Group, Merri-bek Community Recognition Committee (Merri-bek Awards)

External committees: Merri Creek Management Committee

Councillor responsible for: Arts and Culture, Economic Development, Women

M 0487 258 044

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

Cr Sue Bolton

Elected to Council in 2012, 2016, 2020 and 2024.

Advisory committees: First Nations Advisory Committee, Disability Reference Group, Heritage and Local History Reference Group

External committees: Nil

Councillor responsible for: Nil

M 0417 583 664

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

Cr Liz Irvin

Elected to Council in 2024.

Advisory committees: Brunswick Advisory Group, Sustainable Transport Advisory Committee (chair)

External committees: Merri Creek Management Committee (substitute), Metropolitan Transport Forum (substitute)

Councillor responsible for: Sport and Recreation, Transport and Getting Around, Urban Planning

M 0472 846 861

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

Cr Dr Jay Iwasaki

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

Cr Chris Miles

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

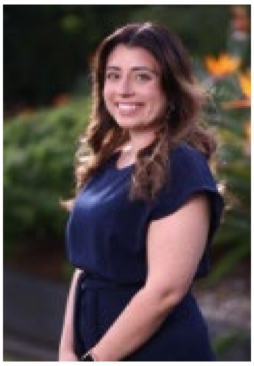
Cr Adam Pulford

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

Cr Ella Svensson

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

Cr Katerine Theodosis



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

Cr Oscar Yildiz JP

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

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

Cr Annalivia Carli Hannan

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

Cr James Conlan

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

Cr Monica Harte

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

Cr Angelica Panopoulos

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

Cr Helen Pavlidis-Mihalakos

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

Cr Mark Riley

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

Cr Lambros Tapinos

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

Our people

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

Our executive team

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

Chief Executive Officer – Cathy Henderson

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

Director Business Transformation – Sue Vujcevic

Responsible for the corporate functions of Council including:

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

Director City Infrastructure – Anita Curnow

Responsible for the following branches:

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

Director Community – Eamonn Fennessy

Responsible for the following branches:

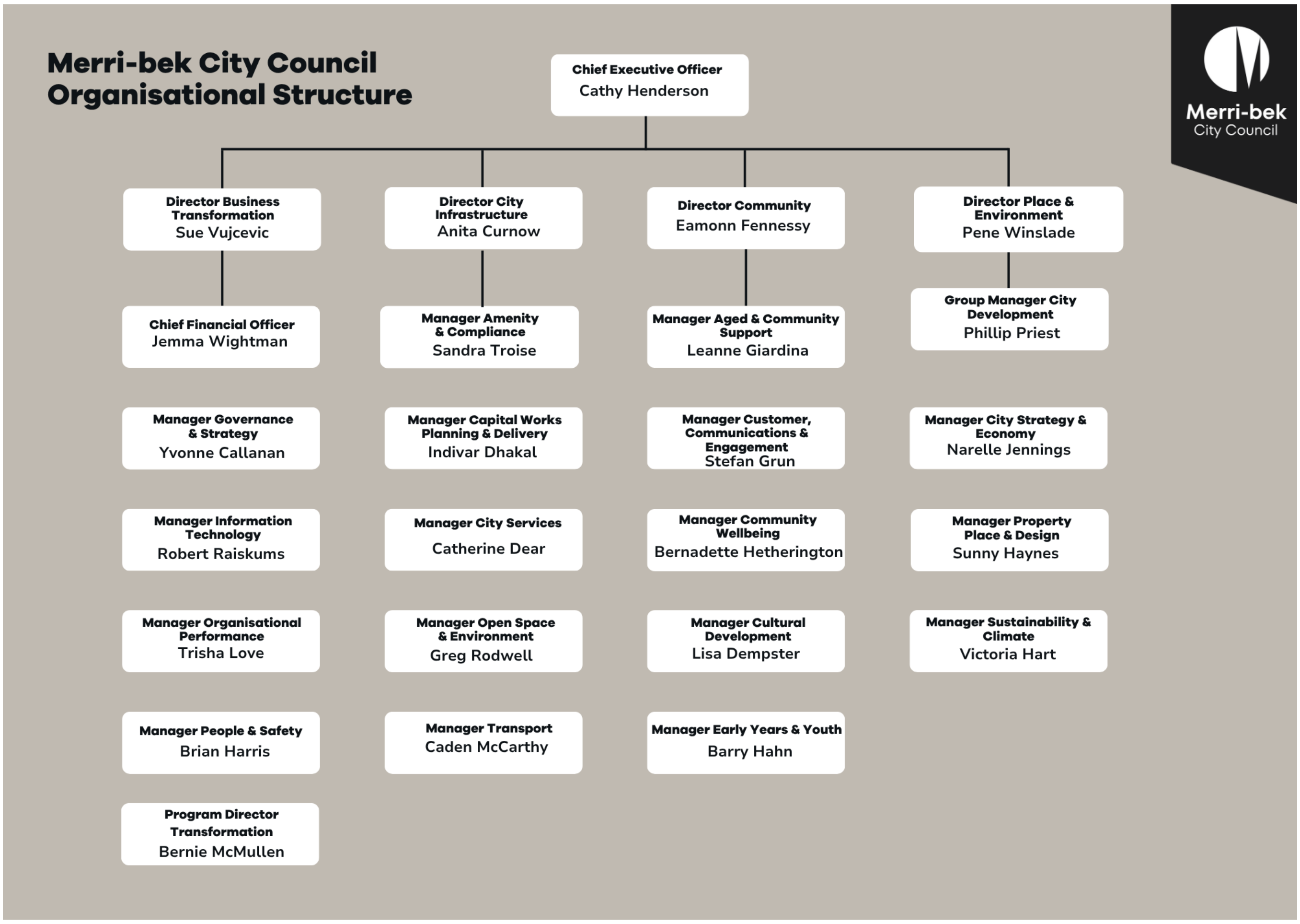
- Aged and Community Support
- Community Wellbeing
- Cultural Development
- Customer, Communications and Engagement
- Early Years and Youth

Director Place and Environment – Pene Winslade

Responsible for the following branches:

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

Merri-bek City Council organisational structure for 2024-25



Our staffing profile

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

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

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

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

Inclusive employment

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

Key actions and achievements in 2024-25 include:

Strengthening disability inclusion

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

Advancing gender equality and flexible work

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

Improving data collection for diversity

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

Supporting gender diversity and pronoun use

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

Creating gender-inclusive facilities

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

Creating multi-faith and wellness facilities

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

Promoting equal pay and recognition

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

Ongoing initiatives

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

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

First Peoples

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

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

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

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

Key actions and achievements in 2024–25 include:

Workplace capabilities and cultural competence

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

Recruitment and retention

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

Pathways and career development

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

Workplace support and engagement

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

Partnerships and organisational support

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

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

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

Equal opportunity

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

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

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

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

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

Service recognition awards

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

Building our organisational capability

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

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

Senior Management Team development

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

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

Leader Development Program

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

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

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

Training for all staff

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

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

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

Project Management upskilling

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

Capability uplift

Team and Leader Development

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

Earn and Learn program

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

Occupational health and safety

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

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

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

Safety management system

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

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

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

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

Activities included:

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

Key safety initiatives undertaken during 2024-25 included:

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

Occupational Health and Safety training 2024-25

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

Injury Management

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

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

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

Our early intervention program for 2024-25 included:

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

Employee Health and Wellbeing

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

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

Child Safety

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

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

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

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

Risk management

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

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

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

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

Our performance

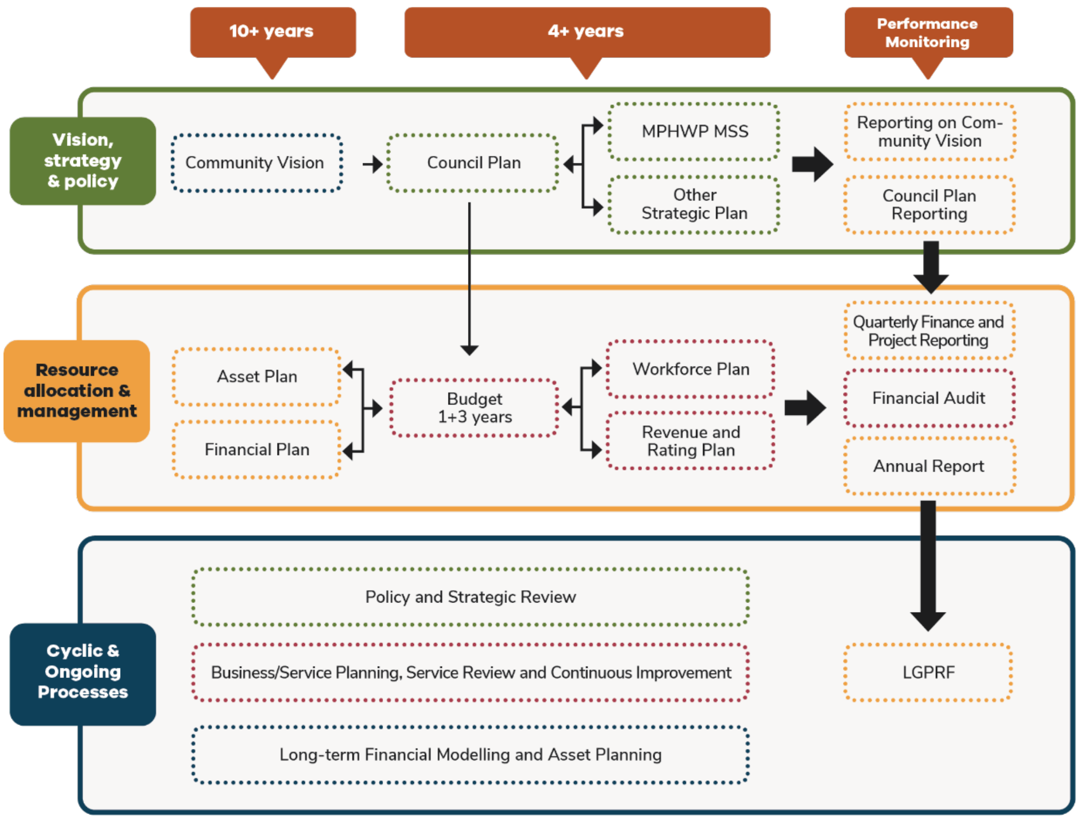
Integrated planning and reporting framework

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

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

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

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



Vision

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

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

Council plan

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

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

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

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

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

The 5 strategic objectives are:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Council plan on a page

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

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

Report of operations

Performance against our objectives

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Local Government Performance Reporting Framework

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Strategic objective 3: A healthy and caring Merri-bek

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

Strategic indicators

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Performance statement

For the year ended 30 June 2025

Description of municipality

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

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

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

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

Certification of the Performance Statement

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Independent Auditor’s Report

To the Councillors of Merri-bek City Council

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

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the performance statement

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

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

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

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

MELBOURNE
23 September 2025

Travis Derricott
as delegate for the Auditor-General of Victoria

Section 2 - Service performance indicators

For the year ended 30 June 2025

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

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

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

Section 3 - Financial performance indicators

For the year ended 30 June 2025

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

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

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

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

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

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

Section 4. Sustainable capacity indicators

For the year ended 30 June 2025

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

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

Section 5 - Notes to the accounts

5.1 Basis of preparation

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

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

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

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

5.2 Definitions

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

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

5.3. Other Matters

Overview of 2025

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

Governance and management

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

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

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

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

Council meetings

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

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

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

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

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

Councillor attendance at meetings

In 2024-25, we held:

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

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

Table A

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

[1] Elected from 26 October 2024

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

Major committees

Audit and Risk Committee

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

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

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

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

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

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

Delegated committees

Council has not established any delegated Committees.

Councillor expenses and allowances

Expenses

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

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

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

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

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

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

**refund*

Allowances

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

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

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

Mayoral allowance: $138,506

Deputy mayor's allowance: $69,252

Councillor allowance: $40,769

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

Councillor Code of Conduct

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

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

Conflict of interest

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- gifts
- benefits
- hospitality.

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

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

Governance and management checklist

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Taskforce on Climate-related financial disclosures

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

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

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

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

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Climate change governance

Council meetings and decisions

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

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

Audit and Risk Committee

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

Climate Resilience Integration Board

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

Risk Management Committee

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

Other Project Control Boards

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

Climate change strategy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Climate risk management

Scenario analysis

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

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

Risk identification and assessment

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

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

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

Risk management approach

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

Continuous Improvement

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

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

Metrics and targets

Climate risk strategy monitoring and evaluation

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

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

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

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

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

Council emissions 2023-24 pending certification

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

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

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

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

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

Community emissions – 2022-23

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

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

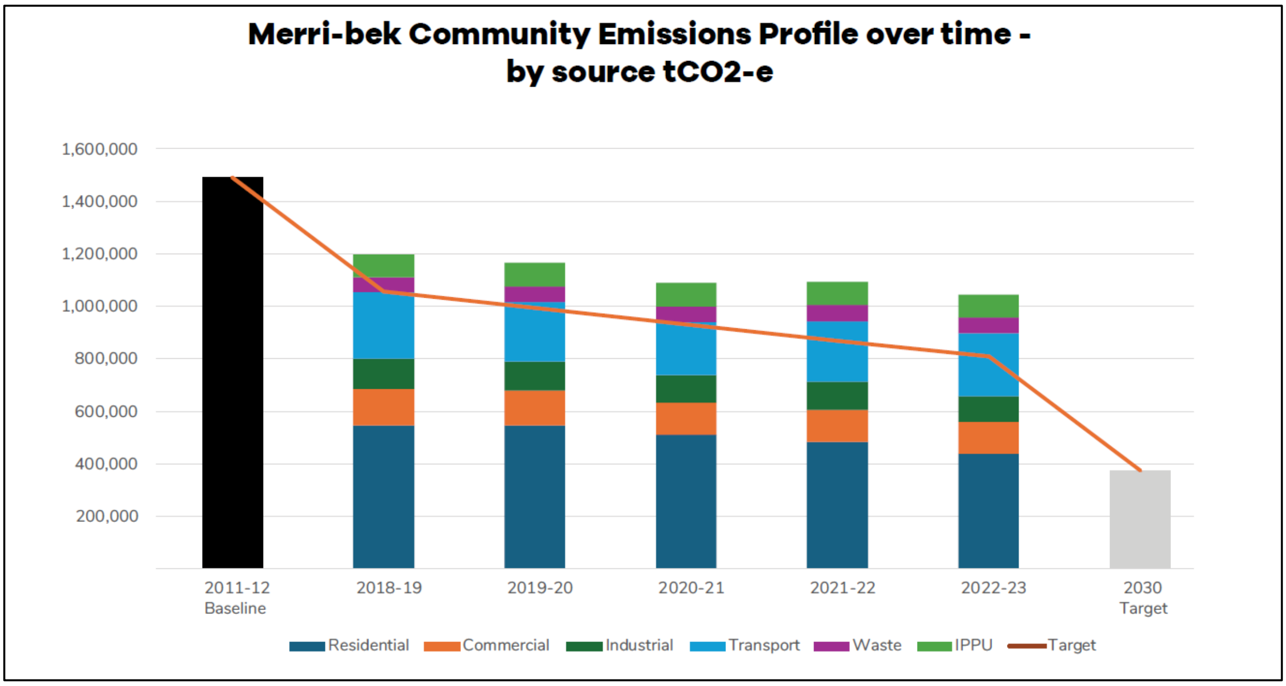


Figure 1. Snapshot Tool estimate of 2022-23 Merri-bek Community Emissions over time compared to baseline.

