



Merri-bek
City Council



News in your language

Notizie nella tua lingua, pagina 9

Ειδήσεις στη γλώσσα σας, σελίδα 9

Kendi dilinizde haberler 9.sayfa

الأخبار بلغتك، الصفحة 9

January/February 2026

Merri-bek Community News

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Young voices, big ideas: a new mural for Fawkner

From left to right: Moomba Park student Alaa Karroum, artist Emma Ismawi, student Miray Goz, Moomba Park Principal Andrew Drago, student Benjamin Araneda, Art/Italian teacher Cloe Milonopoulos, and student Saim Mehmood.

Merri-bek City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the traditional custodians of the lands and waterways in the area now known as Merri-bek, and pays respect to their Elders past, present, as well as to all First Nations communities, who significantly contribute to the life of the area.



Meet our new Mayor

Cr Nat Abboud

Merri-bek Councillor Natalie Abboud was elected Mayor last November, for the term running through to October this year. Learn a little bit more about her and what she has in store for the coming year.

What's the best thing about living in Merri-bek?

Where do you start when you talk about this fantastic city of ours! It could be the food or the magnificent nature or all the interesting people and their willingness to share their stories.

When you're not busy being the Mayor, what do you like to do in your free time?

I can usually be found in my garden, at the gym or the pool, walking along the creek with my blue dog, eating with the family maybe at Pentridge cinema or watching a live band. There's not much spare time if I'm honest, but I do love to be busy.

Tell us about your favourite spot in Merri-bek:

I love to be anywhere outside. At the wetlands or along one of our magnificent creeks. The work that has been done over the last few decades has made a terrific difference to the waterways we know and love.

What do you hope to achieve as Mayor this term?

I'm very keen to keep a good work-life balance. Supporting and representing the position of the councillor group is very important to me. I'm excited to hear from as many people as I can and get stuck into exploring further all the fabulous things that are happening in the city.

I've already been very moved by how much goes on. We always talk about our diversity, but it really is remarkable. There are so many people doing so many different things out there.

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Accessible to everyone

We are committed to ensuring our communications are accessible to everyone in our community. If you require this magazine in an alternative format, please contact us on **9240 1111** or at **communications@merri-bek.vic.gov.au**

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January 2026

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Speak with us in your language



Per maggiori informazioni nella tua lingua, chiama il numero **9280 1911**

如需了解更多您语言版本的信息，请致电 **9280 0750**

Για να μάθετε περισσότερα στη γλώσσα σας, καλέστε το **9280 1912**

Para saber más en tu idioma llama al **9280 1916**

لمعرفة المزيد بلغتك، اتصل
بالرقم **9280 1913**

Để tìm hiểu thêm bằng ngôn ngữ của bạn, hãy gọi **9280 1915**

اپنی زبان میں مزید جاننے کے لیے
پر کال کریں۔ **9280 1917**

अपनी भाषा में अधिक जानने के लिए,
9280 1918 पर कॉल करें

तपाईंको भाषामा थप जान्नुको लागि,
9280 1910 मा कल गर्नुहोस्

To speak with us in a language not listed here, please call **9280 1919**

Kendi dilinizde daha fazla bilgi edinmek için **9280 1914**'ü arayın

For more information visit [merri-bek.vic.gov.au/your-language](https://www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/your-language)



Artist Emma Ismawi with Moomba Park students Alaa Karroum and Miray Goz.

Young voices, big ideas: a new mural for Fawkner

You may have already seen the colourful new mural at the Fawkner Maternal and Child Health Centre, titled *A World That Grows With Us*.

The artwork was created by artist Emma Ismawi in partnership with Moomba Park Primary School students from grades 5 and 6, as well as parents from the centre.

The mural's title – *A World That Grows With Us* – was inspired by a conversation with a new parent at the centre, discussing her hopes for her 4-month-old daughter.

The bright artwork celebrates the local plants and animals that keep our ecosystem thriving. It includes student drawings of the Growling Grass Frog life cycle, recognising the important conservation project at Moomba Park Wetlands.

Local parents also spent time in nature creating sustainable prints of native plants. Prints and

patterns from this activity feature in the community mural.

