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# AGENDA OF THE ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING

To be held on Monday 26 August 2024 at 6.00pm

**This Council Meeting will be held at Council Chamber, 350 High Street, Preston.**

**This meeting will be a scheduled hybrid meeting, at which both councillors and members of the public may participate either in person or virtually.**

**This meeting will also be livestreamed and may be accessed from Councils website [www.darebin.vic.gov.au](http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au).**

**Persons wishing to observe the meeting in person, submit a Question or make a Submission, are required to register by 12pm on the day of the meeting.**



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS AND ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITIES IN DAREBIN**

Darebin City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land we now call Darebin and pays respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

Council pays respect to all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Darebin.

Council recognises, and pays tribute to, the diverse culture, resilience and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We acknowledge the leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the right to self-determination in the spirit of mutual understanding and respect.



### English

These are the Minutes for the Council Meeting. For assistance with any of the items in the minutes, please telephone 8470 8888.

### Arabic

هذه هي محاضر اجتماع المجلس. للحصول على المساعدة في أي من البنود في المحاضر، يرجى الاتصال بالهاتف 8470 8888.

### Chinese

这些是市议会会议纪要。如需协助了解任何纪要项目，请致电8470 8888。

### Greek

Αυτά είναι τα Πρακτικά της συνεδρίασης του Δημοτικού Συμβουλίου. Για βοήθεια με οποιαδήποτε θέματα στα πρακτικά, παρακαλείστε να καλέσετε το 8470 8888.

### Hindi

ये काउंसिल की बैठक का सारांश है। सारांश के किसी भी आइटम में सहायता के लिए, कृपया 8470 8888 पर टेलीफोन करें।

### Italian

Questo è il verbale della riunione del Comune. Per assistenza con qualsiasi punto del verbale, si prega di chiamare il numero 8470 8888.

### Macedonian

Ова е Записникот од состанокот на Општинскиот одбор. За помош во врска со која и да било точка од записникот, ве молиме телефонирајте на 8470 8888.

### Nepali

यी परिषद्को बैठकका माइन्युटहरू हुन्। माइन्युटका कुनै पनि वस्तुसम्बन्धी सहायताका लागि कृपया 8470 8888 मा कल गर्नुहोस्।

### Punjabi

ਇਹ ਵੈੱਸਲ ਦੀ ਮੀਟਿੰਗ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਸੰਖੇਪ ਸਾਰਾਂਸ਼ ਹੈ। ਸੰਖੇਪ ਸਾਰਾਂਸ਼ ਵਿਚਲੀਆਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਵੀ ਆਈਟਮਾਂ ਸੰਬੰਧੀ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਵਾਸਤੇ, ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ 8470 8888 ਨੂੰ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

### Somali

Kuwaani waa qodobadii lagaga wada hadlay Fadhiga Golaha. Caawimada mid kasta oo ka mid ah qodobada laga wada hadlay, fadlan la xiriiir 8470 8888.

### Spanish

Estas son las Actas de la Reunión del Concejo. Para recibir ayuda acerca de algún tema de las actas, llame al teléfono 8470 8888.

### Urdu

یہ کاؤنسل کی میٹنگ کا ایجنڈا ہے۔ ایجنڈے کے کسی بھی حصے کے بارے میں مدد کے لیے براہ مہربانی 8470 8888 پر فون کریں۔

### Vietnamese

Đây là những Biên bản Họp Hội đồng Thành phố. Muốn có người trợ giúp mình về bất kỳ mục nào trong biên bản họp, xin quý vị gọi điện thoại số 8470 8888.

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# Agenda

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## 1. OPENING OF MEETING AND MEMBERSHIP

Cr. Susanne Newton (Mayor) (Chairperson)  
Cr. Tim Laurence (Deputy Mayor)  
Cr. Emily Dimitriadis  
Cr. Gaetano Greco  
Cr. Tom Hannan  
Cr. Trent McCarthy  
Cr. Lina Messina  
Cr. Susan Rennie  
Cr. Julie Williams

## 2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS

## 3. APOLOGIES

## 4. DISCLOSURES OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

## 5. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETINGS

<b>Recommendation</b>
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**That** the following Meeting Minutes be confirmed as a correct record of business transacted:

- a) Ordinary Council Meeting held of 22 July 2024
- b) Special Council Meeting held on 29 July 2024
- c) Special Council Meeting held at 5:30pm on 14 August 2024
- d) Special Council Meeting held at 6:00pm on 14 August 2024

## 6. COUNCIL'S OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY RESPONSIBILITIES

## 7. QUESTION AND SUBMISSION TIME

Members of the public can lodge questions for Council to answer or make a Comment or Submission prior to a specific item listed on the Agenda of an Ordinary Council meeting.

### **QUESTIONS**

Members of the public can ask up to three (3) questions at an Ordinary Council meeting. Members of the public wishing to ask a question must register their question using the Questions and Submission Time Form before 12 noon on the day of the meeting.

Questions that are not lodged by 12 noon on the day of the Council Meeting will not be accepted, and **no questions will be taken from people *in attendance on the night of the Council Meeting***.

In accordance with the Council Governance Rules 2020, the Chairperson may disallow a question if it:

- a) relates to a matter outside the duties, functions or powers of Council;
- b) is defamatory, indecent, abusive, offensive, irrelevant, trivial or objectionable in language or substance;
- c) may lead to a breach of Council's statutory obligations;
- d) relates to a Notice of Motion, Petition or item of urgent business;
- e) deals with a subject matter already answered;
- f) is aimed at embarrassing a Councillor or an Officer; or
- g) deals with a matter that should be, or has been, considered as a confidential matter or relates to any matter in respect of which Council may close the Meeting to the public under section 66 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

No questions directed at an individual Councillor or Officer will be allowed

### **SUBMISSIONS**

Members of the public wishing to make a 2 minute submission on a report listed on the Agenda (unless not permitted pursuant to the Councils Governance Rules) must register online before 12 noon on the day of the Ordinary Council Meeting or Hearing of Submissions Meeting and be in attendance on the day of the Meeting to make their submission.

If the person wishing to make a submission or their representative is not in attendance (including virtual attendance for a scheduled hybrid meeting) when the Agenda item is to be considered, their submission will not be read out.

The person making the submission must clearly state their name and their suburb. The name of the submitter will be recorded in the Minutes, as an official record.

No member of the public can make a submission to a Notice of Motion, Petition (unless originator of petition, Governance Rule 16.3(6)) or item of Urgent Business presented at a Council meeting.

**HOW TO REGISTER TO ATTEND THE MEETING, SUBMIT YOUR QUESTION OR MAKE A SUBMISSION**

Members of the public who wish to observe the meeting in person, ask a question, or make a submission to an agenda item, at an Ordinary Council Meeting are required to register by 12pm on the day of the meeting in one of the following ways:

- (a) online at [darebin.vic.gov.au](https://darebin.vic.gov.au);
- (b) by calling the customer service team on 8470 8888, or
- (c) by mail to PO Box 91, Preston 3072

Council meetings can be viewed at the 'Watch Council and Planning Committee' meetings page via Council's website.

Agenda's will be available for viewing on Council's website at the 'Meeting Agendas and Minutes' page up to 6 days prior to the date of the meeting.

**8. PETITIONS**

## 9. CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS

### 9.1 GOVERNANCE REPORT - AUGUST 2024

**Author:** Senior Governance Services Officer

**Reviewed By:** Acting General Manager Customer & Corporate

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#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Summary of attendance at Advisory Committees Meetings, Councillor Briefings, and other informal meetings of Councillors (**Appendix A**).
- Activity Reports by Mayor and Councillors.
- Freedom of Information (FOI) statistics for the financial year 2023-24.
- Councillor expenses for the quarter 1 April 2024 – 30 June 2024 (**Appendix B**).
- Bi-annual CEO Credit Card transactions and reimbursements report – 1 January 2024 – 30 June 2024.
- Climate Emergency Darebin Advisory Committee – Appointment of new community members.

<b>Officer Recommendation</b>
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**That Council:**

- (1) Notes the Governance Report – August 2024.
- (2) Notes the Summary of attendance at Advisory Committees Meetings, Councillor Briefings, and other informal meetings of Councillors at **Appendix A** to this report, for incorporation in the minutes of this meeting.
- (3) Notes that the activity reports by Mayors and Councillors submitted prior to the meeting and circulated to Councillors, will be incorporated in the minutes of this meeting.
- (4) Notes the Freedom of Information (FOI) statistics for the financial year 2023-24 (**Table 1**).
- (5) Notes the Councillor Expenses Report for the period of 1 April 2024 – 30 June 2024 (**Appendix B**) to this report.
- (6) Notes that there have been no CEO Credit Card transactions or reimbursements for the period of 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024.
- (7) Endorses the appointment of two (2) community members to the Climate Emergency Darebin Advisory Committee (CED AC) as recommended in confidential **Appendix C** in accordance with the CED AC Terms of Reference (**Appendix D**).



## BACKGROUND / KEY INFORMATION

In accordance with Council's Governance Rules 2020, the agenda for each Ordinary Meeting is required to list certain governance/administrative matters in addition to other specified items.

These include Reports of Standing Committees i.e. Hearing of Submissions Committee, Summary of Meetings i.e. Briefings, Advisory Committee, responses to Public Questions taken on notice, reports by Mayor and Councillors, Councillor expenses and a range of other governance matters.

In accordance with best practice, good governance principles, transparent and accountable reporting, officers deem it appropriate to consolidate governance/administrative reports into one standing report to provide a single reporting mechanism for a range of statutory compliance, transparency, and governance matters. This also ensure compliance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020* ('the Act'), Council's Governance Rules and related regulations.

### Previous Council Resolution

This matter is not the subject of a previous Council resolution.

### ALIGNMENT TO 2041 DAREBIN COMMUNITY VISION

Strategic Direction 1: Vibrant, Respectful and Connected

### ALIGNMENT TO 2021-25 COUNCIL PLAN

Strategic Direction 4 Responsible, Transparent and Responsive

### ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

4.1 We will ensure balanced and responsible financial decision making that meets the needs of our community now and into the future

## DISCUSSION

Matters covered in this report for the month of June 2024 are:

### Summary of Advisory Committees, Councillor Briefing and other informal meetings of Councillors

Council's Governance Rules 2020 require any meeting of an Advisory Committee established by Council and attended by at least one Councillor, or a scheduled or planned meeting to discuss the business of Council, including briefing Councillors, and which is attended by at least half of the Councillors and one member of Council staff (excluding Council, Delegated Committee or Community Asset Committee meetings), the Chief Executive Officer must ensure that a summary of the meeting is:

- a) Tabled at the next convenient Council meeting; and
- b) Recorded in the minutes of that Council meeting.

The Advisory Committees, Councillor Briefings or other Informal Meetings of Councillors are summarised at **Appendix A**.

**Activity Reports by Mayor and Councillors**

By 4.00pm on the day of each Ordinary Council Meeting, the Mayor and Councillors submit a report detailing their attendance at various functions and activities since the last Council Meeting. These reports will be recorded in the minutes of this meeting.

**Freedom of Information – Financial Year 2023 - 2024**

The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* extends as far as possible, the right of the community to access information in the possession of the government bodies constituted under the law of Victoria (such as Council) for certain public purposes by:

- a.making available to the public information about the operations of agencies and, in particular, ensuring that rules and practices affecting members of the public in their dealings with agencies are readily available to persons affected by those rules and practices; and*
- b.creating a general right of access to information in documentary form in the possession of Ministers and agencies limited only by exceptions and exemptions necessary for the protection of essential public interests and the private and business affairs of persons in respect of whom information is collected and held by agencies.*

As part of Councils commitments made under the Public Transparency Policy, a snapshot of the number of FOI requests made to date for the current financial year (2023 -24) and the outcomes of those requests will be presented to Council on a quarterly basis.

**Table 1**

<b>FOI statistics: FY 2023-2024</b>	<b>COUNT</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
<b>Total Number of Active Requests</b>	<b>5</b>	
<b>Total Number of Request Received (FY 2023-24)</b>	67	
<b>Outcome of Requests (Valid from FY 2023-24)</b>	60	
Access granted in full (no exempt material)	26	
Access granted in part (some exempt material)	6	
Access denied in full (all material exempt)	4	S.31(1)(b)
Withdrawn	6	
Administrative Release	6 (2 withdrawn)	
Not Proceeded With	3	
Act does not apply	-	
No Documents found	9	
Not yet finalised (60 days to pass) per s34 of the FOI Act	-	
Not yet finalised	7	
VCAT appeals lodged	-	
<b>Outcome of VCAT Decision on Appeals Arising from Your Decision on Access</b>		
VCAT confirmed agency decision	-	
VCAT varied agency decision	-	
VCAT Overturned agency decision	-	

**Councillor Expenses – Quarter 4 from 1 April 2024 to 30 June 2024**

Councillor Expenses Report for the period from 1 April 2024 to 30 June 2024, are included at **Appendix B** to this report. The Councillor Expenses report will also be made available on Council's website.

**CEO Credit Card transactions or Reimbursements (1 January 2024 – 30 June 2024)**

The CEO Employment and Remuneration Policy provides that Council will meet expenses incurred by the CEO including:

- “Membership and subscription fees payable to professional associations which are necessary or desirable in performance of duties;
- Reasonable costs incurred where attending conferences, seminars or undertaking professional development activities; and
- Reasonable costs incurred in performance of duties.”

Pursuant to the CEO Employment and Remuneration Policy a report on credit card transactions and any claim for reimbursements made by the CEO will be provided to Council twice annually for approval.

The Independent Audit & Risk Committee will also receive twice annual reporting on all CEO corporate card transactions for oversight.

This update provides information pertaining to the CEO corporate card transactions and reimbursement claims for the period 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024.

***Peter Smith – CEO*****Reporting Period: 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024**

For the reporting period, the CEO:

- Did not have a corporate card;
- Did not lodge or receive any reimbursement claim; and
- Did not utilise a shared corporate card (held by the Coordinator of Financial Accounting on behalf of the Council).

**Climate Emergency Darebin Advisory Committee – appointment of new members**

In line with Climate Emergency Darebin Advisory Committee Terms of Reference (**Appendix D**), two new members meeting one or more of the following categories were sought via an expression of interest process undertaken throughout Feb/March 2024.

- Traditional Owner as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- Climate and/or community expertise - could be technical or other, leadership, engagement, advocacy.
- Young people aged 16-25.

Guided by Darebin's 'Towards Equality Framework 2019-2029', recruitment included clear messaging that we sought diverse representation across gender, sexuality, all abilities, and cultural background and that we actively work to promote cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander committee members.

Sixteen excellent written applications were received and assessed against key selection criteria (**Appendix C confidential Summary of Applicants and Outcomes**).

Key Selection Criteria:

- Diversity and equal opportunity.
- Application quality.
- Connection to Darebin.
- Connection and experience relating to the issues considered by the CED AC.
- Capacity to bring strategic and innovative advice in support of implementation of Councils new Climate Emergency Plan (pending approval at time of writing).

Four candidates were shortlisted. Two were appropriate under the cultural and linguistic diversity category and therefore both were interviewed.

