



**Merri-bek**  
City Council

# Merri-bek Community News

December 2024



(Left to right)

Cr Sue Bolton, Cr Nat Abboud, Mayor Helen Davidson, Cr Liz Irvin, Cr Oscar Yildiz, Cr Katherine Theodosis,  
Cr Jay Iwasaki, Cr Ella Svensson, Cr Chris Miles, Deputy Mayor Helen Politis and Cr Adam Pulford

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## Meet the new Mayor

**Mayor Helen Davidson**

To our wonderful residents,

I am deeply honoured to have been elected as the new Mayor of Merri-bek, a city defined by its diverse, engaged, and caring community. I am proud to lead Council over the next 12 months, alongside my dedicated fellow Councillors. Together, we look forward to serving you with integrity, keeping your best interests at the heart of everything we do.

Over the past year, Council has made significant progress. We've delivered on major developments, including the \$36 million Fawkner Leisure Centre, the \$29 million cultural and community hub in Brunswick – which will open over summer – and the new A Park Close to Home, Yubup Park, at 14 Frith Street. We've also continued providing over 150 services to our community, including maternal and child health, libraries, and in-home aged care. We've supported the construction of better-quality developments and taken local action on climate change by reducing emissions, supporting households to transition to renewable energy, and rolling out our purple glass bin to boost recycling.

As we enter Year 4 of our Council Plan, we remain focused on building a more sustainable, inclusive, and vibrant Merri-bek. We're committed to creating an environmentally proactive city, investing in sustainable transport options, and expanding open spaces. We will continue to advocate for better public transport and improve our networks to ensure safer, more equitable access across Merri-bek. We also remain dedicated to supporting our community's health and wellbeing, fostering inclusion for older people, those with disabilities, and the LGBTIQ+ community. We will continue supporting moves towards a Treaty with First Peoples and backing community calls for the Ballerit Mooroop site in Glenroy to be returned to Traditional Custodians.

Our efforts to create vibrant public spaces will see the renewal of shopping strips, support for local festivals including the Glenroy Festival and Brunswick Music Festival, and the completion of the cultural and community hub in Brunswick. At the same time, we continue to work toward reducing our carbon footprint and achieving zero carbon emissions by 2040.

I am excited to embark on this journey with my fellow Councillors, Council staff, and the community. Thank you and here's to a great 2025!

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.

## Congratulations, Merri-bek Community Award winners!



On September 16, an excited crowd gathered at Coburg Town Hall to celebrate the 2024 Merri-bek Community Awards.

Every year we call on Merri-bek residents to nominate peers who have enriched our community through outstanding service. The nominees could be anyone who lives, works, studies, plays, or volunteers in Merri-bek. This year, we received a massive 132 nominations across 10 award categories.

The awards recognised the people behind the Coburg Community Garden Festival and an inclusive swimming and exercise event, an Olympian, a local community radio station and more. The event was a chance to shine the light on Merri-bek's changemakers, doers and volunteers who make up the heart of our city.

Award	Winners
Community Event of the Year	Coburg Community Garden Festival
High Commendation	Inclusive gym and swim night - YMCA Victoria
Collaborative Partnerships	Michael Carney
High Commendation	West Brunswick Clinic
Youth Contribution	Ezel Cagin
High Commendation	Hajrah Sajid
Contribution to Arts and Culture	Kimba Thompson
High Commendation	Rangmanchkaree Theatre Group
Lisa Bellear Award for Contribution to Reconciliation Activities	Mark Rose
Contribution to Sport	Rhydian Cowley
Volunteer of the Year	Leo Ioannou and Sally Kerin
Environmental Sustainability	Ian Duxbury
High Commendation	Vincenzo Fittipaldi
Honouring Women in Merri-bek	Cheryl Congram
High Commendation	Athena Babo
Access and Inclusion	3ZZZ
Merri-bek Community Police Leadership Award	Senior Sergeant Robert Henderson

## Small change, big impact

Pat yourself on the back, Merri-bek. In the first year of our 4-bin service, we've saved an extra 2,151 tonnes of household waste from landfill. That's the weight of 531 elephants that's been turned into compost or recycled into new products! It takes us one step closer to our goal of zero waste by 2030.

Since starting the service in July 2023, we've collected 2,462 tonnes of your glass bottles and jars to recycle right here in Victoria. We've seen an increase in food waste being turned into compost, instead of going to landfill. Twenty percent of the food and garden organics bin is now food waste, up from 5% in 2021.