“Ideas and drawings from the students about what we can do to help nature have been incorporated into the scene,” artist Emma says, **“demonstrating a world informed by young minds and Indigenous knowledges, where we care for, nurture and protect a world that grows with us.”**

Moomba Park student Miray says the art workshops associated with the mural made her want to make more artwork.

“I really liked working on all the ideas,” Miray adds, when asked about the mural design process.

“I don’t usually do much drawing but when the artist came, I really loved it. I felt a lot more confident, and kind of even inspired!”

The mural is part of Council’s Sustainable Communities Fawkner pilot Community Outreach project, a local initiative focused on environmental sustainability and community well-being.

The project is engaging residents in shaping Council programs, aiming to build a greener, healthier Fawkner through creating community connection and supporting local voices.

Visit the mural, located near the services on offer at the recently renovated Fawkner Leisure Centre.

To learn more visit:

➔ merri-bek.vic.gov.au/fawknermural

Subscribe to our e-newsletter, My Merri-bek

Be the first to hear about projects, events and initiatives happening in your local area.

Visit merri-bek.vic.gov.au/e-newsletter





Helping local businesses thrive

Merri-bek businesses are invited to join our free 11-part series of 1.5 hour workshops. This program runs across both Darebin and Merri-bek City Council areas until June 2026 and offers practical, expert-led workshops to help you strengthen your business skills.



To learn more, visit:
events.humanitix.com/host/business-merri-bek
follow us on Facebook @businessmerribek or
Instagram @business_merri_bek or contact us
on 8311 4131.

2026 Darebin x Merri-bek Business Skills Workshops

13 February

Stay Safe, Stay Smart:
Technology and Cybersecurity

18 February

Be the Answer: How to
Optimise for Search and AI

13 March

Building Community,
while Building your Business

18 March

Your 5-Step Roadmap to
a Successful 2026

10 April

Protect your Business:
Avoid Legal Pitfalls

22 April

Show me the money!

1 May

Understanding Mental
Health at Work

15 May

Building Digital Presence
and Audience Growth

20 May

Pricing for your Products
and Services Profit

12 June

Paying People Right:
Building Better Payroll

18 June

Environmental Sustainability
for Businesses

Merri-bek looks ahead

We have set a clear direction for the years ahead, with our new Community Vision, Council Plan, and our first Action Plan for this Council term now in place. These documents reflect the voices of our community and will guide how we work together to shape Merri-bek's future.

Thank you to everyone who helped us develop these plans and provided ideas and feedback. We now look forward to putting these plans into action. Read more about our plans and what we hope to achieve at

➔ merri-bek.vic.gov.au/my-council



Protecting our parks and sports ovals

We're asking the community to help us protect local parks and sports grounds after a recent increase in cars and motor bikes being driven onto the areas. Even one vehicle can cause serious damage and create safety risks for everyone who uses these shared spaces.

Why it matters?

Sports ovals and parkland are carefully maintained so they can be safely enjoyed by players, families, walkers, children and pets. A single vehicle can undo months of turf recovery work.

What happens if vehicles are caught on ovals?

Driving or parking on sports ovals and turf areas may result in enforcement action, including fines, vehicle infringement notices, and recovery of repair costs where damage has occurred.

What to do if you see it happening?

If you see a vehicle driving or parked on an oval or turf area, please do not approach the driver. Instead, if it is safe to do so, take note of:

- The location
- The time
- A description of the vehicle and its registration

How to report it?

Reports can be made to Council via Customer Service by phone or email info@merri-bek.vic.gov.au. If the situation is urgent or causing immediate damage, use the after-hours contact: **9240 1111**. If there is an immediate risk to public safety, contact emergency services on **000**.

Early reporting helps Council respond quickly and prevent further damage.

What is Council doing?

We're installing bollards and gates at some locations and continuing to work alongside local businesses, residents and sports clubs.

A shared responsibility

Our parks and ovals are shared spaces that support sport, play, wellbeing and community connection.



Dumping rubbish is illegal – fines apply



Keeping Merri-bek clean is a shared responsibility. Dumping rubbish is illegal and can result in fines of up to \$9,000.

If you see rubbish being dumped, you can report it to Council by calling **9240 1111** or by visiting merri-bek.vic.gov.au/clean-streets. Your report helps protect our streets, parks and waterways.