The two candidates recommended meet the following criteria:

- Climate and/or community expertise.
- Culturally and linguistically diverse.

These appointments will be until June 2025 when membership renewal will occur as per the Terms of Reference.

## **CONSIDERATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (2020) PRINCIPLES**

### **Financial Management**

Not Applicable.

### **Community Engagement**

Not Applicable.

### **Other Principles for consideration**

#### **Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles**

(i) the transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.

#### **Public Transparency Principles**

(a) Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of this Act or any other Act;

#### **Strategic Planning Principles**

Not Applicable.

#### **Service Performance Principles**

Not Applicable

## COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

### Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)

Not applicable.

### Equity, Inclusion, Wellbeing and Human Rights Considerations:

Not applicable.

### Economic Development and Cultural Considerations

Not applicable.

### Operational Impacts

Not applicable.

### Legal and Risk Implications

Not applicable.




## IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

Not applicable.

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

- *Local Government Act 2020*
- Governance Rules

## Attachments

- Summary of Councillor Attendance Records (**Appendix A**) [↓](#) 
- Q4 2023-23 Councillor Expenses (**Appendix B**) [↓](#) 
- Climate Emergency Darebin Advisory Committee - Summary of applicants and outcome (**Appendix C**) Confidential - enclosed under separate cover
- Climate Emergency Darebin Advisory Committee - Terms of Reference (**Appendix D**)  
[↓](#) 

## DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires members of Council staff and persons engaged under contract to provide advice to Council to disclose any conflicts of interest in a matter to which the advice relates.

The Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.



## SUMMARY OF COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCE AT ADVISORY COMMITTEES, COUNCILLOR BRIEFINGS AND OTHER INFORMAL MEETINGS OF COUNCILLORS

<b>MEETING DETAILS:</b>	<b>Title:</b>	Councillor Briefing Session
	<b>Date:</b>	8 July 2024
	<b>Location:</b>	Council Chamber (Hybrid Meeting)
<b>PRESENT:</b>	<b>Councillors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cr. Newton (Mayor) (Chairperson)</li> <li>• Cr. Dimitriadis (from 4.40pm)</li> <li>• Cr. Greco</li> <li>• Cr. Hannan</li> <li>• Cr. McCarthy (from 5pm)</li> <li>• Cr. Rennie</li> <li>• Cr. Williams</li> </ul>
	<b>Council Staff:</b>	<p>Peter Smith, CEO</p> <p>Kylie Bennetts, General Manager Community</p> <p>Enna Giampiccolo, Acting General Manager Customer &amp; Corporate (Item 4.4)</p> <p>Rachel Ollivier, General Manager Infrastructure, Operations &amp; Finance (Items 4.1 and 4.3)</p> <p>Vanessa Petrie, General Manager City Sustainability &amp; Strategy (Items 4.2, 5.1)</p> <p>Greg Phippen, Coordinator Property Services (Item 4.1)</p> <p>Wendy Dinning, Acting Manager Equity and Wellbeing (Item 4.1)</p> <p>Srini Krishnan, Chief Financial Officer (Item 4.3)</p> <p>Anton Fernando, Coordinator, IT Operations (Item 4.3)</p> <p>Lalitha Koya, Chief Information Officer (Item 4.3)</p> <p>David Cecala, Coordinator Procurement &amp; Contracting (Item 4.3)</p> <p>Allan Middlemast, Acting Manager -Climate Emergency &amp; Sustainable Transport</p>
	<b>External Attendees:</b>	Municipal Monitors – June Anstee and Ross Millard
<b>APOLOGIES:</b>		Cr Messina, Cr Laurence (Deputy Mayor)

The Meeting commenced at 4.02pm

<b>MATTERS CONSIDERED</b>	<b>DISCLOSURES AND COMMENTS</b>
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MATTERS CONSIDERED		DISCLOSURES AND COMMENTS
4.1	Property Matters – Lease – Darebin Information Volunteer & Resource Service – 285-287 High Street Preston	No disclosures were made.
4.3	Procurement Policy Review	No disclosures were made.

#### SUMMARY OF MEETINGS – PUBLIC RECORD (CONTINUED)

MATTERS CONSIDERED		DISCLOSURES AND COMMENTS
	Update on Organisational Strategy	No disclosures were made.
4.4	Update on Confidential Risks and Issues	No disclosures were made.
4.5	General Business	
5.1	Updated proposed final Climate Emergency Plan 2024-2030	

The Meeting concluded at 6.26pm

<b>RECORD COMPLETED BY:</b>	<b>Officer Name:</b>	Enna Giampiccolo
	<b>Officer Title:</b>	Acting GM, Customer and Corporate



## SUMMARY OF COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCE AT ADVISORY COMMITTEES, COUNCILLOR BRIEFINGS AND OTHER INFORMAL MEETINGS OF COUNCILLORS

<b>MEETING DETAILS:</b>	<b>Title:</b>	Councillor Briefing Session
	<b>Date:</b>	15 July 2024
	<b>Location:</b>	Council Chamber (Hybrid Meeting)
<b>PRESENT:</b>	<b>Councillors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cr. Newton (Mayor) (Chairperson)</li> <li>• Cr. Dimitriadis (left at 7.10pm)</li> <li>• Cr. Greco (from 4.15pm)</li> <li>• Cr. Hannan</li> <li>• Cr. McCarthy (from 4.30pm)</li> <li>• Cr Messina (from 4.50pm)</li> <li>• Cr. Rennie</li> <li>• Cr. Williams</li> </ul>
	<b>Council Staff:</b>	<p>Peter Smith, CEO</p> <p>Kylie Bennetts, General Manager Community (item 4.4)</p> <p>Enna Giampiccolo, Acting General Manager Customer &amp; Corporate</p> <p>Rachel Ollivier, General Manager Infrastructure, Operations &amp; Finance (item 4.5)</p> <p>Vanessa Petrie, General Manager City Sustainability &amp; Strategy (item 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2)</p> <p>Chad Griffiths, Manager City Futures &amp; Development (item 4.1, 4.2)</p> <p>Leo Parente, Municipal Building Surveyor (item 4.1)</p> <p>Munir Vahanvati, City Designer (item 4.2)</p> <p>Alex McKenna-Cocks, Principal Planner (item 4.2)</p> <p>Yash Duggal, Manager City Safety &amp; Compliance (item 4.3)</p> <p>Rhett English, Coordinator, Civic Compliance (item 4.3)</p> <p>Jessica Creed, Team Leader Local Laws and Animal Management (item 4.3)</p> <p>Wendy Dinning, A/Manager Equity &amp; Wellbeing (item 4.4)</p> <p>Joshua Williams, Community Safety Officer (Item 4.4)</p> <p>Srini Krishnan, Chief Financial Officer (item 4.5)</p> <p>Stevie Meyer, Acting Manager City Futures (item 5.1)</p> <p>Allan Middlemast, Acting Manager Climate Emergency &amp; Sustainable Transport (item 5.2)</p> <p>Yvette Fuller, Chief People Officer</p>



	<b>External Attendees:</b>	Municipal Monitors – June Anstee and Ross Millard
<b>APOLOGIES:</b>		Cr Laurence (Deputy Mayor)

The Meeting commenced at 4.04pm

**SUMMARY OF MEETINGS – PUBLIC RECORD (CONTINUED)**

	<b>MATTERS CONSIDERED</b>	<b>DISCLOSURES AND COMMENTS</b>
<b>4.1</b>	Update on registration of private swimming pools within Darebin	No disclosures were made
<b>4.2</b>	Northland Development – Development Facilitation Program Application	No disclosures were made
<b>4.3</b>	Local Laws Review PACE	No disclosures were made.
<b>4.4</b>	Community Safety Framework	No disclosures were made.
<b>4.5</b>	Procurement Policy Review	
<b>5.1</b>	Draft Housing Strategy - Answers to Questions on Notice	
<b>5.2</b>	Transport and Infrastructure Net Zero Roadmap - Council Submission	

The Meeting concluded at 8.02 pm

<b>RECORD COMPLETED BY:</b>	<b>Officer Name:</b>	Enna Giampiccolo
	<b>Officer Title:</b>	Acting GM, Customer and Corporate



## SUMMARY OF COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCE AT ADVISORY COMMITTEES, COUNCILLOR BRIEFINGS AND OTHER INFORMAL MEETINGS OF COUNCILLORS

<b>MEETING DETAILS:</b>	<b>Title:</b>	CEO Employment Matters Committee
	<b>Date:</b>	22 July 2024
	<b>Location:</b>	ELT meeting room
<b>PRESENT:</b>	<b>Councillors:</b>	Cr. Newton (Mayor) (Chairperson), Cr. Hannan, Cr. Messina
	<b>Council Staff:</b>	Yvette Fuller, Chief People Officer
	<b>External Attendees:</b>	Joe Carbone – Independent Chair, Monitors
<b>APOLOGIES:</b>		Cr Greco, Cr Laurence (Deputy Mayor)

The Meeting commenced at 4.30pm

MATTERS CONSIDERED		DISCLOSURES AND COMMENTS
1	Minutes for the CEO Performance review meeting 20 May 2024	No conflicts were raised.
2	CEO Performance Review process – update	No disclosures were made.
3	Resignation of Cr Greco from Employment Matters Committee	No disclosures were made.

### SUMMARY OF MEETINGS – PUBLIC RECORD (CONTINUED)

The Meeting concluded at 5.10pm

<b>RECORD COMPLETED BY:</b>	<b>Officer Name:</b>	Yvette Fuller
	<b>Officer Title:</b>	Chief People Officer



## SUMMARY OF COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCE AT ADVISORY COMMITTEES, COUNCILLOR BRIEFINGS AND OTHER INFORMAL MEETINGS OF COUNCILLORS

<b>MEETING DETAILS:</b>	<b>Title:</b>	Councillor Briefing Session
	<b>Date:</b>	5 August 2024
	<b>Location:</b>	Council Chamber (Hybrid Meeting) Virtual Meeting
<b>PRESENT:</b>	<b>Councillors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cr. Newton (Mayor) (Chairperson)</li> <li>• Cr. Laurence (Deputy Mayor)</li> <li>• Cr. Dimitriadis (left the meeting at 6.35pm, returned at 7.10pm)</li> <li>• Cr. Hannan</li> <li>• Cr. McCarthy</li> <li>• Cr. Williams</li> </ul>
	<b>Council Staff:</b>	<p>Rachel Ollivier, Acting CEO (item 4.1, 4.10)</p> <p>Enna Giampiccolo, Acting General Manager Customer and Corporate</p> <p>Kylie Bennetts, General Manager Community (item 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7)</p> <p>Vanessa Petrie, General Manager City Sustainability and Strategy (item 4.8, 4.9)</p> <p>Valli Morphett, Manager Creative Culture &amp; Economic Development (item 4.2)</p> <p>Melanie McCarten, Manager Recreation &amp; Libraries (Item 4.3, 4.6)</p> <p>Adam Feiner, Recreation Planner (item 4.3)</p> <p>Bruce Fordham, Leisure Major Projects Officer (item 4.6)</p> <p>Jo Smale, Acting General Manager Community (item 4.4)</p> <p>David Godden, Planning and Project Officer (Item 4.4)</p> <p>Wendy Dinning, Acting Manager Equity and Wellbeing (item 4.5)</p> <p>Kathie Duncan, Coordinator Community Development and Wellbeing (Item 4.5)</p> <p>Shabaz Fattah, Multicultural and Diversity Officer (Item 4.5)</p> <p>Ana L.Galvez, Interfaith and Multicultural Officer (Item 4.5)</p> <p>Jeanne Poustie, Manager Supported and Connected Living (item 4.7)</p> <p>Nathan Korotkov, Senior Team Leader, Service Projects (Item 4.7)</p> <p>Anja Hauenschild, Coordinator Ageing Well Unit (Item</p>

		<p>4.7)                  Stevie Meyer, Coordinator City Futures (item 4.8 &amp; 4.9)                  Lakshmanan Madhu, Senior Strategic Planner (Item 4.9)                  Srini Krishnan, Chief Financial Officer (item 4.10)                  David Cecala, Coordinator Procurement and Contracting (Item 4.10)                  Lalitha Koya, Chief Information Officer (Item 4.10)                  Anton Fernando, Coordinator IT Operations (Item 4.10)</p>
	<b>External Attendees:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipal Monitor - Ross Millard</li> <li>• Sebastian, Belle and Olga from Welcoming Cities to present Council with a trophy (first ever “excelling” accreditation) (Item 4.5)</li> <li>• Todd Beavis, ie Community (Item 4.6)</li> </ul>
<b>APOLOGIES:</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cr. Greco</li> <li>• Cr Messina</li> <li>• Cr. Rennie</li> </ul>

The Meeting commenced at 4.25pm

MATTERS CONSIDERED		DISCLOSURES AND COMMENTS
4.1	Property Matters – Lease - Amplitel - Bundoora Park - Construction, operation and maintenance of a telecommunication monopole	No disclosures were made.
4.2	Migration Public Artwork Artist Selection List matter considered	No disclosures were made.
4.3	Fair Access Policy Roadmap	
4.4	Families, Youth and Children Strategy - report back on Phase 2 Engagement	
4.5	Welcoming Cities Accreditation	
4.6	Reservoir Leisure Centre Scoping Study – Engagement Plan	
4.7	Aged Care Reform, Assessment Services and Audit Outcomes Updates	
4.8	Amendment C170DARE - Darebin DCP	
4.9	Central Preston Activity Centre State-led Planning	
4.10	IT Procurement	
4.11	Strategic Planning Matters	

MATTERS CONSIDERED		DISCLOSURES AND COMMENTS
4.12	General Business	

**SUMMARY OF MEETINGS – PUBLIC RECORD (CONTINUED)**

The Meeting concluded at 8.12 pm

<b>RECORD COMPLETED BY:</b>	<b>Officer Name:</b>	Enna Giampiccolo
	<b>Officer Title:</b>	Officer Acting General Manager Customer and Corporate

Councillor Expenses - Q4 1 April 2024 - 30 June 2024 (If applicable GST is excluded)

	Cr Dimitriadis	Cr Greco	Cr Hannan	Cr Laurence (Deputy Mayor)	Cr McCarthy	Cr Messina	Cr Newton (Mayor)	Cr Rennie	Cr Williams	Total
										\$
Councillor Allowances	9,090	9,090	9,090	15,045	9,090	9,090	30,090	9,090	9,090	108,765
Mobile (Usage & Data Plan)	95	136	95	136	95	136	96	95	95	982
Internet (Laptop) (*Cr. Laurence does not use a laptop)	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	368
Travel (Cabcharge/misc travel expenses)									50	50
Family care										-
Conferences (Inc. all related costs/travel/meals/accom)							853			853
Training & Development										-
Good Governance Training	756	756	756	756	756	756	756	756	756	6,808
Functions/events										-
Subscription / Memberships	100					100	100	100	100	500
Stationary / printing / equipment										-
Mayoral Vehicle										-
<b>Total net expenses</b>	<b>10,083</b>	<b>10,024</b>	<b>9,983</b>	<b>15,979</b>	<b>9,983</b>	<b>10,124</b>	<b>31,937</b>	<b>10,083</b>	<b>10,133</b>	<b>118,326</b>

Notes:

Telephone and internet charges are recorded in the month they are incurred. All other expenses are reported on a cash basis in the month that they are paid.