Our 4-bin service introduced the new glass recycling bin, food and garden organics bins (which are collected weekly for all households) and the yellow mixed recycling bins (which are collected fortnightly). These changes are part of the Victorian Government's plan to standardise household recycling across the state and divert waste from landfill.



Find out more at ➔  
[merri-bek.vic.gov.au/less-waste-to-landfill](https://merri-bek.vic.gov.au/less-waste-to-landfill)

# Meet your new Council

## Your new Councillors

In October, our community elected 11 Councillors to represent them.

Together these Councillors make decisions in the interests of the whole municipality.

Here are your Councillors for the next 4 years.



**DJIRRI-DJIRRI  
WARD**

### Mayor Helen Davidson

0403 709 948

HDavidson@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

I am a lifelong Glenroy resident and independent Councillor, committed to acting with integrity and being a strong voice for Merri-bek. My priorities include revitalising local shopping strips, supporting small businesses, improving infrastructure, enhancing aged and children's services, and upgrading sporting facilities, all aimed at strengthening and connecting our community.



**HARMONY  
PARK  
WARD**

### Deputy Mayor Helen Politis

0456 357 280

HPolitis@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

I'm a lifelong Merri-bek local. I went to school locally as did my children. Growing up my family lived, played and worked locally. I wish to see this for my children and future generations. I'm passionate about economic development, our local sporting clubs and providing fantastic services for our community.



**BULLEKE-BEK  
WARD**

### Cr Jay Iwasaki

0429 431 760

JIwasaki@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Hi, I'm Dr Jay Iwasaki. I'm an ecologist, bee scientist, and representative for Bulleke-bek ward. I live in Brunswick and want to see Merri-bek City held up as an example for sustainability. Please feel free to get in touch! I aim to be an accessible representative for our community.



**PASCOE  
VALE SOUTH  
WARD**

### Cr Oscar Yildiz

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Oyildiz@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

I am a proud Pascoe Vale South resident and have been a Councillor since 2008 including as Mayor and Deputy Mayor. I have an open-door policy and will continue to work tirelessly for the Merri-bek community. I bring to this role integrity, knowledge, experience, responsiveness and passion.



**PENTRIDGE  
WARD**

### Cr Nat Abboud

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NAbboud@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

I am thrilled to have the opportunity to represent my community as a Councillor again. I look forward to understanding the different voices in the Pentridge Ward and to working with the Council group to deliver the best we can manage for our Merri-bek community.





**BABABI  
DJINANANG  
WARD**

**Cr Sue Bolton**

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I am active in the community around a wide range of local issues from getting new playgrounds and a new dog park to getting better access for people with disabilities. I also want to see more action from Council on climate change and the housing and cost of living crisis.



**BOX FOREST  
WARD**

**Cr Chris Miles**

0439 685 801

CMiles@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

I am a tradesman painter who proudly calls Glenroy home. As someone with a learning disability, I'm dedicated to empowering the community and advocating for better services and support for people with disability and mental health challenges. I am committed to give back to the community that has supported me.



**BRUNSWICK  
WEST WARD**

**Cr Ella Svensson**

0467 498 665

ESvensson@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Hi, I'm Ella Svensson. I'm a psychologist, family therapist, and Brunswick West local. I live with my fiancée Sarah, three cats, and a cantankerous rabbit. My vision for Merri-bek is a more connected community, one with affordable housing and spaces for everyone to thrive. I can't wait to get started.



**RANDAZZO  
WARD**

**Cr Liz Irvin**

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Llrvine@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

I live in Brunswick East and work as a transport planner. I enjoy engaging with the community about how transport can meet their needs and improve their lives. This Council term, I am excited about building more parks, making our streets safer for walking and riding, and planting more trees.



**WARRK-WARRK  
WARD**

**Cr Adam Pulford**

0417 835 793

APulford@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

I love living in Merri-bek. My husband Niccolò and I are renters in Brunswick East. I was first elected in 2020 and served as Mayor this past year. I'm passionate about good quality and affordable housing, making our streets safer for walking and riding, climate action and creating more parks.



**WESTBREEN  
WARD**

**Cr Katherine Theodosia**

0459 959 298

KTheodosia@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

I'm a lifelong local. I grew up in Pascoe Vale, attended local schools and now live in Hadfield. With my background in public policy, I will advocate for high-quality services, support for community organisations, clubs and small businesses and upgrading local parks and pools. I want our community to thrive.