Please remember that leaving rubbish on your nature strip without a booked hard waste collection is also considered illegal dumping.

While repairing, repurposing or recycling items should always be the first option, Merri-bek's hard waste collection service provides an easy solution for disposing of large, unwanted household items responsibly.

Booking is simple. Just book online at merri-bek.vic.gov.au/hard-waste-2026 or call our friendly team on **9240 1111** to arrange your hard waste collection.

Let's all do our part to keep Merri-bek clean, safe and welcoming for everyone.

Your 2026 Waste collection calendar



Scan the QR code and enter a property address to find the general rubbish, mixed recycling, food and garden organics and glass recycling bin collection days.

If you need help viewing your online calendar, please call our friendly Customer Service team on **9240 1111** or visit merri-bek.vic.gov.au/waste-cal





Disability advocate Briar Harte.

The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower – growing understanding

All Merri-bek libraries, leisure and aquatic centres and Customer Service Centres are proudly participating in the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program.

Council is committed to building a community where everyone feels seen, supported, and respected and where our services and spaces are inclusive for everyone.

The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower is a discreet way to let other people know that you have a hidden disability and may need some extra support, help or a little more time.

Supporters, or people without hidden disabilities, can also show advocacy by collecting a free Sunflower supporter product from these locations.

You can request your free Sunflower lanyard, pin or wristband from council locations displaying the Sunflower sticker at the entrance.

Staff at these locations have completed training to recognise the symbol and can offer appropriate support.

Briar Harte is a well-known disability advocate from Merri-bek. She has served on the Merri-bek Disability Advocacy panel for years and has lived experience of disability.

“I want to help shift the idea that having a disability is a tragedy,” Briar says. “It’s a common human experience.”

“Everyone knows someone who is disabled.” Briar continues. “It’s our colleagues, our kids’ teacher, maybe the person who served you coffee this morning.”

Briar mentions feeling encouraged by a staff member behind the counter at Fawcner Leisure Centre, also wearing a Sunflower lanyard.

“You don’t necessarily have to share the details of your disability, but you immediately feel part of this big unrecognised community. And it’s taking off – really taking off – worldwide.”

Keeping cool and safe in the heat

With heatwaves becoming a regular feature of the Victorian summer, it’s important to look after yourself and others when extreme heat hits. There are simple things you can do to stay safe in the heat:

- Drink plenty of water (always take a reusable bottle with you).
- Hot cars kill - never leave kids, adults or pets in hot cars. The temperature inside a parked car can double within minutes.
- Keep cool - seek out air-conditioned buildings, draw your blinds, use a fan, take cool showers and dress in light and loose clothing made from natural fabrics.
- Help others - look out for older people, younger people, and those with medical conditions.
- Don’t forget your pets and leave shallow dishes of water out for wildlife.

If you or anyone you know feels unwell on a hot day call NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24 or call 000 in an emergency.

For more information visit
 ➔ merri-bek.vic.gov.au/heatwave



Council offers a place to stay out of the heat and a cool drink of water at Brunswick Library, Coburg Library, Glenroy Library, Brunswick Customer Service Centre and the Merri-bek Civic Centre in Coburg, during opening hours.

Learn more at ➔ merri-bek.vic.gov.au/sunflower2026



Woody Meadows Program: from forgotten to flourishing

We've been working with the University of Melbourne to turn some of our city's forgotten landscapes – such as roadsides, roundabouts, and railway areas – into vibrant, green spaces that help wildlife, keep our cities cooler and to improve the appearance of Merri-bek for everyone.

These new native gardens are full of plants that flower at different times, giving food and shelter to native birds and pollinators all year round. They are also low-cost, resilient to climate change and easy to maintain.

As part of the Merri-bek Nature Plan, our teams are planting what Melbourne Uni has named “Woody Meadows” across Merri-bek.

John Castelow, Merri-bek Council Crew Leader – City Infrastructure, says the project has been a really positive experience:

“Working on the Woody Meadows project has been a fantastic experience. Very rewarding. These new gardens require very little maintenance and offer great havens for local birds and insect life.”

Melbourne Uni has created the Woody Meadows guide – a mix of shrubs that are hardy, colourful, and great for the environment. Woody Meadows are pruned every two to three years to encourage flowers, create dense plant cover, and stop weeds from growing.