Cr's Greco, Laurence and Messina - Mobile plan Includes Ipad usage & data plan

Reimbursements to Council include payments from Councillors owed for a range of previous months which were paid for within this quarter

Further explanation of the expense categories is available in the City of Darebin Councillor Support and Expenses Policy June 2021.

Amounts rounded to nearest \$

# TERMS OF REFERENCE

## *Climate Emergency Darebin*



<p><b>1. Application of these Terms of Reference</b></p>	<p>These Model Terms of Reference apply to all Community Advisory Committees, Community Reference Groups and similar groups formally constituted by resolution of Darebin City Council.</p> <p>For the purpose of this Model Terms of Reference, all such groups and committees are referred to as “the Committee”.</p>
<p><b>2. Purpose and Scope</b></p>	<p>The <i>purpose</i> of this Committee is to provide advice and recommendations (were appropriate) to Council in relation to the matters specified in <b>Appendix A</b>.</p> <p>In conducting its activities associated with its purpose and scope the Committee will;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct itself according to, and within, the Terms of Reference and any relevant Council resolution;</li> <li>• Inform itself of issues, opportunities, constraints and urgent actions relating to maintenance and promotion of the Committee;</li> <li>• Provide honest, considered, constructive and impartial advice to Council that will improve Council decision making;</li> <li>• Provide advice on strategic and other planning work to help set short and longer-term direction and action;</li> <li>• Foster a Committee culture that seeks to understand and explore diverse views of Committee members so that advice to Council reflects such diversity of views, and;</li> <li>• Report to Council periodically on its work, in order to ensure accountability for its conduct.</li> </ul> <p>In providing advice, all members will be given every opportunity, encouragement and support to put their views before the Committee and that this will be considered in Darebin’s policy, program and project development.</p> <p>The <i>scope</i> of this Committee is to act in an advisory capacity to the Council only and has no delegated authority to make decisions.</p> <p>The Committee does not have an operational role and neither it, nor its members, may direct Council staff in the performance of their duties.</p> <p>The Committee shall have regard to and act in accordance with Council’s strategic objectives and priorities. Specifically, the Committee will have regard to the strategies, plans, frameworks, policies and plans referenced in <b>Appendix A</b>.</p>

<p><b>3. Committee Specific Protocols and Operating Practices</b></p>	<p>It is acknowledged that these model Terms of Reference may not in all instances provide the required or adequate clarity regarding a Committees functioning. To this extent, Committees may develop specific protocols and operating practices to supplement these ToR.</p> <p>These protocols and operating practices may deal with any matters that the Committee determines are relevant to the efficient and effective functioning of the Committee and may include matters such as consideration of the social and cultural diversity of the Darebin community, inclusiveness of multicultural, educational, religious, disability, youth, aged, sexual and gender communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, membership numbers, support for members to facilitate participation and consideration of sitting fees.</p> <p>Any such protocols and operating practices must not conflict with these ToR and must be endorsed by the Committee, the relevant General Manager and be attached to these ToR when formally adopted by Council. Should agreement not be reached by the Committee and the relevant General Manager, this will be escalated to the Chief Executive Officer.</p>
<p><b>4. Composition, Recruitment, Appointment and Tenure</b></p>	<p>This Committee comprises Councillor(s) appointed by Council annually and a Council Officer nominated by the Chief Executive Officer (both non-voting) and any other persons, and representatives of organisations as determined by resolution of Council and as specified in <b>Appendix A</b>.</p> <p>All Advisory Committees will sunset on 30 June following each General Council election, unless they have been re-established in the new Council term or the work of an Advisory Committee has been completed prior to this date.</p> <p>All appointments will be for an initial period of 2 years with the option for a further maximum period through to the 30 June in the year following each General Election upon. Current Committee members who wish to continue beyond their initial 2-year appointment must notify the Council Officer responsible for the administration of the committee in writing of their intention to do so.</p> <p>If the Council Officer (in consultation with existing Committee members) believes that staggered appointment terms are appropriate for the Committee, these may be instituted within the parameters of the 2 years period.</p> <p>All vacancies shall be publicly advertised by Council prior to appointment.</p> <p>Prospective candidates shall submit an Expression of Interest in a form and manner prescribed by Council to enable Council to consider their appointment to the Committee. The criteria for the appointment of members will be developed by the Council Officer based on the required skills and knowledge and the existing Council policy and practices that promote diversity and inclusion. The Council Officer will consult with the Committee regarding any skill or experience deficiency or gap in the existing Committee that may need to be specifically considered during a recruitment and appointment process.</p> <p>Where vacancies occur ‘mid-term’, replacement Committee members may be appointed by Council’s Chief Executive Officer, subject to an Expression of Interest process as above.</p> <p>Committee members appointed as a result of a ‘mid-term’ vacancy will serve the balance of the former Committee member’s term.</p>



	<p>A position becomes vacant if a Committee member fails to attend 3 consecutive meetings without reasonable grounds, on a case by case basis.</p> <p>A member may not complete more than 2 successive Council terms ie 8 years unless exceptional circumstances supporting the continuation of the members participation are demonstrated.</p> <p>Where a member is appointed to the Committee as a representative of a particular organisation a proxy may attend meeting on their behalf if the nominated person cannot attend.</p> <p>Council will appoint one proxy Councillor to each Committee annually. Councillors appointed as a proxy through the annual appointment process may attend Committee meetings.</p> <p>Notwithstanding any of the above, Council may at any time by resolution set a date or a milestone that when reached or completed causes the cessation of the Committee and the expiry of Committee members' terms.</p>
<p><b>5. Responsibilities, Duties and Conduct of Members</b></p>	<p>In performing the purpose of the Committee, members must act honestly, treat others with respect, exercise reasonable care and diligence, and not make improper use of their position or make improper use of information acquired because of their position.</p> <p>The expectation of members' behaviour is that they will behave with respect and openness by listening to one another and by allowing all members to have a voice. Respectful behaviour is inclusive of all Committee meetings, emails, correspondence, telephone calls and on-line meetings.</p> <p>Members must work co-operatively with other members, respect the authority of the Chair and meeting procedures and must not seek to dominate the meeting or insist or imply that their own views and ideas carry more weight than those of others.</p> <p>Members must respect the confidential and sensitivity of information as appropriate.</p> <p>Committee members will be required to participate in an induction workshop arranged by Council and may be required to participate in specified training relevant to the work of the Committee from time to time.</p> <p>Upon appointment, Chairs including Co-Chairs must undertake or demonstrate relevant recent training and proficiency in running effective meetings.</p> <p>Committee members must not speak for Council and are not authorised to speak to the media in respect of the Committee's activities and deliberations.</p> <p>Committee Members are required to abide by Council's Employee Code of Conduct to the extent applicable to volunteers and the Council's Volunteer Policy. Failure to abide by the conduct principles, (and relevant Council policies, including Council's Occupational Health and Safety Guidelines) will result in the member being deemed to be in breach of their obligations and may result in their removal from the Committee by a Council resolution, or in urgent circumstances by Council's Chief Executive Officer if the Chief Executive Officer considers that such action is necessary.</p>

**6. Meetings**

Attendance at Committee meetings is expected in normal circumstances and is critical to fulfilment of appointment as a member.

The Chairperson shall be appointed as specified in **Appendix A**.

Meetings will be held quarterly unless determined by the Committee Chair and Council Officer in order to allow for the timely consideration and provision of advice to Council on particular, time-sensitive matters from time to time. Committees may, with the approval of the relevant General Manager, meet more frequently on a limited and specific basis (if required).

Working Groups may be established as required for a specific purpose and on a limited timeframe to enable a focus on a specific task or project. These are subject to the approval by the relevant General Manager after consideration of their specific need, the availability of resources to support their operation and their agreed timeframes and tenure.

If the Chairperson is not present at a meeting, the Committee members will determine to appoint a Chairperson for the purposes of conducting the meeting.

The appointed Council officer will take responsibility for providing executive support to the Committee including provision of meeting agendas and minutes.

Committee agendas will be forward to Committee members by email no later than five working days before a scheduled meeting.

Minutes will be provided to Committee members and all Councillors no later than 10 working days of the meeting and will include a summary of discussions, details of any conflicts of interest disclosed and any decisions made. The Chair, including Co-Chairs, shall ratify the minutes of the meeting prior to their distribution. Formal endorsement of the minutes will occur at the subsequent Committee meeting.

Committee agenda items will be identified by Council Officers in consultation with the Chairperson. Members are able to request items to be listed subject to them being raised with the Council Officer and with the Chairpersons consent

Notice of any additional Committee meetings will be provided 2 weeks in advance.

Committee meetings may be held virtually

Committee meetings are closed to the public.

Special guests / subject matter experts may be invited to the meeting at the combined discretion of the Chair, including Co-Chairs and Council officer.

A quorum will be half of the voting Committee members plus one. In the absence of a quorum, a Chairperson may conduct the meeting for discussion purposes. Committees have no delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of Council, therefore any vote is on a position or recommendation to be made to Council if appropriate.

Whilst voting on matters is expected to be uncommon a member must be in attendance (either virtually or in person) to vote.

Any Conflicts of Interest must be declared and recorded at the commencement of the meeting. A member who has a conflict of interest must leave the meeting when the item is discussed.

<p><b>7. Transparency</b></p>	<p>In order to maintain transparency of Committee operations and in alignment with Council's Governance Rules the following information is to be published on Council's website in respect of each Committee:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The Terms of Reference.</li> <li>b) The names of all members (where appropriate)</li> <li>c) Minutes of Advisory Committees meetings</li> <li>d) Reports of Committee activities (as reported biannually to Council) as prepared by Council Officers</li> </ul>
<p><b>8. Opportunities for Cross Collaboration and Induction of Committee members</b></p>	<p>Council may, from time to time, facilitate meetings, forums, workshops and the like to enable the members of the various Committees to come together for knowledge sharing, professional development and the collaborative provision of advice as appropriate.</p> <p>Committees and new Committee members will be provided with an appropriate induction at the commencement of their term that includes an overview of the Council's structure and functions, the relationship of the Committee with Councillors and the community and any other matters to ensure they are well supported.</p>
<p><b>9. Reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation</b></p>	<p>The specific advice of a Committee in relation to a particular matter will be communicated to Council by the relevant Council officer in an appropriate format if and when required. The progress and activities of a Committee will be reported annually through a combined Council meeting report on the progress and activities of all Committees to be prepared by Council Officers. The operation of the Committee will be evaluated annually via a number of methods including self-evaluation of the Committee (arranged by the Council Officer) to ensure that the Committee is achieving its objectives. Results of the evaluation will be reported in the annual progress report.</p>

APPENDIX A

<p><b>Name of Committee</b></p>	<p>Climate Emergency Darebin</p>
<p><b>ToR Clause 2</b></p>	<p>The <i>purpose</i> of this Committee is to provide advice and recommendations (where appropriate) to Council in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• climate emergency leadership, specifically around the impacts and opportunities for the Darebin community</li> <li>• achieving and implementing climate and energy strategies and actions in the Council Plan</li> <li>• rapid community emissions reduction including advice on large and community scale renewable energy and other zero emissions technologies</li> <li>• ongoing development and review of policies, strategies and plans, especially those that directly and indirectly impact the Darebin community around the climate emergency</li> <li>• developing programs relating to Council priorities such as: climate risk, fuel poverty, resilience, adaptation, mitigation and protection of those communities most impacted by climate change</li> <li>• developing and delivering Council’s Climate Emergency Plan</li> <li>• promoting the work of Darebin’s climate program</li> <li>• effective and appropriate engagement with Darebin’s diverse community on climate issues</li> <li>• advocating to relevant external authorities to ensure action is taken to create a safe climate for all.</li> </ul> <p>The Committee shall have regard to and act in accordance with Council’s strategic objectives and priorities. Specifically, the Committee will have regard to the following strategies, plans, frameworks, policies and plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Vision</li> <li>• <a href="#">Council Plan 2021-2025</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Towards Equality: Equity, Inclusion and Human Rights Framework 2019-2029</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Statement of Commitment to Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People</a></li> </ul> <p>Specific Council strategies, frameworks, plans and policies relevant to this Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate Emergency Plan 2017-22</li> <li>• Watershed: Towards Water Sensitive Darebin 2015-25</li> <li>• <a href="#">Darebin Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2017-2021</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Waste and Recycling Strategy 2020</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Transport Strategy</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Breathing Space: Open Space Strategy</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>ToR Clause 3</b></p>	<p>Committee Specific Protocols and Operating Practices</p> <p>The guiding principles are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledgement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First People of this nation and the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners of the land on which the municipality of Darebin is situated. This acknowledgement recognises the importance of traditional owners ongoing</li> </ul>

	<p>commitment and contribution to Country, including to land, water and Culture.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Child Safe Darebin, with all members complying with Child Safe policy and protocols</li> <li>• Respect for diversity of ideas and voices in discussions and advice provided to Council;</li> <li>• Collaboration with all participating in the Advisory Committee;</li> <li>• Active contribution to the development of ideas, discussion and priorities of the Advisory Committee and the advice provided to Council.</li> <li>• Respect the value and integrity of each member and the richness they bring.</li> <li>• Approach dialogue and debate with a spirit of understanding and collaboration.</li> <li>• Respect, value and promote the role of the Climate Emergency Darebin Advisory Committee.</li> </ul>
<p><b>ToR Clause 4</b></p>	<p>Two Councillors required.</p> <p>A maximum of ten community members representing the diversity within Darebin’s community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• two from the Traditional Owner as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities</li> <li>• two from Darebin’s culturally and linguistically diverse communities</li> <li>• two with specialist climate expertise – could be technical or other</li> <li>• two with community expertise – community leadership, community engagement, advocacy etc</li> <li>• two people between 16 to 25 years</li> </ul> <p>*A committee member could be eligible under more than one of the above categories.</p> <p>The Committee will seek to build and reflect diversity within membership including age and gender and be inclusive in practice.</p> <p>The tenure of any such additional members will be in alignment with the current members and will be endorsed by Council in conjunction with the bi-annual reporting of the Committee activities to Council.</p>
<p><b>TOR Clause 6</b></p>	<p>The Committee Chairperson shall be a Councillor with a Community member as Co-Chair</p> <p>The Committee Chairperson and Co-Chair shall be appointed at it’s first meeting.</p>

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**9.2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND POLICY REVIEW- ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES**

**Author:** Senior Adviser - Community Engagement & Demographics  
Coordinator Communications and Engagement

**Reviewed By:** Acting General Manager Customer & Corporate

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Consultation on Darebin's new Community Engagement Improvement Plan and the existing Community Engagement Policy ran from 4 June to 2 July 2024.

The project received 419 feedback responses from 253 people (some people responded through multiple methods) through a mix of online and face-to-face activities.