## Your ideas, your budget

Did you know there's a special section of our annual budget process reserved for you to suggest what you'd like to see in Merri-bek? It's called Community Budget Ideas. Now in its fourth consecutive year, the program has delivered a variety of community assets including sunshades over playgrounds, public seating, drinking fountains, half-court basketball rings and water refill stations.

We want to fund your ideas for projects that demonstrate a strong community benefit through our 2025-26 Council budget process. A proposed total of \$250,000 is available (subject to Council budget adoption).

Council encourages all Merri-bek residents, community groups and organisations to contribute their ideas. Ideas that meet funding criteria will be opened to community voting in February, and then considered by Council for decision as part of the budget process.

Submissions close **Tuesday 21 January 2025**.

Find out more and submit your idea online at  
[conversations.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/cbi-25-26](https://conversations.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/cbi-25-26)



## Come on in!

Did you know there are more than 70 social groups for people aged over 55 in Merri-bek? These groups provide an opportunity to stay connected through activities and socialising as we age.

Lucy Garro (pictured left) and Grace Fazzorali (pictured right) are volunteers from the Health Centre Italian Group in Brunswick East, who love the connection to community that their club facilitates. *"I love helping people and being part of something,"* said club president, Grace. *"(Health Centre Italian Group) gets people out of the house and makes sure they're not isolated."*

The group meets weekly, to provide community connection and conversation over home-style Italian cooking.

These clubs need ongoing volunteer assistance to keep operating. *"People can volunteer at any age! Even if it's just a couple hours in the kitchen, just to help us out,"* said club secretary, Lucy.

For more information contact Carmel Misuraca on  
 ☎9240 2302 or ✉[homecare@merri-bek.vic.gov.au](mailto:homecare@merri-bek.vic.gov.au)

## Join the conversation

In February, we'll be kickstarting community engagement for 2025 and we want your help shaping a range of upgrades and improvements in Merri-bek.

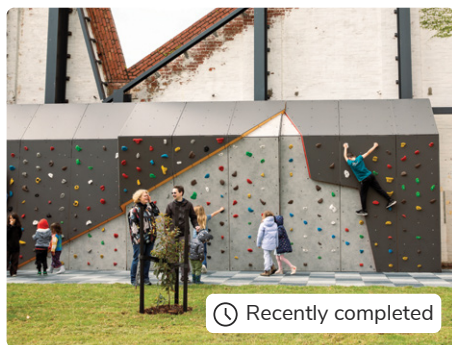


Get involved with Council activities and projects that affect you at  
 ✉[conversations.merri-bek.vic.gov.au](https://conversations.merri-bek.vic.gov.au)

In the first few months of next year, we'll be asking for your feedback on the following projects:

- **Park Renewal – Ivan Page Reserve (stage 1)**
- **Amendment C230 (Brunswick Activity Centre Zone) – public exhibition**
- **Dog off/on leash areas (stage 1)**
- **Park and Playground upgrade projects (stage 3)**





### Yubup Park, 14 Frith Street

Our newest park is now open! Following input from the community, the park has officially been named Yubup Park – meaning Parakeet in Woi-wurrung. Yubup Park was created through our A Park Close to Home program. It has a multi-court designed for various ball games, a ping-pong table, a bespoke bouldering wall, a sheltered BBQ and picnic table area, with plenty of open space including trees for shade as well as a sun lawn space for sitting and relaxing.



### Fisher Reserve, Brunswick East

We're thrilled to announce that after taking on your feedback, Fisher Reserve has undertaken extensive upgrades and is ready for you to explore. The upgraded park features play spaces for younger children, a new nature-based play area with a log enclosure, sculptures, and a stepping-stone trail. There are new seating and picnic areas, additional trees and garden beds, a table tennis table as well as a drinking fountain, with access paths and safety features including new fencing and pedestrian gates. Look out for the newly installed insect hotels, supporting the natural ecosystem.



### Hosken Reserve, Coburg North

Over the past two years, Council has worked hard to bring the Hosken Reserve Masterplan to life. The renewed spaces for play, connection and exercise are now open for the whole community to enjoy. Upgrades include a new active recreation area with play and exercise equipment for all ages, a community shelter and tennis pavilion along with two refurbished courts, two new soccer pitches (the north shared with Pascoe Vale Soccer Club available from February 2025), ample car parking and extensive landscaping, including 242 new trees!