Our work with the University also helps us learn more about Australian plants and how to make green spaces in our city stronger and healthier.

Together, we're building a city that's greener, more colourful, and better for wildlife.

Create your own Woody Meadow at home

Thanks to this project, the University of Melbourne has made free Woody Meadows Guidelines for anyone who wants to grow one at home. Learn how to pick plants, prepare your garden, and care for your Woody Meadow.

You can download the Woody Meadows Guidelines from the University of Melbourne website and help make Merri-bek greener, one garden at a time.

Visit → woodymeadow.unimelb.edu.au

Want to learn more about Council's new native planting sites? Visit:

→ merri-bek.vic.gov.au/native-plants

Join the conversation about Merri-bek's future



Conversations Merri-bek is our online community where you can join the conversation about important matters shaping our city.

We welcome your ideas and feedback. Join today at → conversations.merri-bek.vic.gov.au





Gloria uses the friendly Community Transport Service to travel up to the West Street shops.

Community Transport Service helps older residents get out and about

Did you know that Council offers an affordable and safe transport service for eligible residents?

Our Community Transport Service can help you stay active and connected to the community if you have difficulty getting around.

Whether it be going to the shops, a healthcare appointment, visiting social support groups and leisure centres, or attending your Senior's Club, one of our friendly drivers can pick you up from home, take you where you need to go, and bring you back home afterward.

“If Merri-bek didn't have this transport to come up to West Street and do our shopping, I'd never get out because I can't drive. I'm very grateful for the bus.”

— Gloria Fletcher, Community Transport Service user

All our community buses are accessible for people who use walking frames or wheelchairs.

Council delivers this and other aged care services to our older residents thanks to Federal Government funding of the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP).

The Federal Government has committed to extending the CHSP to at least July 2027, however, the longer-term future of this program is uncertain. We call on the Government to recognise the program's important role in caring for older community members and to commit to continuing funding the CHSP permanently.

For more information about our services, visit merri-bek.vic.gov.au/olderpeople or call My Aged Care for a referral at **1800 200 422**. If you are aged under 65, you can talk to our intake team on **9240 2338** to see if you're eligible to access this service.



Italian | Italiano

Servizio di Trasporto Comunitario

Il Consiglio Comunale di Merri-bek offre un servizio di trasporti semplice e conveniente per i residenti aventi diritto.

Il nostro servizio di trasporti può portarti agli appuntamenti, a fare la spesa, alle attività sociali o in altri luoghi dove devi andare.

Questo servizio è rivolto alle persone anziane e alle persone con disabilità che non sono in grado di guidare e hanno difficoltà a usare i mezzi pubblici.

Per saperne di più, visita il nostro sito:

➔ merri-bek.vic.gov.au/transport-your-language

Per parlare di questo servizio con un membro del personale chiama il numero **9240 2302**.

Puoi anche chiamare il numero **9280 1911** per parlare di questo servizio con qualcuno nella tua lingua.

Greek | ελληνικά

Κοινοτική Υπηρεσία Μεταφοράς

Ο Δήμος Merri-bek προσφέρει εύκολη και οικονομική μεταφορά για κατοίκους που πληρούν τα κριτήρια.

Η υπηρεσία μεταφοράς μπορεί να σας μεταφέρει σε ραντεβού, για ψώνια, σε κοινωνικές δραστηριότητες ή σε οποιονδήποτε άλλον προορισμό χρειάζεστε.

Η υπηρεσία αυτή παρέχεται σε ηλικιωμένους και άτομα με αναπηρία που δεν μπορούν να οδηγήσουν και δυσκολεύονται να χρησιμοποιήσουν τις δημόσιες συγκοινωνίες.

Για να μάθετε περισσότερα σχετικά με αυτή την υπηρεσία, επισκεφθείτε την ιστοσελίδα μας:

➔ merri-bek.vic.gov.au/transport-your-language

Για να μιλήσετε με ένα μέλος του προσωπικού σχετικά με αυτήν την υπηρεσία, καλέστε στο **9240 2302**.