The project sought to understand community sentiment on:

- Proposed actions in the Community Engagement Improvement Plan
- The aims and minimum standards for engagement in our Community Engagement Policy

The feedback shows strong support for many of the actions in the Community Engagement Improvement Plan and broad support and suggestions for the aims and minimum standards of the Community Engagement Policy. Based on the feedback, we recommend proceeding to implement the actions listed in the Community Engagement Improvement Plan and finalising the Community Engagement Policy review before its adoption in early 2025.

<b>Officer Recommendation</b>
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**That Council:**

- (1) Thanks the community, stakeholders and staff for providing valuable feedback on this engagement and notes that the Community Engagement team will close the loop with all involved.
- (2) Endorses the community engagement team to implement the actions in the Community Engagement Improvement Plan over the next three years.
- (3) Notes that some of the actions in the plan can be implemented right away using existing resources, while other actions require further research and additional resources which will be considered through individual business cases.
- (4) Notes that the goals and approach of the Community Engagement Improvement Plan have already been incorporated into upcoming engagements including the 'Our Darebin' campaign and will continue to influence all future engagements.
- (5) Notes that the Community Engagement team will continue with planned engagement with Advisory Groups and other stakeholders prior to bringing the revised Community Engagement Policy to Council for adoption in early 2025.

## BACKGROUND

Darebin City Council is committed to building a fair, inclusive and equitable city, which is why we put residents, business owners and the community at the heart of our decision-making. The community engagement function at Council enables us to do this and provides our community with the opportunity to contribute to and influence Council's actions.

There are two key documents that guide our work in this space.

### 1. Community Engagement Improvement Plan

The Community Engagement Improvement Plan was developed in early 2024 through extensive consultation with staff, community, benchmarking across the sector and workshopping with ELT and Councillors. It contains 25 actions which aim to address some of the challenges we face when engaging meaningfully with our community (e.g. low engagement from diverse groups, high engagement on local, place-based issues like parking but low engagement on large, municipal wide issues like council strategies).

The Community Engagement Improvement plan puts the community at the centre and focuses on ensuring we deliver a meaningful, trusted engagement model that is inclusive of our diverse community and is continuously improving. We want our community engagement model to be sector leading, and a benchmark for best practice.

Aligned with our *Council Plan 2021-2025*, the principles in our *Community Engagement Policy*, and a key action under *Priority 3 Value Driven Engagement and Partnerships* in our *Organisational Strategy*, our Community Engagement Improvement Plan will be a core focus for our organisation moving forward.

The community engagement team undertook a final round of engagement with the community on the draft plan in June 2024 to understand what the community think about some of the proposed actions in the plan.

### 2. Community Engagement Policy

Our Community Engagement Policy was developed in 2021. It is a legislated requirement under the *Local Government Act 2020*. The Policy outlines the roles and responsibilities Darebin staff have in relation to Community Engagement and includes the principles and requirements that all councils must abide by.

The Community Engagement Policy is due for review in 2025, so as we undertook engagement on the draft Community Engagement Improvement Plan, we also took the opportunity to ask the community their thoughts on the Community Engagement Policy.

## Previous Council Resolution

This matter is not the subject of a previous Council resolution.

## ALIGNMENT TO 2041 DAREBIN COMMUNITY VISION

Strategic Direction 1: Vibrant, Respectful and Connected

## ALIGNMENT TO 2021-25 COUNCIL PLAN

Strategic Direction 4 Responsible, Transparent and Responsive

## ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1.1 We will develop partnerships with organisations from across our city, to value and include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people from multicultural and diverse backgrounds

1.2 We will help to build an inclusive and empowered community, where social cohesion and community harmony are fostered

4.3 We will transform our services and service delivery models to ensure they meet the current, emerging and future needs of our community

## DISCUSSION

This project sought to understand sentiment on:

- Proposed actions in the Community Engagement Improvement Plan
- The aims and minimum standards for engagement in our Community Engagement Policy

The engagement period ran from 4 June to 2 July 2024 and utilised a range of engagement activities. A summary of the engagement activities and outcomes can be seen in the *Community Engagement* section of this report. The feedback shows strong support for many of the activities in the Community Engagement Improvement Plan including:

- Establishing a community panel.
- Improving Council's visibility in the community.
- Continuing to use a mix of online and in person opportunities to engage.
- Communicating with people via mail and email where possible.
- Strengthening our close the loop process.

The feedback also showed:

- General support for the aims of the Community Engagement Policy.
- A broad range of feedback on the minimum standards of the policy including:
  - Mixed feedback on the importance of recognising and rewarding community feedback through remuneration
  - A range of suggestions for how to best engage with our target groups.

Based on the feedback we recommend proceeding to implement the actions of the Community Engagement Improvement Plan and continuing with planned engagement with Advisory Groups and other stakeholders on the Community Engagement Policy, prior to finalising the Policy in early 2025.

## CONSIDERATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (2020) PRINCIPLES

### Financial Management

The actions proposed in the improvement plan require various amounts of resources. Each action has been categorised as low, medium or high resource intensity. The low and many of the medium intensity actions have been scheduled for year one and will be undertaken using our existing resources.



The high and some of the medium resource intensity actions require additional resourcing and will be considered as part of individual business cases once further feasibility and cost benefit research has been undertaken.

Updating the Community Engagement Policy will be undertaken with existing resources

**Community Engagement**

The engagement period ran from 4 June to 2 July 2024. This project had a total of 419 responses from the community. This included 93 people who participated online (over 4 online engagement tools) and 160 people who participated in face-to-face activities.

Engagement Activity	Number of participants/ points of contact	Target group
Online survey	67 responses	All Darebin community
3 x online voting polls	192 responses	All Darebin community
Pop up #1 Citizenship Ceremony	70 people	New citizens New residents Multicultural and multilingual communities
Pop up #2 Reservoir Leisure Centre	40 people	Young families, older people, multicultural, multilingual, different abilities
Pop up #3 Fairfield Library	50 people	Young families, older people
Total	419	The project targeted the general Darebin community with additional effort taken to engage with younger people, young families and multicultural and multilingual people.

There was a detailed communications plan for this project. It included a video, social media campaign, emails to stakeholders and e-newsletters, posters, postcards and other collateral distributed to key places.

Several questions were put to the community and a summary of the feedback has been included below. All feedback is available in Attachment A.

The results showed:

- A strong preference from the community for Council staff to be more visible in the community.
- A preference to keep community members updated on project outcomes occasionally.
- A preference for engagement projects to be open between four and six weeks.
- A clear preference for email communications from people responding online and a preference for face-to-face communication from people who participated in our in-person engagement activities. Notably social media, mail and Darebin Community News were also popular answers across all activities.

- Ease was the most important attribute for providing feedback with almost 100% of responders selecting this as the most important element of providing feedback. 'Quick' and 'multiple options to provide feedback' were the next most important elements. Surprisingly, 'fun' was not a common response to this question.
- The establishment of a community panel was supported by the responders with over 50% supporting this idea. Notably a significant number of people were unsure about this panel and when prompted their main concerns were around the representativeness of this panel and whether the panel would have meaningful influence of council decisions. This action will be investigated further through development of a business case.
- The importance of recognising and rewarding community members for their time when they engage with us was mixed with most responders sitting in the neutral categories. Those who did think this was important listed various forms of financial compensation as the best way to recognise community members.
- The aims of the Community Engagement Policy were overwhelmingly supported with over 80% of responders supporting these and 12% selecting unsure. Most people noted the words transparency and representation in the aims and highlighted the importance of these in community engagement.
- We received a range of suggestions for how to best engage with our target groups through our minimum standards for engagement. These ideas will be presented to some of our advisory committees before finalising our policy.

### **Other Principles for consideration**

#### **Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles**

- (d) the municipal community is to be engaged in strategic planning and strategic decision making;

#### **Public Transparency Principles**

- (a) Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of this Act or any other Act;

#### **Strategic Planning Principles**

- (a) an integrated approach to planning, monitoring and performance reporting is to be adopted;

#### **Service Performance Principles**

- (d) a Council should seek to continuously improve service delivery to the municipal community in response to performance monitoring;

## **COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)**

Environmental sustainability will be considered in the planning and implementation of the Community Engagement Improvement Plan actions.

**Equity, Inclusion, Wellbeing and Human Rights Considerations:**

An EIA and GIA was undertaken for this project in early 2024. The recommendations were implemented into the consultation for this project and will continue to be implemented as the project continues.

**Economic Development and Cultural Considerations**

Economic and Cultural considerations will be considered in the planning and implementation of the Community Engagement Improvement Plan actions.

**Operational Impacts**

No, the planning and implementation of the Community Engagement Improvement Plan actions will be predominantly managed by the Community Engagement Team.




**Legal and Risk Implications**

N/A

**IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS**

1. Providing endorsement is given by Council the Community Engagement Team will thank the community, stakeholders and staff for providing valuable feedback on this engagement and close the loop with all involved.
2. The Community Engagement Team will implement the actions in the Community Engagement Improvement Plan over the next 3 years. Noting that some of the actions in the plan can be implemented right away using existing resources, whilst other actions require further research and additional resources which will be considered through individual business cases.
3. The goals and approach of the Community Engagement Improvement Plan have already been incorporated into upcoming engagements including the 'Our Darebin' campaign and will continue to influence all future engagements.
4. The Community Engagement team will continue with planned engagement with Advisory Groups and other stakeholders prior to bringing the revised Community Engagement Policy to Council for adoption in early 2025.

**RELATED DOCUMENTS****Attachments**

- Appendix A - Community Engagement Improvement Plan and Policy Review Engagement Report (**Appendix A**) [↓](#) 
- Appendix B - Community Engagement Improvement Plan (**Appendix B**) [↓](#) 
- Appendix C - Community Engagement Policy (**Appendix C**) [↓](#) 

## DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires members of Council staff and persons engaged under contract to provide advice to Council to disclose any conflicts of interest in a matter to which the advice relates.

The Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.



# Community Engagement Results Report

## Background

Darebin City Council is committed to building a fair, inclusive and equitable city, which is why we put residents, business owners and the community at the heart of our decision-making. The community engagement function at Council enables us to do this and provides our community with the opportunity to contribute to and influence Council's actions.

The development of a Community Engagement Improvement Plan is an action in Council's organisational strategy. The plan aims to improve council's community engagement function by undertaking 25 improvement actions over the next 3 years. We undertook this engagement to understand what the community think about some of the proposed actions in this plan. As part of this process we also asked the community to help us review our Community Engagement Policy.

## Participation Analysis

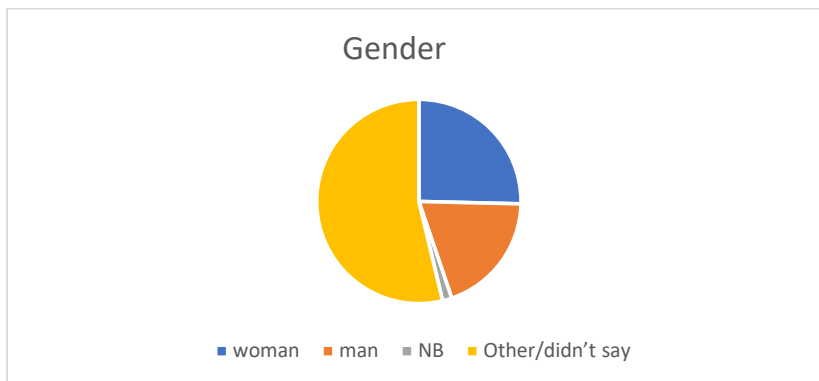
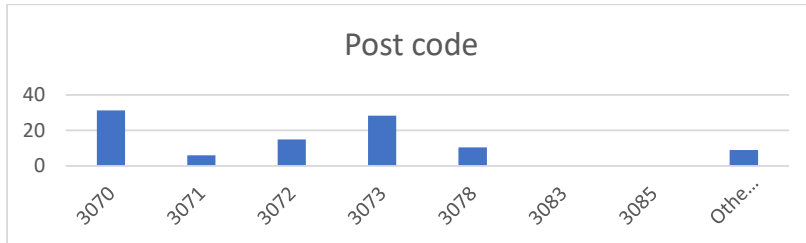
Engagement Activity	Number of participants/ points of contact	Targeted group
Online survey	67	All Darebin community
3 x online voting polls	192	All Darebin community
Pop up #1 Citizenship Ceremony	70 people	New citizens New residents Multicultural and multilingual communities
Pop up #2 Reservoir Leisure Centre	40 people	Young families, older people, multicultural, multilingual, different abilities
Pop up #3 Fairfield Library	50 people	Young families, older people
Pop up # 4 Preston Market	CANCELLED	
Total	419	The project targeted the general Darebin community with additional effort taken to engage with younger people, young families and multicultural and multilingual people.

In summary this project saw a total of 419 points of contact. This included 93 people who participated online (over the 4 tools) and 160 people who participated in face-to-face activities.

## Demographic analysis

We were only able to collect demographic statistics for people who participated in the online activities. These demographics showed a mix of postcodes and genders amongst the people who participated. 5 people who responded to the survey online spoke a language other than English at

home and 11 people stated they were born overseas. These languages were Greek Italian and German. 6 responders identified as having a disability. 0 responders identified as Aboriginal.



## Engagement Results

### Face to Face results

3 pop ups were held at for this engagement:

- Citizenship Ceremony
- Reservoir Leisure Centre
- Fairfield Library

A 4<sup>th</sup> pop up was planned at Preston market but was cancelled due to staff illness. The pop ups included arrange of information about the project, 2 interactive engagement activities and opportunities to scan a QR or complete a paper survey. The majority of passersby chose to participate in the 2 engagement activities which asked people their preferences for engaging with Council and the topics that they were interested in.

The results from the engagement activities varied slightly depending on the location. Generally, all community members that visited the stall were happy to talk to us and leave their feedback. There was a preference for receiving information via the post with most people listing Darebin Community News or Mail as their preferred method of contact. Social media was also a strong preference as was SMS/phone. Parks and Leisure and Recreation were the most popular areas of interest, this makes sense as two of the popups were conducted at a library and a leisure centre.

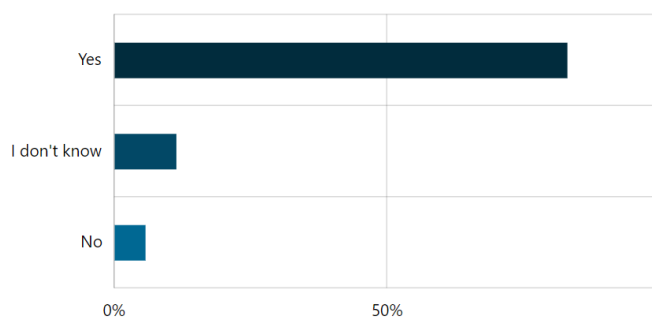


L-R Citizenship Ceremony, Reservoir LeisureCentre, Engagement Activity at Fairfield Library

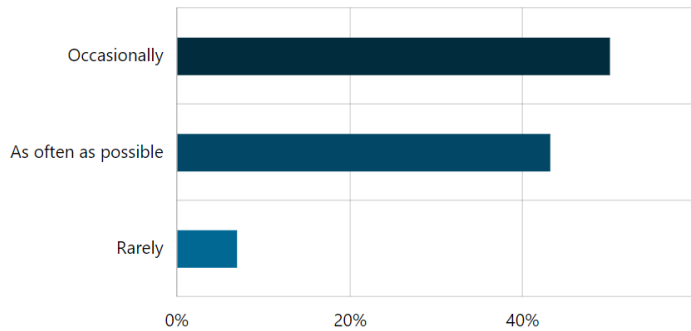
Online results

We asked 3 voting poll questions as a way to enable people to participate quickly and easily and encourage them to continue onto the longer survey if they were particularly interested in this topic. The results from the voting polls showed a strong preference for Council staff to be more visible in the community, a preference to keep community updated on project outcomes occasionally, and a recommendation for engagement projects to be open between 4 and 6 weeks.