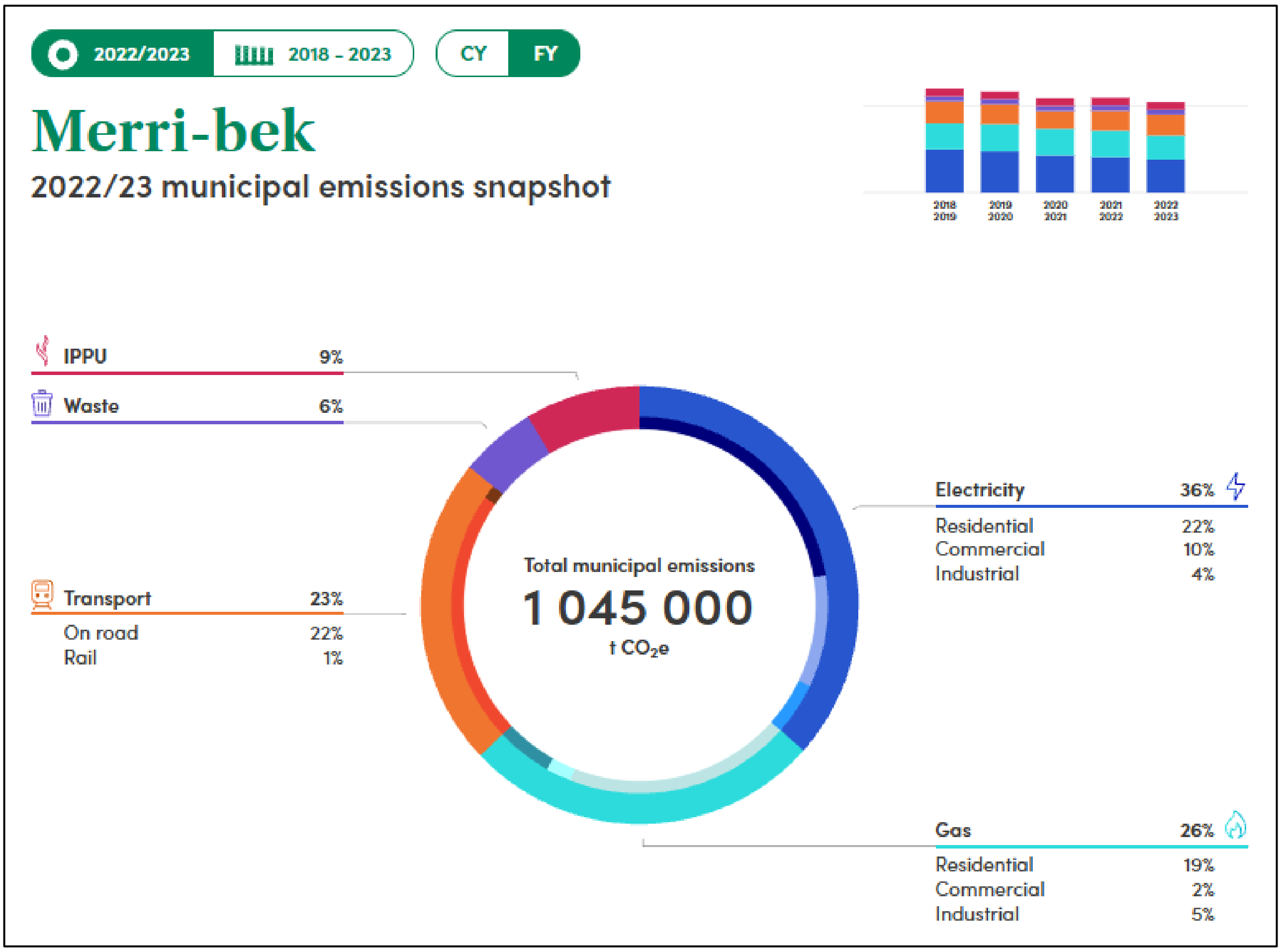


Figure 2. Estimate of 2022-23 Merri-bek Community Emissions.

Statutory information

Community engagement

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

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

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

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

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

Legislative environment

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

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

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

We have highlighted key Acts below.

Local Government Act

Community vision, council plan, asset plan

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chief Executive Officer employment and remuneration policy

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

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

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

Governance rules

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

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

Planning and Environment Act 1987

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

Freedom of Information Act 1982

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

Domestic Animals Act 1994

Domestic Animal Management Plan

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

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

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

Road Management Plan

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

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

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

Contracts

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

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

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

In November 2021, the Instrument of Delegation was prepared by staff, reviewed, and presented to the CEO and Mayor for execution (signing and sealing). The prepared instrument unfortunately included an administrative error, of specifying 20% instead of 5% as the delegated limit for contract variations. Council became aware of this error in mid-September 2024. In the meantime, staff had unknowingly referred to the executed Instrument of Delegation ever since its execution, unaware that it contained an error in relation to contract variations. As a result, five contract variations were incorrectly approved in the period since November 2021.

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

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

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

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

Public tenders awarded within the 2024-25 financial year

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

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

Disability access and inclusion plan

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

Equal access to all areas of community life

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

Employment, education and economic security

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

Inclusion and participation in the community

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

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

Changing attitudes and practices that lead to discrimination

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

Supporting health, wellbeing and safety

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

Domestic animal management

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

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

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

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

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

Food Act ministerial directions

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

Road Management Act ministerial directions

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

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities commitment

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

The charter requires governments, local councils and other public authorities to consider human rights when they:
- make laws
- develop policies
- provide services.

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

Managing Human Rights risk at Council

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

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

Key policies, plans and commitments

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

Training and implementation

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

Advisory and reference groups

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

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

Human Rights training at Council

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

Training topics have included:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Social cohesion

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

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

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

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

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

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

First Nations engagement and cultural consultation

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

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

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

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

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

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

Some notable achievements because of this engagement include:

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

Ballerrt Mooroop Annual Plan update – June 2025

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

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

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

Gender equality and family violence prevention

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

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

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

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

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

LGBTIQA+ communities

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

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

Highlights have included:

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

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

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

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

Initiatives included:

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

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

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

Older people and communities

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

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

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

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

Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum

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

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

People with disability

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

National Competition Policy annual statement of compliance

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

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

Infrastructure and development contributions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A plain English guide to the Financial Report

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

Our report complies with:

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

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

What is in the Annual Financial Report?

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

There are 5 statements and 10 notes, which are:

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

Council approves in principle the Annual Financial Report and authorises its certification. The 5 statements are in the first few pages of the report including:

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

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

Comprehensive income statement

The comprehensive income statement shows:

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

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

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

Balance sheet

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

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

Current and non-current assets

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

Current and non-current liabilities

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

Net assets

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

Total equity

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

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

Statement of changes in equity

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

The main reasons for a change in equity stem from:

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

Statement of cash flows

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

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

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

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

Statement of capital works

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

It categorises capital works expenditure into:

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

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

Notes to the accounts

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

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

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

Notes include:

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

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

Statements by Principal Accounting Officer and Councillors

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

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

Auditor General's report

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

Our main office

90 Bell Street, Coburg

External auditor

Auditor-General of Victoria

Internal auditor

Crowe Australasia

Solicitors

Various

Bankers

Westpac Banking Corporation

Website address

merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Merri-bek City Council

ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Annual Financial Report
for the year ended 30 June 2025

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Annual Financial Report
for the year ended 30 June 2025

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Content Overview

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

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

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

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

Merri-bek City Council

Annual Financial Report
for the year ended 30 June 2025

Certification of the Financial Statements

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Independent Auditor's Report

To the Councillors of Merri-bek City Council

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

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial report

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

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

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

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

MELBOURNE
23 September 2025

Travis Derricott
as delegate for the Auditor-General of Victoria

Comprehensive Income Statement
for the year ended 30 June 2025

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

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

Balance Sheet
as at 30 June 2025

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

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

Statement of Changes in Equity
for the year ended 30 June 2025

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

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

Statement of Cash Flows
for the year ended 30 June 2025

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

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

Statement of Capital Works
for the year ended 30 June 2025

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

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

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

Note 1. Overview

Introduction

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

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

Statement of compliance

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

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

Accounting policy information

1.1 Basis of accounting

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Note 1. Overview (continued)

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

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

Note 2. Analysis of our results

Note 2.1 Performance against budget

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

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

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

2.1.1 Income / Revenue and expenditure

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

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

Note 2.1 Performance against budget (continued)