Μπορείτε επίσης να καλέσετε στο **9280 1912** για να μιλήσετε με κάποιον στη δική σας γλώσσα σχετικά με την υπηρεσία.

Arabic | عربي

خدمة النقل المجتمعي

يقدم مجلس بلدية مدينة Merri-bek وسائل نقل سهلة وبأسعار معقولة للمقيمين المؤهلين.

يمكن لخدمة النقل لدينا أن تأخذك إلى المواعيد أو التسوق أو الأنشطة الاجتماعية أو الأماكن الأخرى التي تحتاج إليها.

هذه الخدمة مخصصة لكبار السن والأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة غير القادرين على القيادة ويواجهون صعوبة في استخدام وسائل النقل العام.

لمعرفة المزيد عن هذه الخدمة، يرجى زيارة موقعنا الإلكتروني:

➔ merri-bek.vic.gov.au/transport-your-language

للتحدث إلى أحد أعضاء الفريق حول هذه الخدمة، يرجى الاتصال على الرقم **9240 2302**.

يمكنك أيضًا الاتصال بالرقم

للتحدث إلى شخص ما حول هذه الخدمة بلغتك **9280 1913**.

Turkish | Türkçe

Toplu Taşıma Hizmeti

Merri-bek Belediyesi uygun sakinler için kolay ve uygun fiyatlı ulaşım imkanı sunmaktadır.

Ulaşım hizmetimizi randevulara, alışverişe, sosyal faaliyetlere veya diğer yerlere gitmek için kullanabilirsiniz.

Bu hizmet, araç kullanamayan ve toplu taşıma araçlarını kullanmakta zorluk çeken yaşlılar ve engelli kişiler içindir.

Bu hizmet hakkında daha fazla bilgi edinmek için, lütfen ➔ merri-bek.vic.gov.au/transport-your-language adresindeki internet sitemizi ziyaret edin.

Bu hizmet hakkında bir görevli ile konuşmak için lütfen **9240 2302** numaralı telefonu arayın.

Bu hizmet hakkında birisiyle kendi dilinizde konuşmak için **9280 1914** numaralı telefonu da arayabilirsiniz.



Twange, Albie and Elena, from community-focused group Colour them Safe.

Community Grants Program

Our Community Grants Program works in partnership with local groups and individuals to create a sustainable, healthy, inclusive and empowered community.

The next round of funding is currently open, giving financial support to projects that benefit our Merri-bek residents.

Non-profit organisation Colour them Safe was the recipient of a 2025 Organisational Establishment Grant. The community-focused group runs workshops – both online and in-person – using art to improve the lives of diverse young people with mental health challenges.

Albie, the founder of Colour them Safe, says Merri-bek Council funding has not only kept the lights on, but allowed the volunteer-run organisation to thrive:

“A Community Grant allowed us to get our own home, or hub really. Council was really helpful locating a space so that we could nurture more community activation.

“We needed a space that was accessible to all, and very inclusive – two things very important to us.”

On offering advice for others thinking about applying for a community grant, Albie says picking up the phone is a great first step.

“My biggest advice is to just get in contact with Council. One of the most important things for us, was simply just knowing which grants we’re most eligible for, especially before sitting down at the computer to start an application. You might be eligible for all kinds of grants you didn’t know about!

“Also, going to any info sessions – that’s really helpful. Council staff have been so friendly and encouraging.”

To find out more about our grant streams, including conditions, and how to apply for a Community Grant, visit

➔ merri-bek.vic.gov.au/community-grants

Save the date



Brunswick Music Festival 2026

1 March – 8 March

Mark your calendar for Melbourne’s longest-running and most cherished inner-city music festival.



Sydney Road Street Party 2026

1 March, 12pm – 6pm

Save the date to enjoy Merri-bek’s iconic day-long celebration of music, performance and sunshine on Sydney Road, kicking off Brunswick Music Festival.



Urdu Storytime

Join in the fun at Urdu storytime. Enjoy stories and songs in Urdu and a craft activity. Everyone welcome, no bookings required.

👉 **Third Monday of every month, 10:30am**

Fawkner Library
77 Jukes Road, Fawkner
9355 4200 | libraryevents@merri-bek.vic.gov.au



Counihan Gallery 2026

Visit Coburg's Counihan Gallery this year for a range of free, thought-provoking contemporary art exhibitions and events.