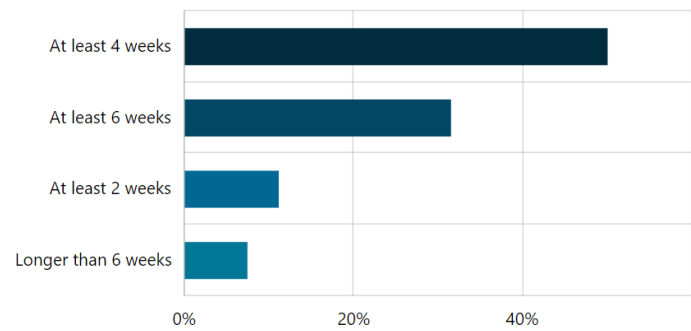
Would you like to see council staff out in the community more often?



When you provide us with feedback on a project we can keep you updated via email. How often would you like to hear from us?



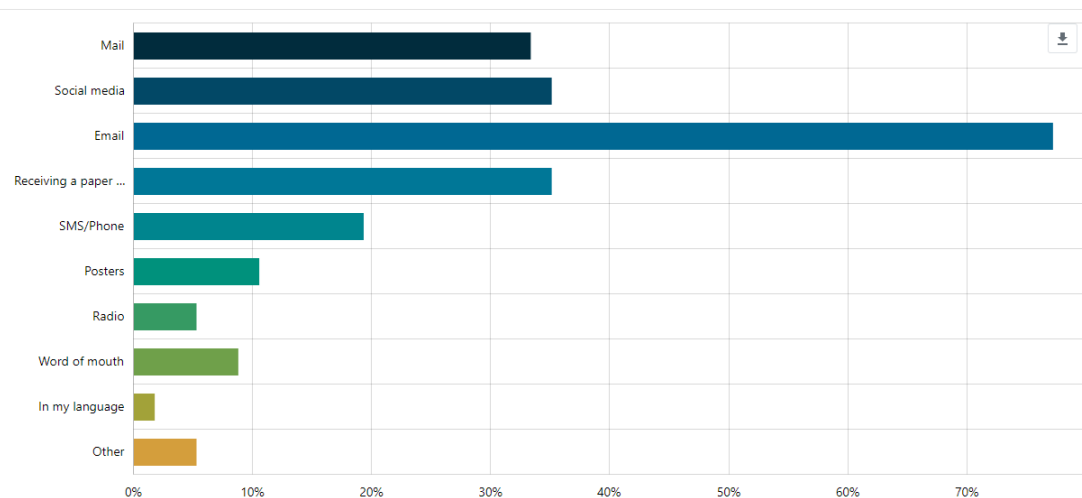
How long should an engagement project be open for community feedback?



We also asked a survey that included more in-depth questions about our engagement activities and our community engagement policy.

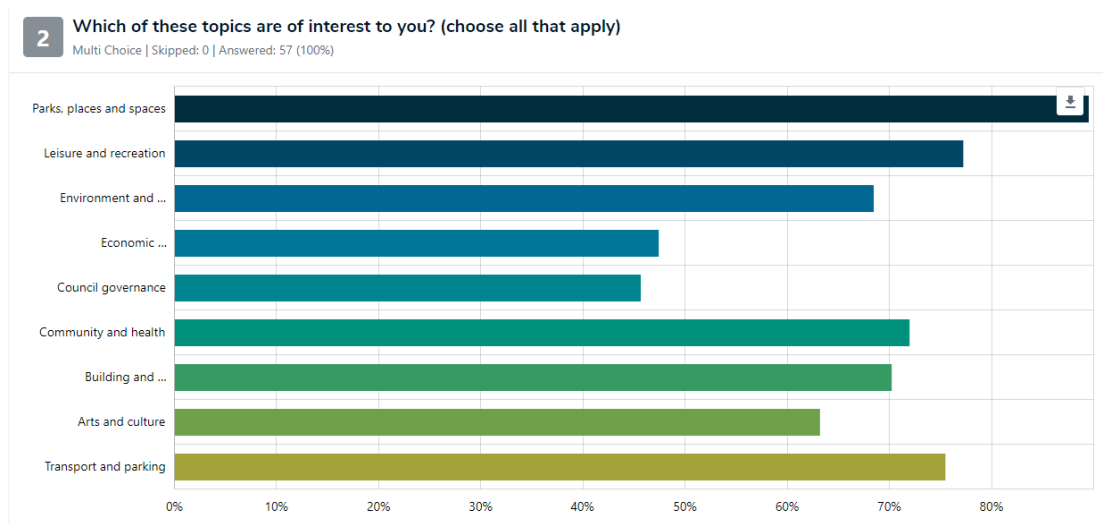
The results showed a clear preference for email communications. Not surprising given this survey was conducted online. Social media, mail and Darebin Community News were also popular answers.

**1** How do you like to receive information about how you can provide your input into Council decisions? (choose all that apply)  
Multi Choice | Skipped: 0 | Answered: 57 (100%)

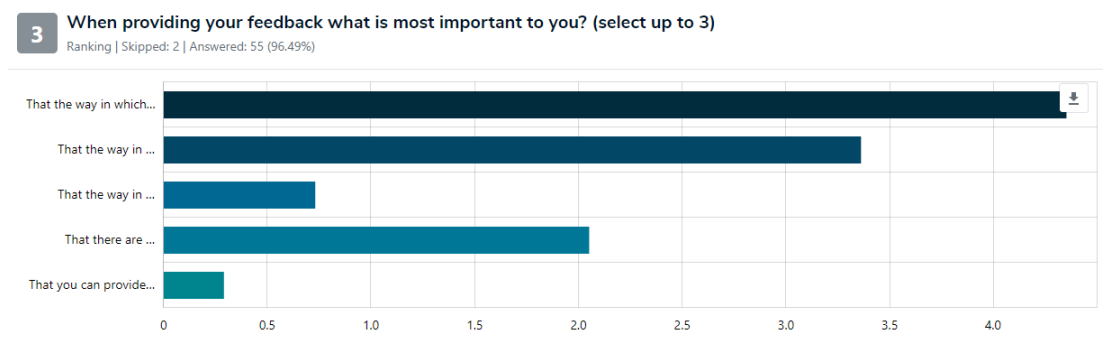




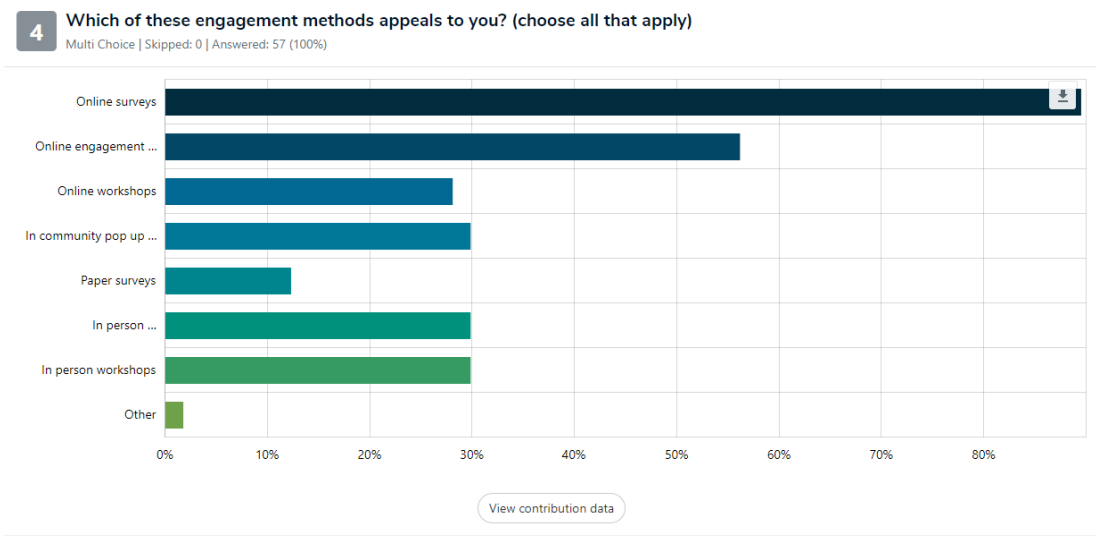
Unlike the face-to-face sessions there was significant variation in the topics of interests for people. Parks places and opens spaces was the most popular topic, and council governance the least popular, but there was a fairly even spread across all topics.



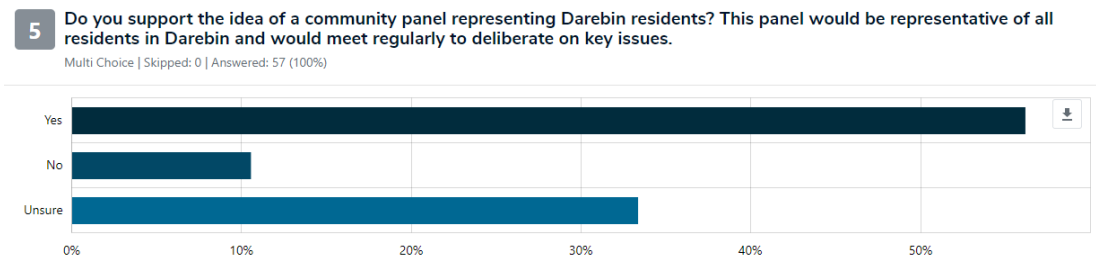
Easiness was the most important attribute for providing feedback with almost 100% of responders selecting this option. Quick and multiple options to provide feedback were the next most important attributes. Surprisingly, fun was not a common response to this question.



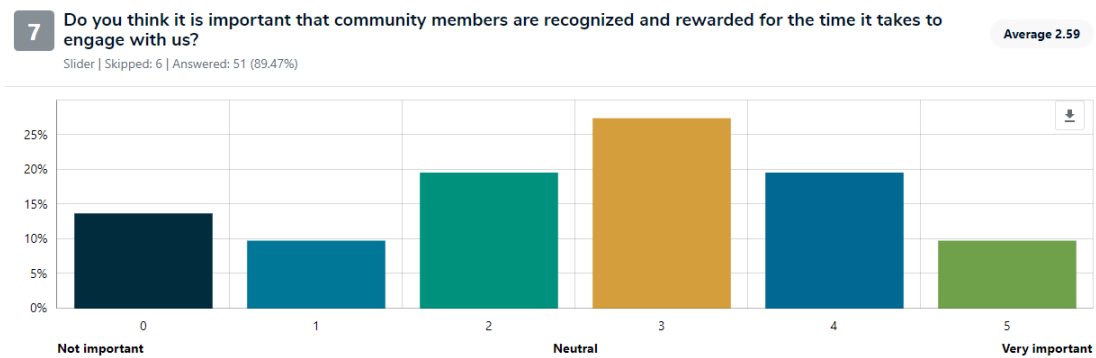
Online surveys and tools were the most appealing engagement methods with almost 100% of responders selecting this option. Not surprising given this engagement was conducted online. Online workshops, in community pop ups and in person workshops also received multiple votes.



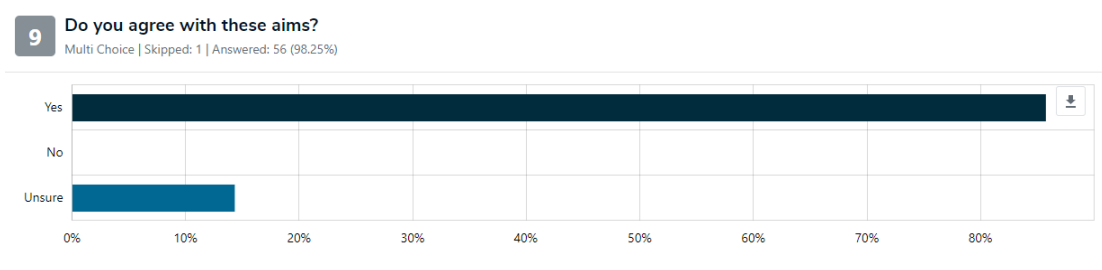
The idea of a community panel was supported by the responders with over 50% supporting this idea. Notably a significant number of people were unsure about this panel and when prompted their main concerns were around the representativeness of this panel and whether or not they would have any influence.



The importance of recognising and rewarding community members for the time it takes to engage with us was mixed with the majority of responders sitting in the neutral categories. Those that did think this was important listed various forms of financial compensation as the best way to recognise community members.



The aims of the community engagement policy were overwhelmingly supported with over 80% of responders supporting these and 12% selecting unsure. Most people noted the words transparency and representation in the aims and highlighted the importance of these in community engagement.



There was a range of suggestions provided for how council could better engage with our target groups including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, Multilingual and Multicultural communities, people with a disability, young people and LGBTQIA+ community members. These included things like engaging with existing groups, paying people for their time and engaging with people in places they normally visit like skate parks or senior citizen centres.

### Recommendations

This project sought to understand the community’s feedback on many of the actions in the Community Engagement Improvement Plan. The feedback shows strong support for activities including a community panel, community pop ups, a mix of online and in person opportunities to engage, communicating with people via mail, and a strong Close the Loop process. We received mixed feedback on the importance of fun when developing engagement activities and will look into this further. Based on the feedback we recommend proceeding to implement the actions of the community engagement improvement plan.

This project also sought to understand community’s feedback regarding the aims of our community engagement policy and our minimum standards for engagement including how we engage with target groups. The aims of the policy were largely supported. We received mixed feedback on the importance of recognising and rewarding community feedback and will look into this further. We received a range of suggestions for how to best engage with our target groups. These ideas will be presented to some of our advisory bodies before finalising our policy.

#### Approval

*Ensure this report is approved by the relevant staff members as appropriate.*

*Please provide a completed copy of the document to the Community Engagement and Demographics Team.*



# Community Engagement Improvement Plan

**DRAFT: June 2024**

**Communications and Engagement**



### Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Darebin City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the traditional owners and custodians of the land and waters we now call Darebin and affirms that Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people have lived on this land for millennia, practising their customs and ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal.

Council acknowledges that Elders past, present and emerging are central to the cohesion, intergenerational wellbeing and ongoing self-determination of Aboriginal communities. They have played and continue to play a pivotal role in maintaining and transmitting culture, history and language.