(i) Explanation of material variations

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

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

Note 2.1 Performance against budget (continued)

2.1.2 Capital works

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

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

Note 2.1 Performance against budget (continued)

(i) Explanation of material variations

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

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 2.2 Analysis of Council results by program

2.2.1 Analysis of Council results by program

Council delivers its functions and activities through the following programs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Note 3. Funding for the delivery of our services

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000

3.1 Rates and charges

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

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

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
General rates	165,723	159,532
Waste management charge	24,713	22,364
Special rates and charges	597	595
Supplementary rates and rate adjustments	2,684	2,214
Interest on rates and charges	1,371	531
Total rates and charges	195,088	185,236

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

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

3.2 Statutory fees and fines

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Infringements and costs	10,032	9,519
Court recoveries	693	860
Town planning fees	1,878	1,710
Land information certificates	514	467
Other fines	1,209	824
Permits	2,953	2,340
Parking	746	315
Total statutory fees and fines	18,025	16,035

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

3.3 User fees

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Aged and health services	3,175	1,956
Leisure centre and recreation	425	998
Registration and other permits	2,606	2,262
Building services	361	376
Valuation fees	–	67
Waste management services	220	233
Other fees and charges	2,345	2,301
Town planning fees	–	17
Total user fees	9,132	8,210
User fees by timing of revenue recognition		
User fees recognised at a point in time	9,132	8,210
Total user fees	9,132	8,210

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

continued on next page ...

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

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

Recognition is based on the underlying contractual terms.

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000

3.4 Funding from other levels of government

Grants were received in respect of the following:

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Summary of grants		
Commonwealth funded grants	20,913	10,685
State funded grants	11,084	11,275
Total grants received	31,997	21,960

(a) Operating Grants

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Recurrent - Commonwealth Government		
Financial Assistance Grants	8,992	252
Family day care	615	593
Aged care	8,481	8,210
Recurrent - State Government		
Home help	426	1,088
Families and Children	3,955	3,794
Food Services	20	22
Libraries	1,183	1,183
Total recurrent operating grants	23,672	15,142
Non-recurrent - State Government		
Libraries	71	123
Employment Assistance	190	–
Recreation	400	–
Arts and Culture	103	–
Community welfare	14	13
Other	1,081	1,894
Total non-recurrent operating grants	1,859	2,030
Total operating grants	25,531	17,172

(b) Capital Grants

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Recurrent - Commonwealth Government		
Roads to recovery	791	609
Total recurrent capital grants	791	609
Non-recurrent - Commonwealth Government		
Local Roads Community Infrastructure	355	939
Buildings	1,679	82
Non-recurrent - State Government		
Buildings	1,468	2,484
Community Safety	–	13
Recreation	577	8
Other	1,596	653
Total non-recurrent capital grants	5,675	4,179

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

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

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

(c) Recognition of grant income

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Unspent grants are determined and disclosed on a cash basis.

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

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000

3.5 Contributions

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

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

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Infrastructure	503	1,887
Total non-monetary contributions	503	1,887

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

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

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment		
Proceeds of sale	6,443	235
Written down value of assets disposed (plant & equipment)	(41)	(29)
Written down value of assets disposed (infrastructure)	(2,727)	(3,515)
Written down value of assets disposed (property)	(9,015)	–
Written down value of assets held for sale disposed (property)	(7,487)	–
Total net loss on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	(12,827)	(3,309)

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

3.7 Other income

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Interest	4,652	5,529
Investment property rental	1,209	1,336
Other rent	1,091	1,207
Recoveries	3,761	944
Sales	377	580
Other	806	277
Road occupancy/ Right of way closures	22	5
Total other income	11,918	9,878

Interest is recognised as it is earned.

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

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

Note 4. The cost of delivering services

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000

4.1 Employee costs

(a) Employee costs

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Wages and salaries	94,834	92,364
Casual staff	6,446	5,060
WorkCover	2,425	3,989
Superannuation	10,928	9,957
Fringe benefits tax	402	111
Other	657	243
Total employee costs	115,692	111,724

(b) Superannuation

Council made contributions to the following funds:

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Defined benefit fund		
Employer contributions to Local Authorities Superannuation Fund (Vision Super)	317	241
	317	241
Accumulation funds		
Employer contributions to Local Authorities Superannuation Fund (Vision Super)	3,973	3,907
Employer contributions - other funds	6,638	5,809
	10,611	9,716
Employer contributions payable at reporting date	785	756

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

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

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

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

Note 4. The cost of delivering services (continued)

4.2 Materials and services

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

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

4.3 Depreciation

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

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

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

Note 4. The cost of delivering services (continued)

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000

4.4 Allowance for impairment losses

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

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

4.5 Other expenses

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

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

Note 5. Investing in and financing our operations

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000

5.1 Financial assets

(a) Cash and cash equivalents

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Current		
Cash on hand	3	5
Cash at bank	36,113	22,382
Total current cash and cash equivalents	**36,116**	**22,387**
Total cash and cash equivalents	**36,116**	**22,387**

(b) Other financial assets

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Current		
Term deposits	60,000	84,000
Total current other financial assets	**60,000**	**84,000**
Total other financial assets	**60,000**	**84,000**
Total current financial assets	**96,116**	**106,387**
Total cash and cash equivalents and other financial assets	**96,116**	**106,387**

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

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

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

(c) Trade & Other Receivables

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Current		
Statutory receivables		
Rates debtors	27,733	27,154
Parking Infringement debtors	19,816	18,588
Net GST receivable	3,181	3,278
Fire Services Property Levy Debtors	2,973	2,668
Allowance for expected credit loss - Parking infringements	(15,301)	(13,220)
Non-statutory receivables		
Other debtors	7,267	9,524
Allowance for expected credit loss - Other debtors	(3,992)	(3,755)
Total current trade and other receivables	**41,677**	**44,237**
Total trade and other receivables	**41,677**	**44,237**

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

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

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

(d) Ageing of receivables

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

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Current (not yet due)	1,939	3,416
Past due by up to 30 days	555	977
Past due between 31 and 180 days	143	252
Past due between 181 and 365 days	13	22
Past due by more than 1 year	625	1,102
Total trade and other receivables	3,275	5,769

(e) Ageing of individually impaired receivables

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

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

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Current (not yet due)	28	26
Past due by up to 30 days	98	92
Past due between 31 and 180 days	737	693
Past due between 181 and 365 days	861	810
Past due by more than 1 year	2,268	2,134
Total trade and other receivables	3,992	3,755

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

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

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

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000

5.2 Payables, trust funds and deposits and contract and other liabilities

(a) Trade and other payables

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Current		
Non-statutory payables		
Trade payables	6,292	5,223
Accrued expenses	13,311	13,455
Total current trade and other payables	19,603	18,678

(b) Trust funds and deposits

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Current		
Refundable deposits	491	878
Trust funds	691	679
Fire services levy	5,004	4,137
Retention amounts	588	399
Other refundable deposits	(13)	72
Total current trust funds and deposits	6,761	6,165

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.3 Interest-bearing liabilities

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Current		
Treasury Corporation of Victoria borrowings - secured	1,619	1,577
Other borrowings - secured	12,590	420
Total current interest-bearing liabilities	14,209	1,997
Non-current		
Treasury Corporation of Victoria borrowings - secured	11,567	13,131
Other borrowings - secured	2,100	14,690
Total non-current interest-bearing liabilities	13,667	27,821
Total	27,876	29,818

Borrowings are secured by the rates of the Council
a) The maturity profile for Council's borrowings is:

	2025	2024
Not later than one year	14,209	1,997
Later than one year and not later than five years	9,054	20,873
Later than five years	4,613	6,948
	27,876	29,818

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

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

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

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

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

5.4 Provisions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

	2025	2024
Key assumptions:		
- discount rate	4.30%	4.35%
- index rate	4.25%	4.45%

5.5 Financing arrangements

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

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Credit card facilities	289	289
Treasury Corporation of Victoria facilities	13,186	14,708
Other facilities	14,690	15,110
Total Facilities	28,165	30,107
Used facilities	28,084	30,048
Used facilities	28,084	30,048
Unused facilities	81	59