### Carlisle Street, Coburg

Upgrades along Carlisle St, Coburg, between Nicholson Street and Darlington Parade, are now complete following a community tree planting event. Approximately 400 plants were planted on the day, with the community coming together to share a cuppa and chat about the benefits of the completed works. The addition of new garden beds allowed 24 new trees to be planted for shade, as well as 1,000 understory plants. New asphalt and the addition of bluestone edging and solar lights also makes for a safer walking and riding experience.



### Shore Reserve public toilet, Pascoe Vale South

The renewed public toilet at Shore Reserve is now open. Located in the north-east corner of the reserve near the intersection of Melville Road and Reynard Street, the toilet is a single, unisex and accessible Exeloo and is open during daylight hours. Bicycle parking hoops have also been installed next to the toilet for riders using the facility.



### Road reconstruction and drainage upgrades, Beccles Street, Fawkner

We're pleased to announce the successful completion of the road reconstruction and drainage upgrade works at Beccles Street, Fawkner. The upgrade included the connection of all house drains into newly installed underground drainage, the replacement of kerbing and channelling, the installation of stormwater pits, laying of new asphalt and the installation of new and compliant bus shelters.



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## Become a Youth Ambassador

Join a team of passionate young changemakers to represent the views of young people in Merri-bek through weekly meetings and workshops with Council staff. It's your chance to lead, inspire, build your skills and drive positive change. The program begins in June 2025 and runs for 18 months.

**When:** Applications close 30 January 2025

**Where:** Oxygen Youth Space, 4 - 8 Gaffney Street Coburg North, and other locations around Merri-bek to be announced

To apply, please email  
➔ [merribekyouth@merri-bek.vic.gov.au](mailto:merribekyouth@merri-bek.vic.gov.au)



## Summer StoryFest

Who doesn't love a good story? Coming this January to a Merri-bek library near you, a literary festival for children and youth! Join us for author talks, workshops, and activities galore.

Bookings required, please note the recommended ages for each event.

**When:** 6 January to 24 January 2025

For more information, visit  
➔ [eventbrite.com/cc/summer-storyfest-3760129](https://eventbrite.com/cc/summer-storyfest-3760129)



## Active Summer of Fun

Dive into summer at Active Merri-bek's Aquatic & Leisure Centres! Expect family-friendly activities and plenty of opportunities to cool off at our six centres: Brunswick Baths, Coburg Olympic Swimming Pool, Coburg Leisure Centre, Fawkner Leisure Centre pool (opening this summer), Pascoe Vale Outdoor Pool and Oak Park.

**When:** December 2024 to April 2025

Find out more at ➔ [active.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/news-events](https://active.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/news-events) and check each pool's social media pages for daily opening times.



## Love Merri-bek Trail Maps

Whether you're looking to find a hidden art gallery, unearth your new favourite band or record, enjoy a tipple at a local brewery or distillery, or discover a new hobby, there's something for everyone to explore through our Love Merri-bek Trail maps. Pick up a copy of our Art Galleries, At Your Leisure, Breweries and Distilleries, and Live Music and Records Trail Maps in our Council service centres and libraries or download from the Love Merri-bek website.

**When:** Ongoing

Visit ➔ [lovemerri-bek.com.au](https://lovemerri-bek.com.au)



## Community Grants Program

The next round of annual funding for 2025 will open this summer, giving financial support to projects that benefit our Merri-bek residents. Our Community Grants Program works in partnership with local groups and individuals to create a sustainable, healthy and inclusive community.

**When:** Applications open 1 January and close 26 February 2025

To find out more, visit ➔ [merri-bek.vic.gov.au/my-council/grants-and-awards/community-grants-program](https://merri-bek.vic.gov.au/my-council/grants-and-awards/community-grants-program)



## Brunswick Music Festival

Brunswick Music Festival will kick off on 2 March with the famed Sydney Road Street Party filling the street with live music, food, market stalls and roving performers. From there, Brunswick will enjoy 10 days of live music. An eclectic array of local and international acts all find a home in pubs, clubs, bars, backstreets, parks, pools and even churches across the suburb.

**When:** 2 to 10 March 2025

**Where:** Venues across Merri-bek  
For more information, visit  
➔ [brunswickmusicfestival.com.au](https://brunswickmusicfestival.com.au)