Council respects and recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' values, living culture and practices, including their continuing spiritual connection to the land and waters and their right to self-determination. Council also recognises the diversity within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities have had and continue to play a unique role in the life of the Darebin municipality. Council recognises and values this ongoing contribution and its significant value for our city and Australian society more broadly.

*Extract from Darebin City Council's Statement of commitment to Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, 2019.*

### Darebin's Diversity Statement

Situated on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, the City of Darebin is now home to a diverse community of people with different socio-economic status, gender, age, ability, race, culture, ethnicity, language, sexuality, sex characteristics, gender identity, beliefs, occupations, income, education, carer status and household type. The Darebin community cherishes this diversity and values it as an important civic asset.

Darebin City Council acknowledges the history and contributions of the various communities, migrants and refugees who have made the municipality their home. Their endeavours have enriched the economic, social, cultural, artistic, community and civic character of the city, and created a cosmopolitan locality where variety and difference are welcomed and encouraged.

Council also acknowledges that who we are today as a municipality rests on the history of loss and dispossession inflicted upon Aboriginal people, past and present, despite their strengths, resilience and continued contributions to our city.



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## Introduction

Darebin City Council is committed to building a fair, inclusive and equitable City, which is why we put residents, business owners and the community at the heart of our decision-making. The community engagement function at Council enables us to do this and provides our community with the opportunity to contribute to and influence Council's actions.

Council has a clear Community Engagement Policy and uses a range of engagement methods and communications tools, however at times there is low engagement from diverse groups, high engagement on local, place-based issues but low engagement on large, municipal wide issues and low levels of community influence over engagement outcomes.

Our Community Engagement Improvement plan seeks to address these challenges. It puts the community at the centre and focuses on ensuring we deliver a meaningful, trusted engagement model that is inclusive of our diverse community and is continuously improving. We want our community engagement model to be sector leading, and a benchmark for best practice.

Aligned with our *Council Plan 2021-2025*, the principles in our *Community Engagement Policy*, and a key action under *Priority 3 Value Driven Engagement and Partnerships* in our *Organisational Strategy*, our Community Engagement Improvement Plan will be a core focus for our organisation moving forward.

Our plan contains 25 actions that aims to achieve our goals that were identified through extensive consultation with staff and community and benchmarking across the sector.

Over the next three years we will focus on improving our work in these improvement areas:

- Earlier planning and more meaningful engagement
- Creating and using more accessible channels and methods
- Maximising community interest, impact and relevance in our engagement projects
- Capacity building and collaboration
- Internal process improvements
- Innovative technology and data
- Diversity and inclusion
- Relationships, trust and cultural safety
- Recognition and respect
- Trust building

It is our responsibility to ensure that the voices, perceptions and needs of our diverse community are included in Council's service planning, delivery, and decision making. Improving engagement with these groups is a key focus of the plan.

We're proud to present our Community Engagement Improvement Plan and believe it will significantly improve Council's engagement outcomes over the next three years.



## The Why, What, How and Who of Community Engagement

### Why – Our Purpose and Aims

The purpose of the community engagement function at Council is to provide our community with an opportunity to contribute to and influence Council's actions. It is our responsibility to ensure that the voices, perceptions and needs of our diverse community, including our multicultural and multilingual community members Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, are included in Council's service planning and delivery, and decision making. We do this by:

- Providing engagement advice to the organisation using best practice models.
- Providing advice and support for community engagement processes.
- Ensuring community engagements meet the legislated community engagement principles and our Community Engagement Policy requirements.
- Ensuring community engagements are meaningful, accessible and transparent.
- Providing education, training and resources to build the engagement capacity of the organisation.
- Providing specialist advice on best practice to communicate and engage effectively with diverse multicultural, multilingual communities.
- Strengthening relationships with community and relevant stakeholders
- Coordinating a community engagement project schedule across the organisation

### What – Our Tools and Channels

We use a range of engagement and communication tools and channels to encourage our community members to participate in our engagement activities.

*Some of our community engagement tools include:*

*Your Say Darebin platform*

*Our website dedicated to conversations about our projects and initiatives.*

*Online engagement tools*

*Online surveys, voting polls, vision boards etc. offline versions are always available.*

*Pop-up Events*

*Pop up stalls within the municipality where community members can participate in our engagement activities.*

*Community Workshops*

*Organised workshops with existing groups or open to the public where community members can participate in our engagement activities.*

*Information sessions*

*Formal sessions usually open to the public for community to learn more about a project or initiative.*

*Deliberative engagement tools*

*Community panels, citizen assemblies etc. that allow community to deliberate and decide on key issues.*

*Hearings of Submission*

*Formal processes where community members can raise issues at special council meetings.*





*Some of our communications tools include:*

*Your Say Darebin* newsletters to members  
Newsletters  
Darebin Community News publication  
Letterbox drops  
Posters  
Signage  
Public notices  
Social media  
Council website

### **How – Our Principles and Promises**

The following six principles are listed in our Community Engagement Policy and underpin community engagement at Darebin. They are the guiding rules for all engagement processes and activities undertaken, and ensure our community engagement is purposeful, representative, and is easy to be involved in.

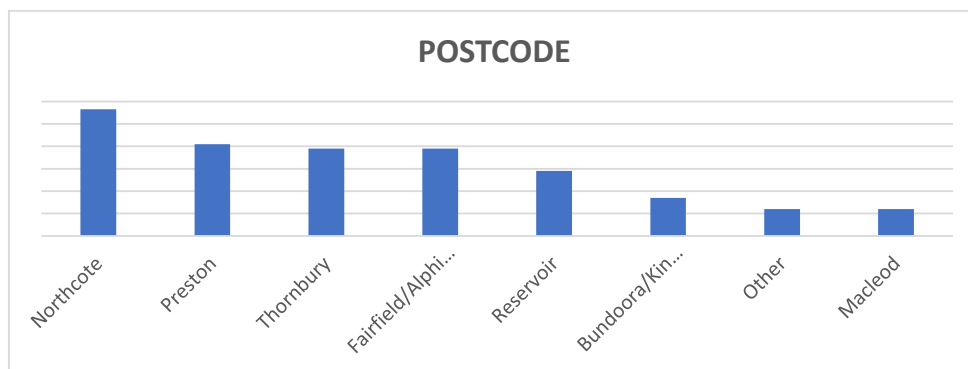
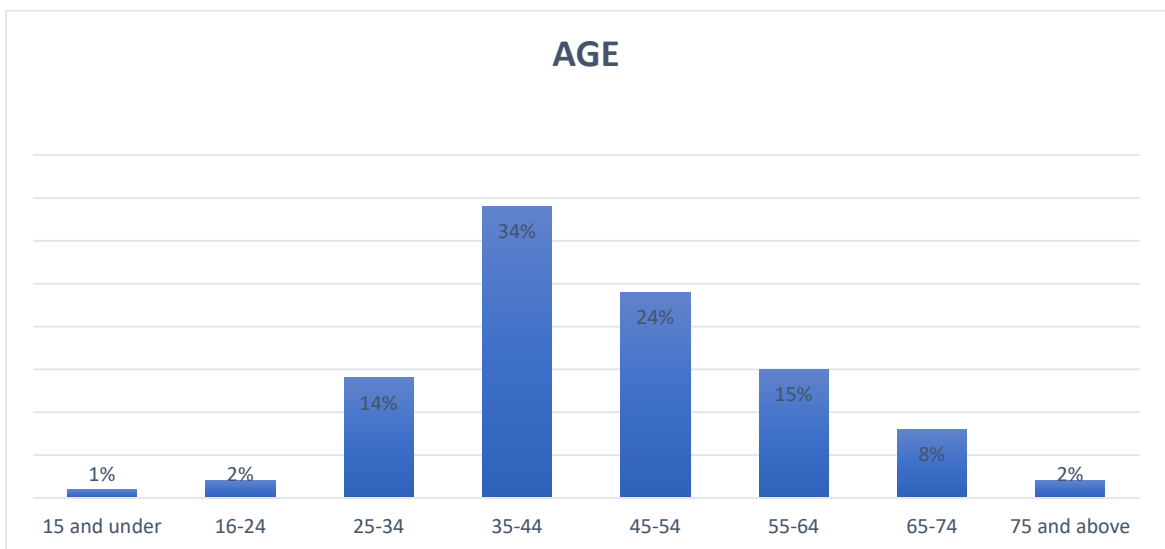
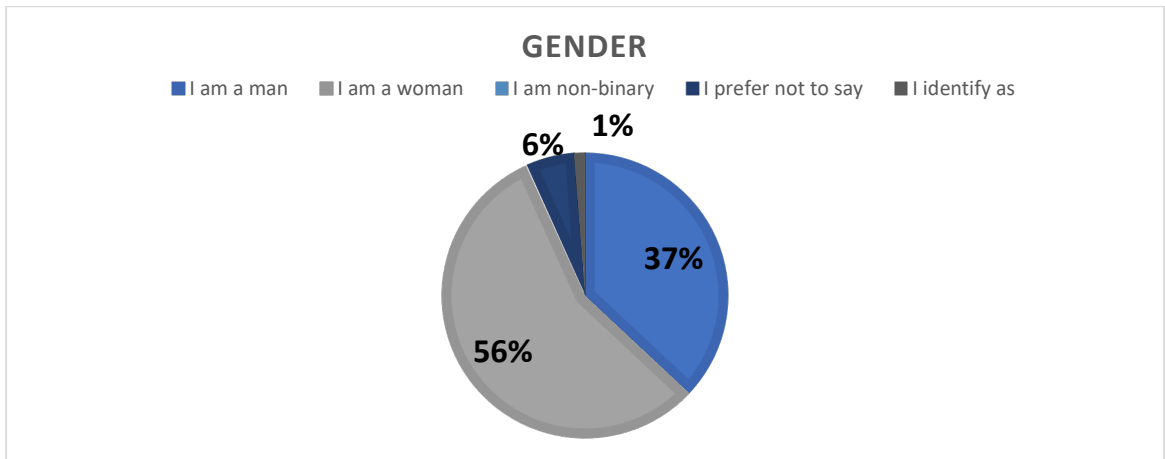
1. A genuine opportunity to shape the way our local government works (respectful).  
*We set clear objectives and scope for our engagements to ensure participants have clear expectations of what they can influence and how their feedback will be used.*
2. Focused on providing input to solving challenges (action oriented).  
*We recognise that better decisions will be made with community feedback and input.*
3. Representative (focused on justice and equity).  
*We ensure all community members have opportunities to contribute and benefit, no matter their preferences, abilities, cultures or where they live. We recognise there are barriers for some groups and will use suitable methods, and build our relationships across our community, to remove those barriers and ensure everyone's voices are heard.*
4. Build on our relationships with the community which are essential to trust in our work.  
*We value the insights of our community and respect the time and effort they give towards informing our decision making. We will be collaborative, consistent, transparent and will keep the community informed in our engagement approach.*
5. Accessible, easy, and enjoyable (inclusive).  
*We focus on productive and meaningful sessions that suit the community and are enjoyable and culturally relevant. We want those involved to learn about complex issues, hear a range of perspectives, and have their own experiences and needs heard.*
6. Fed back to the community (integrity).  
*We are committed to sharing the findings with participants and to ensuring our decisions are reported back widely to the community.*



**Who – Our Internal and External Audiences**

Our Community Engagement program aims to reach the entire Darebin community; however, we know that some people have less opportunity to participate than others. On average just 4.5% of our population engages with us each year.

Our online engagement platform *Your Say Darebin* is actively used by some members of our community. A breakdown of our online members can be seen below.





Voices that are typically underrepresented from our online engagement space and benefit from more targeted engagement strategies include:

- Multilingual/multicultural communities
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- People with a disability
- Young people
- Older people
- People with low digital literacy
- Residents from Bundoora, Macleod and Kingsbury



### Strategic Alignment

Community engagement is a core part of our work at Darebin City Council. The diagram below outlines how community engagement is critical for the development, monitoring and review of the key strategic documents that guide our work. This Community Engagement Improvement Plan was developed through the lens of key strategies, plans and related considerations.



### Council Plan

The *2021-2025 Council Plan* sets out how we will deliver on our promises to make Darebin an equitable, vibrant and connected community. It outlines how Council will deliver on its promises to the community and achieve the *2041 Community Vision*, which is:

- Darebin is an equitable, vibrant and connected community.
- Darebin respects and supports First Nations People, values country, our diverse communities and places.
- Darebin commits to mitigating the climate emergency, creating prosperity for current and future generations.

Our Community Engagement Improvement Plan aligns with this vision and focuses on a community engagement model that meets the diverse needs, interests, and preferences of our community.



**Organisational Strategy**

Darebin’s Organisational vision is to be: “a sector leading organisation that delivers the Community Vision and Council plan for our community by being:

- Value driven and purposeful
- A brilliant and responsive service provider
- Transparent, empowering and trusted
- Motivated, joyful and proud”

We want our community engagement model to be sector leading, and a benchmark for best practice. In-depth consultation with our staff and community identified the importance of delivering a meaningful, trusted community engagement model that is inclusive of our diverse community and is continuously improving. The table below outlines how our improvement plan goals align with our organisational strategy.

	<b>Organisational strategy</b>	<b>What does this mean for community engagement at Darebin?</b>
	Value driven and purposeful	Our practice will be <b>driven</b> by our organisational <b>values</b> and the community engagement principles that give our work <b>purpose</b> .
	Motivated, joyful and proud	We want to <b>motivate</b> our staff to see engagements as <b>joyful</b> activities that make a positive impact to communities that they can be <b>proud</b> of.
	A brilliant and responsive service provider	We will provide a <b>brilliant</b> engagement service that is <b>responsive</b> to the needs of our diverse communities.
	Transparent, empowering and trusted	We will focus on having a <b>transparent, empowering and trusted</b> relationship with our community so that we can explore, co-contribute and co-create solutions to community issues that help realise our community vision.

**Community Engagement Policy**

Our Community Engagement Policy ensures we conduct our community engagement in a way that includes all voices in our community. It outlines the need for us to remove the barriers people and groups in the community might encounter. It also ensures our engagement practice is open and transparent to ensure the community can trust the decisions we make as caretakers of this City.

The Policy outlines the roles and responsibilities Darebin staff have in relation to Community Engagement and includes the legislative principles and requirements we are required to abide by under the Local Government Act (2020). The review of our Community Engagement Policy by February 2025 is a key action in this improvement plan.