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

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

5.6 Commitments

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

(a) Commitments for expenditure

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

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

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

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000

(b) Operating lease receivables

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

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Future undiscounted minimum rentals receivable under non-cancellable operating leases are as follows:		
Not later than one year	1,408	1,393
Later than one year and not later than five years	4,178	4,678
Later than five years	6,291	7,200
	11,877	13,271

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

Note 6. Assets we manage

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000

6.1 Current assets classified as held for sale

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

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

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

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

Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

6.2 Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment

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

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

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

Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

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

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

Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

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

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Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

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

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

Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

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

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

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

	Depreciation Period years	Threshold Limit $ ´000
Asset recognition thresholds and depreciation periods		
Land and land improvements		
land	n/a	–
land improvements	n/a	–
Buildings		
buildings	5-260 years	1
building and leasehold improvements	N/A	1
Plant and Equipment		
plant, machinery and equipment	3-10 years	1
furniture and fittings	7-10 years	1
computer equipment	1-5 years	1
library books	10 years	1
motor vehicles	up to 10 years	3
artwork	not applicable	1
Infrastructure		
roads surface	Up to 40 years	1
roads pavement	Up to 100 years	1
drainage	Up to 100 years	1
footpaths and cycleways	10-80 years	1
kerb and channel	10-80 years	1
bridges	Up to 200 years	1
Other infrastructure		
street furniture	10 to 20 years	1
recreational, leisure and community facilities	10 to 50 years	1
parks, open space and streetscapes	10 to 100 years	1
playground equipment and other structures	10 to 100 years	1
Right of use assets		
right of use assets	Lease Term	10

Land under roads
Land under roads acquired after 30 June 2008 is brought to account using the fair value basis. Council does not recognise land under roads that it controlled prior to that period in its financial report.

Depreciation and amortisation

continued on next page ...

Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

Buildings, land improvements, plant and equipment, infrastructure, and other assets having limited useful lives are systematically depreciated over their useful lives to the Council in a manner which reflects consumption of the service potential embodied in those assets. Estimates of remaining useful lives and residual values are made on a regular basis with major asset classes reassessed annually. Depreciation rates and methods are reviewed annually.

Where assets have separate identifiable components that are subject to regular replacement, these components are assigned distinct useful lives and residual values and a separate depreciation rate is determined for each component.

Road earthworks are not depreciated on the basis that they are assessed as not having a limited useful life.

Straight line depreciation is charged based on the residual useful life as determined each year.

Depreciation periods used are listed above and are consistent with the prior year unless otherwise stated.

Repairs and maintenance
Where the repair relates to the replacement of a component of an asset and the cost exceeds the capitalisation threshold the cost is capitalised and depreciated. The carrying value of the replaced asset is expensed.

Leasehold improvements
Leasehold improvements are recognised at cost and are amortised over the unexpired period of the lease or the estimated useful life of the improvement, whichever is the shorter.

Valuation of land and buildings
A revaluation is necessary when the fair value of each revalued class of asset differs materially from its carrying amount at balance date. Tom Kennedy (Qualified CPV valuer) from Opteon Property Group, has completed a review of the carrying amount of land and building assets as at February 2025.

The valuation of buildings is at fair value based on current replacement cost less accumulated depreciation at the date of valuation. The valuation of land is at fair value, being market value based on highest and best use permitted by relevant land planning provisions. All freehold land reserved for public open space is valued at a discount of 20 percent to market value based on legal precedents.

Where land use is restricted through existing planning provisions, the valuation is reduced to reflect this limitation. The review methodology included analysis of recent land and building sales to determine the movement in values as displayed by the market. To ascertain a level of market value movement, Opteon Property Group reviewed the sales data throughout Merri-bek City Council from the 1st March 2024 to the 28th February 2025, to determine the material change in the underlying land value of each property sector.

The property sector includes residential, commercial and industrial property classifications. The change in the underlying land value of each sector over the analysed period has been residential -0.22%, commercial -1.97% and industrial 2.51%. These movements can be summarised across all combined sectors to reflect an average change of 0.35%. In addition, to determine the change in council owned buildings, reference was made to the building cost index "Rawlinsons Construction Guide 2025". The building cost index derived from this reference source has indicated an immaterial change in value over the analysed period of 5.35%.

The movement in the value of the land and building assets since the last valuation undertaken as at February 2024 was not material and therefore the change was not applied to Merri-bek City Council's land and building asset register.

Specialised land is valued at fair value using site values adjusted for englobo (undeveloped and/or unserviced) characteristics, access rights and private interests of other parties and entitlements of infrastructure assets and services. This adjustment is an unobservable input in the valuation. The adjustment has no impact on the comprehensive income statement.

Any significant movements in the unobservable inputs for land and land under roads will have a significant impact on the fair value of these assets.

The date and type of the current valuation is detailed in the following table.

Details of the Council's land and buildings and information about the fair value hierarchy as at 30 June 2025 are as follows:

continued on next page ...

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Date of valuation	Type of Valuation
Non-specialised Land	–	343,990	–	Mar-24	Revaluation
Specialised land	–	–	1,208,028	Mar-24	Revaluation
Buildings	–	–	336,268	Mar-24	Revaluation
Total	–	343,990	1,544,296		

Valuation of Infrastructure

Fair value assessments were performed on 31st May 2025 where it was determined that there was a material movement in fair value for the asset classes of Roads, Footpath, Kerb & Channel and Drainage Infrastructure. The valuation of these classes were undertaken by Geoff Bolling (Bachelor of Engineering - Civil) from Council's Asset Management Unit, at fair value based on replacement cost less accumulated depreciation.

The replacement cost revaluation was conducted in the current year, based on Merri-bek City Council's construction costs of assets within that category, Rawlinsons Australian Construction Handbook and construction cost indices from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The methodology included reassessment of each asset’s replacement cost, condition and written down value. The valuation is at fair value based on current replacement cost less accumulated depreciation as at the date of valuation.

Council advises that certain cost components have not been included in the current replacement cost estimate for the asset classes within Infrastructure, as Council does not have data to reliably estimate these costs. This includes disruption costs and third-party assets related costs.

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

Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Date of valuation	Type of Valuation
Road surface	–	–	41,917	May-25	Revaluation
Road pavement	–	–	175,352	May-25	Revaluation
Kerbs	–	–	53,723	May-25	Revaluation
Bridges	–	–	20,201	Jun-23	Revaluation
Footpaths and cycleways	–	–	73,489	May-25	Revaluation
Drainage	–	–	212,062	May-25	Revaluation
Recreational, leisure & community facilities	–	–	22,500	June-23	Index
Parks, open space & streetscapes	–	–	44,731	June-23	Index
Other Infrastructure	–	–	28,779	June-23	Index
Total	–	–	672,754		

Description of significant unobservable inputs into level 3 valuations

Specialised land and land under roads is valued using a market based direct comparison technique. Significant unobservable inputs include the extent and impact of restriction of use and the market cost of land per square metre. The extent and impact of restrictions on use varies and results in a reduction to surrounding land values between 10% and 95%. The market value of land varies significantly depending on the location of the land and the current market conditions. Currently land values range between $4 and $6,500 per square metre.

Specialised buildings are valued using a current replacement cost technique. Significant unobservable inputs include the current replacement cost and remaining useful lives of buildings. Current replacement costs are calculated on a square metre basis and ranges from $350 to $15,000 per square metre. The remaining useful lives of buildings are determined on the basis of the current condition of buildings and vary from 5 years to 260 years. Replacement cost is sensitive to changes in market conditions, with any increase or decrease in cost flowing through to the valuation. Useful lives of buildings are sensitive to changes in expectations or requirements that could either shorten or extend the useful lives of buildings.

Infrastructure assets are valued based on the current replacement cost. Unobservable inputs are included in the current replacement cost and remaining useful lives. The remaining useful lives of infrastructure assets are determined on the basis of the current condition of the asset and vary from 10 year to 200 years. Replacement cost is sensitive to changes in market conditions, with any increase or decrease in cost flowing through to the valuation. Useful lives of infrastructure are sensitive to changes in use, expectations or requirements that could either shorten or extend the useful lives of infrastructure assets.