👉 **Counihan Gallery**
233 Sydney Road, Brunswick
9389 8622 | CounihanGallery@merri-bek.vic.gov.au



Libraries After Dark

Enjoy special events during extended opening hours. Regular programs include weekly English Conversation Cafe, monthly puzzle swaps, book groups, film screenings and more.

👉 **Thursdays 7pm – 10pm**
Glenroy Library
50 Wheatsheaf Road, Glenroy
8311 4100 | libraryevents@merri-bek.vic.gov.au



Glenroy Crafting Group

Come along and share your love of crafting, pick up new ideas, inspiration and tips. Bring your current project and work on it while enjoying a warm drink and friendly chat.

No registrations required.

👉 **Fridays, 9:30am**

Glenroy Library
50 Wheatsheaf Road, Glenroy
8311 4100 | libraryevents@merri-bek.vic.gov.au



Chatty Café

Chatty Cafe brings the community together for friendly conversation, English practice and social connection. Come along to the library to have a chat over a cuppa and make a friend or two. Refreshments provided, no bookings required.

👉 **Mondays, 2pm – 3:30pm**

Fawkner Library
77 Jukes Road, Fawkner
9355 4200 | libraryevents@merri-bek.vic.gov.au



Walking Group

Meet new people and improve your fitness while you explore Brunswick on foot – finish up at a local café, so bring some money for coffee.

Costs: \$2 per session

👉 **Wednesdays 9:30am – 11:30am**

Brunswick Neighbourhood House, meet at 18 Garden Street, Brunswick
9386 9418 | info@bnch.vic.edu.au

Works in your area



Mitchell Parade Retaining Wall

A new retaining wall is being built on Mitchell Parade, Pascoe Vale South. Original bluestone is being replaced with concrete to improve community safety, increase native vegetation and biodiversity and to improve the visual quality of the street. There will be road closures until works are completed around April / May 2026.



HM Dowd Reserve Playground, Pascoe Vale

We heard your ideas last year and we've now completed upgrades to the park and playground. New equipment has been installed, including a carousel, rockers, steppers and nature play elements and more. New trees have been planted and we've added a new sheltered picnic area, a double swing set and a drinking fountain.



A new park on York Street, Pascoe Vale South

We heard from over 300 community members to help shape the design of the new park, part of our Park Close to Home initiative. The park is set to be completed soon and features accessible play equipment, including a pendulum basket swing, carousel and water play elements. A large grassed area, barbeques and much more.



Gervase Reserve Playground, Glenroy

Gervase Reserve is now open to enjoy. We've added a new half-basketball court along with new access paths through the reserve. You can enjoy additional shade trees and a shade sail, garden beds, new picnic tables and more. There's also a new accessible drinking fountain and play equipment, including a flying fox and musical play.

Your local Councillors



Bababi Djinanang Ward
Cr Sue Bolton
0417 583 664
SBolton@merri-bek.vic.gov.au



Box Forest Ward
Cr Chris Miles
0439 685 801
CMiles@merri-bek.vic.gov.au



Brunswick West Ward
Cr Ella Svensson
0467 498 665
ESvensson@merri-bek.vic.gov.au



Bulleke-bek Ward
Deputy Mayor Cr Jay Iwasaki
0429 431 760
JIwasaki@merri-bek.vic.gov.au



Djirri-Djirri Ward
Cr Helen Davidson
0403 709 948
HDavidson@merri-bek.vic.gov.au



Harmony Park Ward
Cr Helen Politis
0456 357 280
HPolitis@merri-bek.vic.gov.au



Pascoe Vale South Ward
Cr Oscar Yildiz
0413 850 357
OYildiz@merri-bek.vic.gov.au



Pentridge Ward
Mayor Cr Nat Abboud
0487 258 044
NAbboud@merri-bek.vic.gov.au



Randazzo Ward
Cr Liz Irvin
0472 846 861
LIrvin@merri-bek.vic.gov.au



Warrk-warrk Ward
Cr Adam Pulford
0417 835 793
APulford@merri-bek.vic.gov.au



Westbreen Ward
Cr Katherine Theodosis
0459 959 298
KTheodosis@merri-bek.vic.gov.au