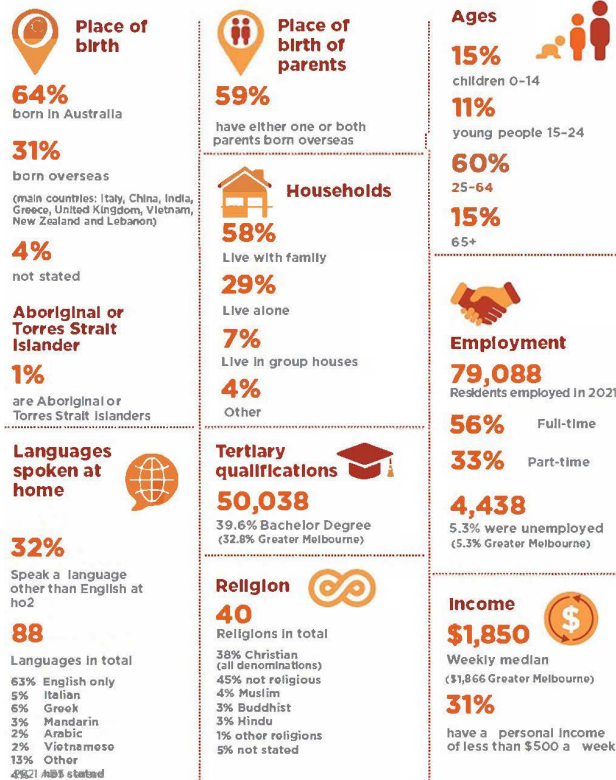
### Community Profile

This improvement plan has a particular focus on improving engagement with diverse groups in our community who we know experience barriers to participation.

The City of Darebin is a region rich in culture and diversity. In 2023 there are over 155,000 people living in a vibrantly growing multicultural and multifaith community. The municipality is a home to people from over 110 countries and speaking 88 languages.

About one-third of our residents were born overseas and 1% of total population are of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background (this is higher % than that for Greater Melbourne). Over 6% of our residents require help with their day-to-day lives due to disability. Unemployment rate at 5.8% is the same as that for Greater Melbourne. The Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage for the City of Darebin is 1,081. It varies for different suburbs throughout the municipality from very low to very high.

#### Quick Facts About Darebin





## What informed this Plan?

### Annual Community Satisfaction Survey

The Annual Community Satisfaction Survey provides valuable insights into community satisfaction with Council's engagement and consultation activities. In 2023 satisfaction with Council's community consultation and engagement performance declined by 12% to 6.0 out of 10. This score is measurably lower than our long-term average satisfaction (6.6). This score was accompanied by several verbatim comments reflecting a perception in the community that Council was not consulting or engaging sufficiently with the community including comments such as:

- *"I don't get engaged"*
- *'They don't consult or communicate. The decisions are already made, and they just make community listen'*
- *"Council does what it wants. Community consultation is just to show"*

### Community Consultation

In addition to the results from the 2023 Annual Community Satisfaction Survey, findings from several recent community consultations were used to inform this plan. The consultations included the following groups:

- Multicultural and multilingual community members
- Elderly community members
- Young people
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members
- People with disability
- General community

Some of the key themes uncovered during these consultations included:

- The importance of communicating through a variety of accessible channels
- Relationships, trust and cultural safety
- Transparency
- Accessibility and inclusion
- Recognition and respect

These findings and key themes were used to inform the development of our improvement plan actions.



### Consultation with staff

Several internal workshops including and a thorough Equity Impact Assessment process with relevant staff informed this plan. At the staff workshop staff were asked to consider dilemmas relating to areas for improvement and brainstorm challenges and opportunities within each area.

Some of the key themes uncovered during these consultations included a need for:

- Early planning and more meaningful engagement.
- Capacity building, collaboration and relationships.
- Innovation, technology and data.
- Community representation and accessibility.
- Clearer communication, setting parameters and closing the loop.
- Internal process improvements.
- Community impact and relevance.

The findings from these sessions informed the development of our improvement plan actions.

### Consultation and benchmarking across the sector

Several local councils and industry leaders were consulted to inform this improvement plan. We were particularly interested in understanding the challenges faced by other councils and engagement agencies and the strategies they use to conduct meaningful engagement with their communities. Below is a list of stakeholders consulted during the development of this plan.

Banyule City Council	Social PinPoint
Moonee Valley City Council	Tamarack Institute
Wyndham City Council	IAP2 Australasia
Brimbank City Council	
Port Phillip City Council	
City of Kingston	
Frankston City Council	
City of Yarra	
Hume City Council	
City of Casey	
City of Ballarat	
City of Monash	
City of Wodonga	
City of Parramatta	





## Our Goals

We have identified the following goals to aim for to improve our community engagement approach.

**Goal 1:** We engage with our community in meaningful, accessible and interesting ways on issues that matter to them.

**Goal 2:** We maintain a collaborative and continuously improving engagement model that prioritises innovation, evaluation and capacity building.

**Goal 3:** We offer an inclusive and culturally safe environment to learn from the rich knowledge, experiences and feedback of our diverse communities.

**Goal 4:** We build a connected, credible, and trusted relationship with the community based on mutual respect and accountability.

### Improvement areas:

Each goal is associated with several improvement areas.

***We engage with our community in meaningful, accessible and interesting ways on issues that matter to them.***

#### ***We do this by:***

- Early planning and meaningful engagement:  
Ensure that community engagement is considered as an important element in the early stages of project planning and is included in the project's budget. This will enable more opportunities for innovative engagement methods including deliberative engagement, and greater community influence over project outcomes.
- Accessible channels and methods:  
Make engaging easy by ensuring that a range of diverse and suitable methods are incorporated into the process, including outreach, traditional methods of engagement and channels used by the community.
- Community interest, impact and relevance:  
Ensure engagements are relevant and impactful, connect to bigger issues, make sense to the community and respect the needs and interests of diverse communities.

***We maintain a collaborative and continuously improving engagement model that prioritises innovation, evaluation, and capacity building.***

#### ***We do this by:***

- Capacity building and collaboration:  
Create a collaborative environment of resource sharing for staff to share learnings, contacts, relationships and information relating to community engagements.
- Internal process improvements:  
Strengthen internal processes at all levels of the organisation so the best practice is implemented.



- Innovation technology and data:  
Leverage innovative technology such as virtual reality, social media, gamification and data analysis to reach broad audiences and enhance community experiences.

**We offer an inclusive and culturally safe environment to learn from the rich knowledge, experiences, and feedback of our diverse communities.**

**We do this by:**

- Diversity and inclusion:  
Ensure diverse representation and intersectionality is addressed through the application of our minimum standards of engagement.
- Relationships, trust and cultural safety:  
Focus on building relationships and creating safe spaces for community members to share feedback.

**We build a connected, credible, and trusted relationship with the community based on mutual respect and accountability.**

**We do this by:**

- Recognition and respect:  
Respect the time, needs and preferences of community members when asking for feedback and recognise their expertise.
- Trust building:  
Deliver clear, transparent communication that outlines engagement parameters and closes the loop to maintain trust and accountability.

## Key Actions

This is a summary of how the actions in this plan address our key improvement areas. For a full list of improvement plan actions see the table at end of this document.

**Goal 1:** We engage with our community in meaningful, accessible and interesting ways on issues that matter to them.

Actions under this goal focus on improving engagement experiences and increasing the influence that our community has on the outcomes of our engagement projects. Actions include improving our close the loop process, using fun and interactive engagement methods and having a more visible presence in the community through regular pop ups and other events.

**Goal 2:** We maintain a collaborative and continuously improving engagement model that prioritizes innovation, evaluation, and capacity building.

This goal relates to building the capacity of our workforce, both within the community engagement team and wider Darebin staff, improving our internal process and leveraging technology to improve our engagement activities. Actions include developing a structured staff training program, setting up a Community of Practice and embedding community engagement into our project management processes.



**Goal 3:** We offer an inclusive and culturally safe environment to learn from the rich knowledge, experiences, and feedback of our diverse communities.

Actions under this goal focus on building relationships, creating safe spaces, and ensuring our diverse community has an opportunity to participate in our engagement activities. Actions include establishing a community panel, establishing a community leadership program and developing best practice guidelines for engaging with key groups.

**Goal 4:** We build a connected, credible, and trusted relationship with the community based on mutual respect and accountability.

This goal relates to the importance of respecting the time, needs and preferences of our community and the need for clear, transparent communication that builds trust and accountability. Actions include a review of the minimum standards of engagement in our Community Engagement Policy and establishing an evaluation and reporting framework.

## Outcomes

Based on our four goals we expect to see the following outcomes at the completion of our three-year improvement plan:

- ✓ Increased community participation and satisfaction. Community validates and co-creates solutions to problems faced by council and Council has confidence that its services align with community aspirations and expectations.
- ✓ Increased capacity and confidence in our ability to deliver a sector leading engagement model.
- ✓ Improved relationships and increased participation from diverse communities in our engagement activities.
- ✓ Increased satisfaction from community in our consultation and engagement processes.

## Resources

The actions proposed in this improvement plan require various amounts of resources. Each action has been categorised as low, medium or high resource intensity. The low and many of the medium intensity actions have been scheduled for year one and will be undertaken using our existing resources.

The high and some of the medium resource intensity actions require additional resourcing and will be considered as part of individual business cases once further feasibility and cost benefit research has been undertaken.



**Community Engagement Improvement Plan Actions and Timeline**

Action	Timeframe (year)			Goal	Additional resources required?	Risk Low/Medium/High
	1	2	3			
1. Develop and implement a structured "Close the Loop" process with defined checkpoints and roles to regularly update the community on project status and outcomes and keep the organisation accountable (e.g. report card).	X			1	No	Low
2. Develop a proactive and consistent approach to sharing celebratory-style news, showcasing successful engagement outcomes.	X			4	No	Low
3. Introduce a dedicated section on the "Your Say" page titled "What can Your Feedback Influence?" per engagement outlining the direct impact community input can have on decision-making processes.	X			4	No	Low
4. Establish a dedicated section within the Darebin Community News publication specifically tailored for community engagements.	X			1	No	Low
5. As part of website redevelopment prioritise the visibility of the "sign up here" function to promote engagement opportunities.	X			1	No	Low
6. Establish an engagement support matrix with tiers (gold, silver, bronze) and minimum requirements, including setting a minimum budget for accessible communications including translations, transcriptions and graphic design, videos etc. Report quarterly to ELT on upcoming engagements and level of support allocated in line with matrix.	X			2	No	Low
7. Integrate a structured reflection process into all community engagement projects, including staff-to-staff congratulations, best practice sharing, annual wrap-ups, ongoing feedback process and coordinating workshops led by successful teams to promote peer education and role modelling.	X	X		2	No	Low



8. Establish a consistent evaluation and reporting framework for all engagement projects including checking that engagement has been meaningful for participants.	X	X		4	No	Low
9. Implement the customer research work on use of personas to channel strategy and better target audiences.	X	X		3	No	Low
10. Explore opportunities to partner with tertiary education providers in the area for the purposes of reaching young people and international students and leveraging academic expertise, resources, and networks.	X	X		3	No	Low
11. Review the Community Engagement Policy with particular focus on refining the minimum standards for engagement.	X			4	No	Low
12. Implement a structured program for regular staff training sessions aimed to build community engagement capacity including, community engagement timelines and processes, lap2 spectrum of engagement, using demographic data tools, the benefits of deliberative engagement and diverse communications and engagement best practices.		X	X	2	No	Low
13. Form a Community of Practice made up of selected Darebin staff with community engagement skills for the purposes of knowledge sharing, training opportunities and supporting engagement activities.		X	X	2	No	Low
14. Research, test and implement fun and interactive engagement methods including virtual and augmented reality technologies and promote these methods over traditional approaches.		X	X	1	No	Low
15. Assess the feasibility, costs and benefits of establishing a Community Panel comprised of engaged and interested community members convening regularly to offer advice and feedback on community engagement activities.		X	X	3	Yes	High
16. Develop a model and resource infrastructure for regular pop ups and aim for attendance at significant places where community gathers (including neighbourhoods houses) and all major events (including citizenship ceremonies) to establish a visible and accessible presence across the municipality.		X	X	1	Yes	Medium



17. Embed Community Engagement process into our project management processes to ensure Community Engagement is considered and planned for proactively (through systems, process and training).		X	X	2	No	Low
18. Investigate the feasibility, costs and benefits of establishing a community engagement leadership program employing community leaders from diverse backgrounds to promote, share and provide advice on community engagement activities.		X	X	3	Yes	High
19. Work with Darebin’s advisory groups to develop best practice guides for engaging with key groups e.g. multifaith and multicultural, LGTBTIQ+, disability, young people, Aboriginal communities etc.		X		3	No	Low
20. Explore the option of embedding community engagement as a standing agenda item on advisory group meetings to obtain advice from them on how to tailor engagements for that audience and get an ongoing pulse check on issues that matter to them.	X			3	No	Low
21. Explore the development and roll out of new resident ‘welcome packs’ featuring key information about Darebin and how to get involved in engagements and explore a similar model for international students e.g. attend induction week.		X		3	Yes	Low
22. Explore possibilities to enhance and harness the requirement for Council Officers with relationships with diverse stakeholders to support/participate/ facilitate engagement with these groups for major engagements.	X			3	No	Low
23. Develop engagement video and a postcard to promote connection and opportunities to engage.	X			4	Yes	Low
24. In the reviewed Community Engagement Policy imbed specific time-lines for undertaking engagement and specify exceptions to these timelines.	X			2	No	Low
25. Ensure that our Transparency Policy is clearly reflected in Governance Rules and Community Engagement Policy.				4	No	Low



### Appendix A: Measurement indicators

Action	Measurement
1. Develop and implement a structured "Close the Loop" process with defined checkpoints to regularly update the community on project status and outcomes and keep the organisation accountable (e.g. report card).	Output: All projects undertake close the loop process within three months of engagement closing.
2. Develop a proactive and consistent approach to sharing celebratory-style news, showcasing successful engagement outcomes.	Output: Positive engagement stories shared on social media and other communications as appropriate.
3. Introduce a dedicated section on the "Your Say" page titled "What can Your Feedback Influence?" per engagement outlining the direct impact community input can have on decision-making processes.	Output: All <i>Your Say</i> pages have dedicated section embedded into "What can Your Feedback Influence?"
4. Establish a dedicated section within DCN specifically tailored for community engagements.	Output: All DCN editions have dedicated engagement article.
5. As part of website redevelopment prioritize the visibility of the "sign up here" function to promote engagement opportunities.	Output: 500 new <i>Your Say</i> Darebin members per year
6. Establish an engagement support matrix with tiers (gold, silver, bronze) and minimum requirements, including setting a minimum budget for accessible communications (all comms should be clear and accessible) including translations, transcreations and graphic design, videos etc and report quarterly to ELT on upcoming engagements and level of support allocated in line with matrix.	Output: All community engagement projects are allocated a gold silver bronze status during planning stage with appropriate resources accordingly.
7. Integrate a structured reflection process into all community engagement projects, including staff-to-staff congratulations, best practice sharing, annual wrap-ups, ongoing feedback process and coordinating workshops led by successful teams to promote peer education and role modelling.	Output: Regular internal articles to celebrates successes.
8. Establish a consistent evaluation and reporting framework for all engagement projects including checking that engagement has been meaningful for participants.	Output: All projects complete a reflection report.