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Reconciliation of specialised land		
Land under roads	4,879	4,943
Parks and reserves	1,208,028	1,207,029
Total specialised land	1,212,907	1,211,972

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

Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

6.3 Investment property

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Balance at beginning of financial year	36,024	28,690
Additions	390	6,959
Fair value increment	818	375
Balance at end of financial year	37,232	36,024

Investment property is held to generate long-term rental yields. Investment property is measured initially at cost, including transaction costs. Costs incurred subsequent to initial acquisition are capitalised when it is probable that future economic benefit in excess of the originally assessed performance of the asset will flow to the Council. Subsequent to initial recognition at cost, investment property is carried at fair value, determined annually by independent valuers. Changes to fair value are recorded in the comprehensive income statement in the period that they arise.

Valuation of investment property

Valuation of investment properties has been determined in accordance with an independent valuation by Opteon Property Group who has recent experience in the location and category of the property being valued. The valuation is at fair value, based on the current market value for the property.

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

Note 7. People and relationships

7.1 Council and key management remuneration

(a) Related Parties

Parent entity
Merri-bek City Council is the parent entity.

Subsidiaries and Associates
Procurement Australasia Ltd

(b) Key Management Personnel

Key management personnel (KMP) are those people with the authority and responsibility for planning, directing and controlling the activities of Merri-bek City Council. The Councillors, Chief Executive Officer and Directors are deemed KMP.

Details of KMP at any time during the year are:

Councillors

Mayor Helen Davidson
Deputy Mayor Helen Politis
Councillor Adam Pulford (Mayor from 1/7/24 to 17/11/24)
Councillor Lambros Tapinos (Deputy Mayor from 1/7/24 to 17/11/24)
Councillor Mark Riley (from 1/7/24 to 17/11/24)
Councillor Annalivia Carli Hannan (from 1/7/24 to 17/11/24)
Councillor James Conlan (from 1/7/24 to 14/8/24)
Councillor Nat Abboud (from 20/11/24 to current)
Councillor Chris Miles (from 20/11/24 to current)
Councillor Ella Svensson (from 20/11/24 to current)
Councillor Jay Iwasaki (from 20/11/24 to current)
Councillor Katerine Theodosis (from 20/11/24 to current)
Councillor Liz Irvin (from 20/11/24 to current)
Councillor Oscar Yildiz
Councillor Sue Bolton
Councillor Helen Pavlidis (from 1/7/24 to 17/11/24)
Councillor Monica Harte (from 1/7/24 to 17/11/24)
Councillor Angelica Panopoulos (from 1/7/24 to 17/11/24)

Key Management Personnel

Chief Executive Officer Cathy Henderson
Director City Infrastructure Anita Curnow
Director Business Transformation Sue Vujcevic
Director Place and Environment Pene Winslade (from 05/08/24)
Acting Director Place and Environment Phillip Priest (from 01/07/24 to 01/08/24)
Director Community Eamonn Fennessy

	2025 No.	2024 No.
Total Number of Councillors	18	11
Total of Chief Executive Officer and other Key Management Personnel	6	5
Total Number of Key Management Personnel	24	16

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Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 7. People and relationships (continued)

(c) Remuneration of Key Management Personnel

Remuneration comprises employee benefits including all forms of consideration paid, payable or provided by Council, or on behalf of the Council, in exchange for services rendered. Remuneration of Key Management Personnel and Other senior staff is disclosed in the following categories.

Short-term employee benefits include amounts such as wages, salaries, annual leave or sick leave that are usually paid or payable on a regular basis, as well as non-monetary benefits such as allowances and free or subsidised goods or services.

Other long-term employee benefits include long service leave, other long service benefits or deferred compensation.

Post-employment benefits include pensions, and other retirement benefits paid or payable on a discrete basis when employment has ceased.

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Total remuneration of key management personnel was as follows:		
Short-term employee benefits	2,173	1,974
Other long-term employee benefits	40	13
Post-employment benefits	232	188
Total	2,445	2,175

	2025 No.	2024 No.
The numbers of key management personnel whose total remuneration from Council and any related entities, fall within the following bands:		
$1 - $9,999	1	–
$10,000 - $19,999	3	–
$20,000 - $29,999	9	–
$30,000 - $39,999	3	7
$40,000 - $49,999	–	1
$50,000 - $59,999	–	1
$70,000 - $79,999	1	1
$90,000 - $99,999	1	1
$270,000 - $279,999	–	1
$280,000 - $289,999	2	–
$290,000 - $299,999	1	2
$310,000 - $319,999	1	1
$330,000 - $339,999	1	–
$360,000 - $369,999	1	1
	24	16

continued on next page ...

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 30 June 2025

Note 7. People and relationships (continued)

(d) Remuneration of other senior staff

Other senior staff are officers of Council, other than Key Management Personnel, whose total remuneration exceeds $170,000 and who report directly to a member of the KMP.

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Total remuneration of other senior staff was as follows:		
Short-term employee benefits	3,466	3,070
Other long-term employee benefits	32	49
Post-employment benefits	378	331
Termination benefits	232	–
Total	4,108	3,450

	2025 No.	2024 No.
The number of other senior staff are shown below in their relevant income bands:		
Income Range:		
$170,000 - $179,999	2	–
$180,000 - $189,999	–	6
$190,000 - $199,999	1	5
$200,000 - $209,999	4	2
$210,000 - $219,999	4	2
$220,000 - $229,999	3	1
$230,000 - $239,999	2	–
$250,000 - $259,999	–	1
$280,000 - $289,999	1	–
$420,000 - $429,999	1	–
	18	17

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
Total remuneration for the reporting year for other senior staff included above, amounted to:	4,108	3,450

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

Note 7. People and relationships (continued)

7.2 Related party disclosure

(a) Transactions with related parties

During the year Council entered into related party transactions totalling $28,349. The nature of the transactions are related to subscriptions, seminars and memberships with Local Government Professionals Inc.

(b) Outstanding balances with related parties

There are no outstanding balances at the end of the reporting period in relation to transactions with related parties.

(c) Loans to/from related parties

The aggregate amount of loans in existence at balance date that have been made, guaranteed or secured by the council to a related party are nil as at 30 June 2025.

(d) Commitments to/from related parties

The aggregate amount of commitments in existence at balance date that have been made, guaranteed or secured by the council to a related party are are nil as at 30 June 2025.

Merri-bek City Council

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

Note 8. Managing uncertainties

8.1 Contingent assets and liabilities

(a) Contingent assets
Contingent assets and contingent liabilities are not recognised in the Balance Sheet, but are disclosed and if quantifiable, are measured at nominal value. Contingent assets and liabilities are presented inclusive of GST receivable or payable, respectively. As at 30 June 2025 there were no contingent assets identified by Council.

(b) Contingent liabilities

Contingent liabilities are:
- possible obligations that arise from past events, whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence or non-occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the Council; or
- present obligations that arise from past events but are not recognised because:
  - it is not probable that an outflow of resources embodying economic benefits will be required to settle the obligation; or
  - the amount of the obligation cannot be measured with sufficient reliability.

As at 30 June 2025, the following Contingent Liabilities have been identified by Council.

Superannuation
Council has obligations under a defined benefit superannuation scheme that may result in the need to make additional contributions to the scheme, matters relating to this potential obligation are outlined below. As a result of the volatility in financial markets the likelihood of making such contributions in future periods exists.

Insurance claims
Council is presently involved in several confidential insurance matters, which are being conducted through Council's insurer. As these matters are yet to be finalised, and the financial outcomes are unable to be reliably estimated, no allowance for these contingencies has been made in the financial report.

Legal matters
Council is presently involved in several confidential legal matters, which are being conducted through Council's solicitors. As these matters are yet to be finalised, and the financial outcomes are unable to be reliably estimated, no allowance for these contingencies has been made in the financial report.

8.2 Change in accounting standards

Certain new Australian Accounting Standards and interpretations have been published that are not mandatory for the 30 June 2025 reporting period. Council assesses the impact of these new standards. As at 30 June 2025 there were no new accounting standards or interpretations issued by the AASB which are applicable for the year ending 30 June 2025 that are expected to impact Council.

In September 2024 the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB) issued two Australian Sustainability Reporting Standards (ASRS). This followed Commonwealth legislation establishing Australia's sustainability reporting framework. Relevant entities will be required to undertake mandatory reporting of climate-related disclosures in future financial years. Public sector application issues remain under consideration and Council will continue to monitor developments and potential implications for future financial years.

8.3 Financial instruments

(a) Objectives and policies

The Council's principal financial instruments comprise cash assets, term deposits, receivables (excluding statutory receivables), payables (excluding statutory payables) and bank and TCV borrowings. Details of the material accounting policy information and methods adopted, including the criteria for recognition, the basis of measurement and the basis on which income and expenses are recognised, in respect of each class of financial asset, financial liability and equity instrument is disclosed in the notes of the financial statements. Risk management is carried out by senior management under policies approved by the Council. These policies include identification and analysis of the risk exposure to Council and appropriate procedures, controls and risk minimisation.

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(b) Market risk

Market risk is the risk that the fair value or future cash flows of Council financial instruments will fluctuate because of changes in market prices. The Council's exposure to market risk is primarily through interest rate risk with only insignificant exposure to other price risks and no exposure to foreign currency risk.

Interest rate risk

Interest rate risk refers to the risk that the value of a financial instrument or cash flows associated with the instrument will fluctuate due to changes in market interest rates. Council's interest rate liability risk arises primarily from long term loans and borrowings at fixed rates which exposes Council to fair value interest rate risk. Council does not hold any interest bearing financial instruments that are measured at fair value, and therefore has no exposure to fair value interest rate risk. Cash flow interest rate risk is the risk that the future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market interest rates. Council has minimal exposure to cash flow interest rate risk through its cash and deposits that are at floating rates.

Investment of surplus funds is made with approved financial institutions under the *Local Government Act 2020*.
Council manages interest rate risk by adopting an investment policy that ensures:

- diversification of investment product;
- monitoring of return on investment; and
- benchmarking of returns and comparison with budget.

There has been no significant change in the Council's exposure, or its objectives, policies and processes for managing interest rate risk or the methods used to measure this risk from the previous reporting period.

Interest rate movements have not been sufficiently significant during the year to have an impact on the Council's year end result.

(c) Credit risk

Credit risk is the risk that a contracting entity will not complete its obligations under a financial instrument and cause Council to make a financial loss. Council has exposure to credit risk on some financial assets included in the balance sheet. Particularly significant areas of credit risk exist in relation to outstanding fees and fines as well as loans and receivables from sporting clubs and associations. To help manage this risk:

- Council has a policy for establishing credit limits for the entities Council deals with;
- Council may require collateral where appropriate; and
- Council only invests surplus funds with financial institutions which have a recognised credit rating specified in Council's investment policy.

Receivables consist of a large number of customers, spread across the ratepayer, business and government sectors. Credit risk associated with the Council's financial assets is minimal because the main debtor is secured by a charge over the rateable property.

There are no material financial assets which are individually determined to be impaired.

Council may also be subject to credit risk for transactions which are not included in the balance sheet, such as when Council provides a guarantee for another party. Details of our contingent liabilities are disclosed in Note 8.1(b).

The maximum exposure to credit risk at the reporting date to recognised financial assets is the carrying amount, net of any allowance for impairment of those assets, as disclosed in the balance sheet and notes to the financial statements. Council does not hold any collateral.

(d) Liquidity risk

Liquidity risk includes the risk that, as a result of Council's operational liquidity requirements it will not have sufficient funds to settle a transaction when required or will be forced to sell a financial asset at below value or may be unable to settle or recover a financial asset.

To help reduce these risks Council:

- has a liquidity policy which targets a minimum and average level of cash and cash equivalents to be maintained;

continued on next page ...

- has readily accessible standby facilities and other funding arrangements in place;
- has a liquidity portfolio structure that requires surplus funds to be invested within various bands of liquid instruments;
- monitors budget to actual performance on a regular basis; and
- sets limits on borrowings relating to the percentage of loans to rate revenue and percentage of loan principal repayments to rate revenue.

The Council's maximum exposure to liquidity risk is the carrying amounts of financial liabilities as disclosed on the face of the balance sheet and the amounts related to financial guarantees disclosed in Note 8.1(c)., and is deemed insignificant based on prior periods' data and current assessment of risk.

There has been no significant change in Council's exposure, or its objectives, policies and processes for managing liquidity risk or the methods used to measure this risk from the previous reporting period.

With the exception of borrowings, all financial liabilities are expected to be settled within normal terms of trade. Details of the maturity profile for borrowings are disclosed at Note 5.3.

Unless otherwise stated, the carrying amounts of financial instruments reflect their fair value.

(e) Sensitivity disclosure analysis

Taking into account past performance, future expectations, economic forecasts, and management's knowledge and experience of the financial markets, Council believes the following movements are 'reasonably possible' over the next 12 months:

- A parallel shift of - 0.75% and + 0.75% in market interest rates (AUD) from year-end rates of 4.90%.

These movements will not have a material impact on the valuation of Council's financial assets and liabilities, nor will they have a material impact on the results of Council's operations.

8.4 Fair value measurement

Fair Value Hierarchy
Council's financial assets and liabilities are not valued in accordance with the fair value hierarchy, Council's financial assets and liabilities are measured at amortised cost.

Council measures certain assets and liabilities at fair value where required or permitted by Australian Accounting Standards. AASB 13 Fair value measurement, aims to improve consistency and reduce complexity by providing a definition of fair value and a single source of fair value measurement and disclosure requirements for use across Australian Accounting Standards.

Council has considered the amendments to AASB 13 Fair Value Measurement that apply for the 2024-25 financial year as a result of AASB 2022-10 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards - Fair Value Measurement of Non-Financial Assets of Not-for-Profit Public Sector Entities. For assets, where the Council adopts a current replacement cost approach to determine fair value, the Council now considers the inclusion of site preparation costs, disruption costs and costs to restore another entity's assets in the underlying valuation.

The AASB 13 amendments apply prospectively, comparative figures have not been restated.
The AASB 13 amendments have not resulted in any material impacts to Councils financial statements.

All assets and liabilities for which fair value is measured or disclosed in the financial statements are categorised within a fair value hierarchy, based on the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement as a whole are described as followed:

Level 1 — Quoted (unadjusted) market prices in active markets for identical assets or liabilities
Level 2 — Valuation techniques for which the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement is directly or indirectly observable; and
Level 3 — Valuation techniques for which the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement is unobservable.

For the purpose of fair value disclosures, Council has determined classes of assets and liabilities on the basis of the nature, characteristics and risks of the asset or liability and the level of the fair value hierarchy as explained above.

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

Note 8. Managing uncertainties (continued)

In addition, Council determines whether transfers have occurred between levels in the hierarchy by re-assessing categorisation (based on the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement as a whole) at the end of each reporting period.

Revaluation
Subsequent to the initial recognition of assets, non-current physical assets, other than plant and equipment, are measured at their fair value, being the price that would be received to sell an asset (or paid to transfer a liability) in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. For plant and equipment, the carrying amount is considered to approximate fair value given short useful lives. At balance date, the Council reviewed the carrying value of the individual classes of assets measured at fair value to ensure that each asset materially approximated its fair value. Where the carrying value materially differed from the fair value at balance date, the class of asset was revalued.

Fair value valuations are determined in accordance with a valuation hierarchy. Changes to the valuation hierarchy will only occur if an external change in the restrictions or limitations of the use of an asset results in changes to the permissible or practical highest and best use of the asset. In addition, Council undertakes a formal revaluation of land, buildings, and infrastructure assets on a regular basis ranging from 1 to 4 years. The valuation is performed either by experienced council officers or independent experts. The following table sets out the frequency of revaluations by asset class.

Asset Class	**Revaluation frequency**
Land	1 to 2 years
Buildings	1 to 2 years
Roads	1 to 4 years
Bridges	1 to 4 years
Footpaths and cycleways	1 to 4 years
Drainage	1 to 4 years
Recreational, leisure and community facilities	1 to 4 years
Waste management	1 to 4 years
Parks, open space and streetscape	1 to 4 years
Other infrastructure	1 to 4 years

Where the assets are revalued, the revaluation increases are credited directly to the asset revaluation reserve. In the case that an increase reverses a prior year decrease for that class of asset that had been recognised as an expense, the increase is recognised as revenue up to the amount of the expense. Revaluation decreases are recognised as an expense except where prior increases are included in the asset revaluation reserve for that class of asset. In that case, the decrease is taken to the reserve and the remaining increases. Within the same class of assets, revaluation increases and decreases within the year are offset.

Impairment of assets

At each reporting date, the Council reviews the carrying value of its assets to determine whether there is any indication that these assets have been impaired. If such an indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset, being the higher of the asset's fair value less costs of disposal and value in use, is compared to the assets carrying value. Any excess of the assets carrying value over its recoverable amount is expensed to the comprehensive income statement. If the asset is carried at the revalued amount, the impairment loss is recognised directly against the revaluation surplus in respect to the same class of asset if the impairment loss does not exceed the amount in the revaluation surplus for that same class of asset.

8.5 Events occurring after balance date

No matters have occurred after balance date that require disclosure in the financial report.

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

Note 9. Other matters

	Balance at beginning of reporting period $ '000	Increase (decrease) $ '000	Balance at end of reporting period $ '000
9.1 Reserves			
(a) Asset revaluation reserves			
2025			
Property			
Land and land improvements	1,219,217	(1,399)	1,217,818
Buildings	110,665	–	110,665
	1,329,882	(1,399)	1,328,483
Plant and equipment			
Artwork	469	–	469
	469	–	469
Infrastructure			
Bridges	13,505	–	13,505
Footpaths and cycleways	111,400	(57,116)	54,284
Drainage	144,557	19,416	163,973
Road surface	74,527	(31,466)	43,061
Road pavement	213,022	(83,454)	129,568
Kerb and channel	86,803	(40,730)	46,073
Other infrastructure	92,042	2	92,044
	735,856	(193,347)	542,509
Total asset revaluation reserves	2,066,207	(194,746)	1,871,461
2024			
Property			
Land and land improvements	1,234,554	(15,337)	1,219,217
Buildings	118,322	(7,657)	110,665
	1,352,876	(22,994)	1,329,882
Plant and equipment			
Artwork	468	1	469
	468	1	469
Infrastructure			
Bridges	13,435	70	13,505
Footpaths and cycleways	111,365	35	111,400
Drainage	144,426	131	144,557
Road surface	74,564	(37)	74,527
Road pavement	213,075	(53)	213,022
Kerb and channel	86,791	12	86,803
Other infrastructure	92,065	(23)	92,042
	735,721	135	735,856
Total asset revaluation reserves	2,089,065	(22,858)	2,066,207

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Note 9. Other matters (continued)

The asset revaluation reserve is used to record the increased (net) value of Council's assets over time.

	Balance at beginning of reporting period $ '000	Transfer from Accumulated Surplus $ '000	Transfer to Accumulated Surplus $ '000	Balance at end of reporting period $ '000
(b) Other reserves				
2025				
Waste Charge Reserve (restricted)	2,551	569	–	3,120
Public resort and recreation land fund (restricted)	20,308	8,322	(12,849)	15,781
Social & affordable housing reserve	496	210	–	706
Defined benefits superannuation reserve	13,500	–	–	13,500
Significant Projects reserve	9,833	14,196	(21,431)	2,598
Local Government Funding Vehicle reserve	6,579	2,208	–	8,787
Developer Contribution Plan reserve (restricted)	2,026	447	(929)	1,544
Carry Forward Reserve	21,276	20,664	(21,277)	20,663
Total Other reserves	76,569	46,616	(56,486)	66,699
2024				
Waste Charge Reserve (restricted)	3,504	–	(953)	2,551
Public resort and recreation land fund (restricted)	19,595	8,916	(8,203)	20,308
Social & affordable housing reserve	397	99	–	496
Defined benefits superannuation reserve	13,500	–	–	13,500
Significant Projects reserve	23,597	14,306	(28,070)	9,833
Local Government Funding Vehicle reserve	4,210	2,369	–	6,579
Developer Contribution Plan reserve (restricted)	2,392	982	(1,348)	2,026
Carry Forward Reserve	19,292	20,771	(18,787)	21,276
Total restricted reserves	86,487	47,443	(57,361)	76,569
Total Other reserves	86,487	47,443	(57,361)	76,569

The Waste Charge Reserve, factoring in under or over expenditure on the provision of kerbside waste services. The reserve is then used to offset the future waste charge calculation of service delivery, strategic projects, compliance, and long-term planning for Council’s waste management responsibilities.

The Public Resort and Recreation Land Fund holds the balance of open space contributions paid to Council by developers and is utilised to fund the development of new open space and recreation assets, as well as upgrade or expansion of existing assets.

The Social and Affordable Housing Strategic Reserve provides funds for the purchase of community housing projects along with other housing initiatives.

Merri-bek Defined Benefit Reserve provides funds for payments requested by Vision Super to meet our superannuation obligations under the defined benefit scheme.

The Significant Projects Reserve accumulates funds to assist with the development of major Council assets. Currently the reserve is utilised to fund the redevelopment of Fawkner Leisure Centre and the construction of the Saxon Street Community Hub.

The Local Government Funding Vehicle reserve accumulates funds to be used to reduce the LGFV bonds held by Council. LGFV is a group borrowing scheme with interest only repayments.

continued on next page ...

Note 9. Other matters (continued)

The Developers Contribution Plan Reserve (DCP) accumulates development contributions paid to Council in respect of developments within particular Plan areas and is used to contribute towards delivery of a ten-year Capital works program with each of the twelve DCP areas.

Carry Forward Reserve is used to set aside funding for incomplete operating or capital works projects carried forward from the current financial year to future financial years.

	2025 $ '000	2024 $ '000
9.2 Reconciliation of cash flows from operating activities to surplus/(deficit)		
Surplus for the year	30,420	25,761
Non-cash adjustments:		
Depreciation/amortisation	39,697	39,083
Loss on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	12,827	3,309
Fair value adjustments for investment property	(818)	(375)
Contributions - Non-monetary assets	(503)	(1,887)
Amounts disclosed in financing activities	924	715
Change in assets and liabilities:		
(Increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables	(191)	(5,599)
(Increase)/decrease in inventories	(31)	(411)
(Increase)/decrease in prepayments	(2,671)	(1,244)
(Increase)/decrease in contract assets	(4,596)	5,075
(Increase)/decrease in other assets	(8)	(347)
Increase/(decrease) in trade and other payables	925	3,850
Increase/(decrease) in provisions	(1,366)	1,390
Increase/(decrease) in trust funds	596	108
Net cash provided by operating activities	75,205	69,428

9.3 Parking fine refund scheme

During the financial year ended 30 June 2025, Merri-bek City Council identified an administrative oversight relating to the penalty amounts applied to certain parking infringements issued between 1 July 2013 and 11 June 2025. Under the Road Safety Act 1986, councils are required to formally resolve the applicable penalty rate for specific infringement categories, within a prescribed range of 0.2 to 0.5 penalty units.

Council has historically applied the maximum rate of 0.5 penalty units in line with sector practice. However, it was determined that a valid resolution authorising this rate had not been in place since the 2012–13 financial year. As a result, the higher penalty amount applied to 11 minor infringement categories was not formally authorised during the affected period.

Following a detailed review, Council identified that the financial impact of this oversight amounted to $2.75 million in parking infringement revenue that had been incorrectly recognised over the affected period. This error has been corrected by restating the relevant financial statement line items in accordance with AASB 108 Accounting Policies, Changes in Accounting Estimates and Errors.

Note 10. Changes in accounting policies

There have been no changes to accounting policies in the 2024-25 year.