<p>9. Implement the customer research work on use of personas to channel strategy and better target audiences.</p>	<p>Output: Dedicated personas developed and used.</p>
<p>10. Explore opportunities to partner with tertiary education providers in the area for the purposes of reaching young people and leveraging academic expertise, resources, and networks.</p>	<p>Output: Develop partnership and attend minimum two events per year.</p>
<p>11. Review the Community Engagement Policy with particular focus on refining the minimum standards for engagement</p>	<p>Output: Community Engagement Policy adopted by Council in February 2025.</p>
<p>12. Implement a structured program for regular staff training sessions aimed to build community engagement capacity including, community engagement timelines and processes, lap2 spectrum of engagement, using demographic data tools, the benefits of deliberative engagement and diverse communications and engagement best practices.</p>	<p>Output: Minimum six staff training sessions per year</p>
<p>13. Form a Community of Practice made up of selected Darebin staff with community engagement skills for the purposes of knowledge sharing, training opportunities and supporting engagement activities.</p>	<p>Output: Minimum 15 x Darebin staff signed up to Community of Practice.</p>
<p>14. Research, test and implement fun and interactive engagement methods including virtual and augmented reality technologies and promote these methods over traditional approaches like surveys.</p>	<p>Output: Explore opportunities and 50% of engagement projects to have an interactive element (not a survey).</p>
<p>15. Assess the feasibility, costs and benefits of establishing a Community Panel comprised of engaged and interested community members convening regularly to offer advice and feedback on community engagement activities.</p>	<p>Output: Develop business case for 30-member community panel.</p>
<p>16. Develop a model and resource infrastructure for regular pop ups and aim for attendance at significant places where community gathers and all major events (including citizenship ceremonies) to establish a visible and accessible presence across the municipality and include opportunities for councillor involvement where appropriate.</p>	<p>Output: Minimum eight pop ups per year.</p>





<p>17. Embed Community Engagement process into our project management processes to ensure Community Engagement is considered and planned for pro-actively. (through systems, process and training).</p>	<p>Output: Engagement included in Pulse software, ELT/Cr reports and other relevant processes.</p>
<p>18. Investigate the feasibility, costs and benefits of establishing a community engagement leadership program employing community leaders from diverse backgrounds to promote, share and provide advice on community engagement activities.</p>	<p>Output: Develop business case for leadership program.</p>
<p>19. Work with Darebin’s Advisory groups to develop best practice guides for engaging with key groups e.g. LGTBTIQ+, Disability, young people, Aboriginal communities etc.</p>	<p>Output: Minimum five best practice guides developed.</p>
<p>20. Explore the option of embedding community engagement as a standing agenda item on advisory group meetings to obtain advice from them on how to tailor engagements for that audience and get an ongoing pulse check on issues that matter to them.</p>	<p>Output: Meet with all advisory groups at least once per year.</p>
<p>21. Explore the development and roll out of new resident ‘welcome packs’ featuring key information about Darebin and how to get involved in engagements.</p>	<p>Output: Develop business case.</p>
<p>22. Explore possibilities to enhance and harness the requirement for Council Officers with relationships with diverse stakeholders to support/participate/ facilitate engagement with these groups for major engagements.</p>	<p>Output: Increased number of participants from diverse backgrounds.</p>
<p>23. Develop engagement video and a postcard to promote connection and opportunities to engage.</p>	<p>Output: Engagement video and postcard developed.</p>
<p>24. In the reviewed Community Engagement Policy imbed specific timelines for undertaking engagement and specify exceptions to these timelines.</p>	<p>Output: Policy specifies staff expectations for planning and undertaking engagements.</p>
<p>25. Ensure that our Transparency Policy is clearly reflected in Governance Rules and Community Engagement Policy.</p>	<p>Output: Transparency Policy mentioned in Governance Rules and Engagement Policy.</p>



# Darebin Community Engagement Policy

<p><b>Purpose</b></p>	<p>Darebin City Council is committed to building a fair, inclusive and equitable city, which is why we put residents, business owners and the community sector at the heart of our decision-making.</p> <p>This policy ensures we conduct our community engagement in a way that includes all voices in our community by actively seeking to remove the barriers people and groups in the community might encounter, and is open and transparent to ensure the community can trust the decisions we make as caretakers of this city.</p> <p>This will be achieved through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our community engagement principles and our commitment to the community, which underpins and guide our approach to community engagement.</li> <li>• Our clear minimum standards of conducting meaningful, equitable and inclusive engagement, taking into consideration the significance and complexity of projects and matters, and level of interest, impact and influence that the stakeholders have on decisions being made.</li> <li>• Consistent application of this policy to all planning, implementation and evaluation of all community engagement processes and activities at Darebin undertaken by Council, including work undertaken by consultants and volunteers.</li> </ul> <p>This policy also provides direction on our legislatively required community engagement practices.</p>
<p><b>Scope</b></p>	<p>This Policy applies to anyone in the organisation who engages with the community.</p>

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<p><b>Definitions and Abbreviations</b></p>	<p>The following definitions have been used for the purposes of this policy.</p> <p><b>Community Engagement</b> A planned process that provides individuals and groups the opportunity to be involved meaningfully in service planning, delivery and decision-making which may affect them or are of interest to them. Community engagement seeks to build trust and strengthen relationships.</p> <p><b>Community</b> A term used that includes residents, businesses/workers, community leaders/representatives, and community groups and organisations in Darebin.</p> <p><b>Consultative Engagement</b> A term used to describe engagements at the level of ‘inform’ or ‘consult’ on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation, with the related promise of keeping the community informed or seeking feedback on strategies, policies and plans.</p> <p><b>Deliberative engagement</b> Deliberative engagement is a process that involves an informative and engaging dialogue with an inclusive, diverse and genuine representation from our community, where considered views and joint outcomes can be developed. Participants are provided with a breadth of inputs, information and enough time and opportunity to engage and discuss issues in depth in a welcoming and respectful environment, then provide recommendations and feedback which is reviewed and considered for adoption by Council.</p> <p><b>Public Participation</b> A term used by IAP2 meaning the involvement of those affected (interested or impacted) by a decision in the decision-making process. We use the term interchangeably with Community Engagement, Stakeholder Engagement or Consultation.</p>				
<p><b>Policy Statement(s)</b></p>	<p>None</p>				
<p><b>Responsibilities</b></p>	<p>We have principles, commitments and approaches that ensure our community engagement is meaningful, equitable and inclusive.</p> <p>The implementation of the Community Engagement Policy is the collective responsibility across all teams and staff members at Darebin.</p> <p>Responsibilities for ensuring this policy is implemented as intended is as follows:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Who</th> <th>Roles and responsibilities</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Councillors</td> <td>Ensure that there has been meaningful and inclusive engagement, and support the</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Who	Roles and responsibilities	Councillors	Ensure that there has been meaningful and inclusive engagement, and support the
Who	Roles and responsibilities				
Councillors	Ensure that there has been meaningful and inclusive engagement, and support the				

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		community mandate		
	Executive Leadership Team	Ensure policy is being applied to the community engagements when reviewing reports and presentations Champion best practice community engagement		
	Managers Group and Leadership Group	Ensure policy is being applied to community engagements being undertaken by their teams		
	Staff	Ensure policy is being applied to community engagements undertaken		
<b>Organisational Values</b>	<p>Council’s organisational values enable and support the effective design and application of this policy by guiding staff in the course of their work.</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>We Make a Difference:</b> We are driven by our desire to make a difference for the people we serve. Our work is purposeful and creates a positive impact for the community. We are proud to work here. Our work matters.</p> <p><b>We are Accountable:</b> We are empowered to own and take responsibility for our actions. We follow through on our commitments and deliver on our promises. We make it happen.</p> <p><b>We are Collaborative:</b> We are united by a common purpose to serve the community. We work together, connecting within our teams and across the organisation. We are inclusive and collaborative. We are one.</p> </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>We have Integrity:</b> We act with integrity and transparency in conversations and decision-making. Through open and clear communication, we build trust. We’re honest. We walk the talk.</p> <p><b>We show Respect:</b> We are diverse, inclusive, respectful and caring. We encourage everyone to have a voice and we listen to each other. We recognise one another’s contributions and treat people fairly. We look after each other.</p> <p><b>We are Creative:</b> We are bold, courageous and innovative. We try new things, experiment and continuously improve. We are open-minded, creative and forward-thinking. We are leaders.</p> </td> </tr> </table>		<p><b>We Make a Difference:</b> We are driven by our desire to make a difference for the people we serve. Our work is purposeful and creates a positive impact for the community. We are proud to work here. Our work matters.</p> <p><b>We are Accountable:</b> We are empowered to own and take responsibility for our actions. We follow through on our commitments and deliver on our promises. We make it happen.</p> <p><b>We are Collaborative:</b> We are united by a common purpose to serve the community. We work together, connecting within our teams and across the organisation. We are inclusive and collaborative. We are one.</p>	<p><b>We have Integrity:</b> We act with integrity and transparency in conversations and decision-making. Through open and clear communication, we build trust. We’re honest. We walk the talk.</p> <p><b>We show Respect:</b> We are diverse, inclusive, respectful and caring. We encourage everyone to have a voice and we listen to each other. We recognise one another’s contributions and treat people fairly. We look after each other.</p> <p><b>We are Creative:</b> We are bold, courageous and innovative. We try new things, experiment and continuously improve. We are open-minded, creative and forward-thinking. We are leaders.</p>
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<b>Breach of Policy</b>	Breaches of policies are treated seriously. Any concerns about non-compliance should be reported immediately to the owner of this policy.			
<b>What is Community Engagement and why we engage</b>	<p>Community engagement is a planned process that provides individuals and groups the opportunity to be involved meaningfully in service planning, delivery and decision-making which may affect them or are of interest to them. Community engagement seeks to build trust and strengthen relationships.</p> <p>Community engagement is a key step in forming decisions and developing policies, services, programs, places and spaces that continue to be relevant and responsive to changing needs and expectations. Maintaining and improving the wellbeing of our community depends on effective and transparent decision-making, that has considered the diversity of community views in an equitable, inclusive, open and authentic way.</p> <p>Meaningful, equitable and inclusive community engagement is essential as highlighted in one of the principles of our Towards Equality – Equity, inclusion and human rights framework 2019-2029.</p> <p>International research shows that the decision-making of governments is improved when communities are involved (Parvin 2018). It makes local government: respond</p>			

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	<p>better to the diverse needs of the community; design better services; and best of all, use the ideas of our community to respond to change. It also builds trust in government as people become involved in, and therefore see themselves reflected in it.</p> <p>Our two aims for engaging are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To strengthen representation in decision-making</li> <li>- To make sure we fulfil our commitments to community in line with our engagement principles and ensure the decisions and actions Council makes are transparent and well explained to our community</li> </ul> <p>The first aim is to strengthen representativeness in decision-making by ensuring Councillors and staff have access to information that reflects the diversity of the needs and lived experiences in our community, not just the opinions of the loudest voices. There is a widening “participation gap” in who gets their views heard in government decision-making (Dalton 2017). If not thought through carefully, new methods of community engagement only give people with the skills and resources more ways to have a say, further widening that gap (Dalton 2017). Focusing on representativeness will improve the quality of our community engagement, ensuring we generate a balanced set of perspectives to incorporate into discussions about action and outcomes. It is important that we provide more ways for a broader range of residents, businesses, and community representatives to have a say, and to experience and build an understanding of local government.</p> <p>The second aim is to ensure we fulfil our commitments to community in line with our engagement principles and widely provide open and transparent feedback on decisions, to allow public scrutiny, and to make sure the community understands the reasons for our decisions (Parvin 2018). Fulfilling our commitment to the community is essential for good community engagement. This means always “closing the loop” by going back to the community post-engagement, so people know how their feedback was considered and what decisions were made as a result.</p> <p>This aim also aligns to the principles in the Local Government Act 2020 to ensure the transparency of Council decisions and actions (governance principle), and to ensure that Council decision making processes are transparent. An exception is when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of this Act or any other Act (public transparency principle). Engaging our community in the decision-making process is at the heart of transparency in Council’s decision making processes.</p> <p>Bolstering the representativeness of information used to make decisions and feeding decisions back to community is not always easy. But well-planned community engagement means we can lead meaningful, open and transparent conversations about policy challenges and options. It means we can deliver the types of services and facilities our community needs and wants and address undue influence of skilled interest groups by balancing needs and perspectives. Ultimately, it allows our elected representatives to make decisions that create better communities, in increasingly complex environments.</p>
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**Our Principles and Commitment to the community**

The following six principles underpin community engagement at Darebin. They are the guiding rules for all engagement processes and activities undertaken, and ensure our community engagement is purposeful, representative, and is easy to be involved in.

Council has built on these six principles to include our commitment to our community against each of these principles.

Principles	Our Commitment
<b>A genuine opportunity to shape the way our local government works</b> (respectful)	We set clear objectives and scope for our engagements to ensure participants have clear expectations of what they can influence and how their feedback will be used.
<b>Focused on providing input to solving challenges</b> (action oriented)	We recognise that better decisions will be made with community feedback and input.
<b>Representative</b> (focused on justice and equity)	We ensure all community members have opportunities to contribute and benefit, no matter their preferences, abilities, cultures or where they live. We recognise there are barriers for some groups and will use suitable methods, and build our relationships across our community, to remove those barriers and ensure everyone’s voices are heard
<b>Build on our relationships with the community which are essential to trust in our work</b>	We value the insights of our community and respect the time and effort they give towards informing our decision making. We will be collaborative, consistent, transparent and will keep the community informed in our engagement approach
<b>Accessible, easy, and enjoyable</b> (inclusive)	We focus on productive and meaningful sessions that suit the community and are enjoyable and culturally relevant. We want those involved to learn about complex issues, hear a range of perspectives, and have their own experiences and needs heard.
<b>Fed back to the community</b> (integrity)	We are committed to sharing the findings with participants and to ensuring our decisions are reported back widely to the community.

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<p><b>How we engage – Minimum standards, Level and Type</b></p>	<p><b>Minimum standards of engagement</b></p> <p>Council will endeavour to reach all sections of the diverse community and provide an opportunity to give feedback and be involved when forming decisions and developing policies, services and spaces in a way that is accessible, appropriate and welcoming.</p> <p>It is important people who participate are supported and made to feel safe and comfortable in the process so they can have their say, whatever their background or life experiences.</p> <p>Specific consideration must be given to encourage feedback from those who experience disadvantage, marginalisation or those who Council traditionally finds hard to reach.</p> <p>We apply the lenses of people, places and experiences from our Towards Equality Framework to consider the diverse needs of our community and how they should be included in the engagement process. We also apply minimum standards of engagement that reflect the ratios of diversity in the community, to all our engagements in order to achieve maximum representation in our engagement approach.</p> <p>We are particularly committed to supporting the rights of people and groups who experience discrimination and disadvantage, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; children; young people; older people; culturally and linguistically diverse people; migrants and refugees; women and girls; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ+) people; people with a disability; and people experiencing poverty, including intergenerational disadvantage in the context of historical and growing inequalities.</p> <p>Council is committed to high quality, open and respectful engagement with all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. Council acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities’ right to self-determination and community-control principles. These principles have special significance for the way in which Council engages with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Council also recognises the diversity of views and opinions within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities have been deeply harmed by the policies and actions of past governments, which means trusting relationships may not exist or may need time and resources to establish and build.</p> <p>In all of Council’s engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, Council will ensure that there are culturally appropriate opportunities for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to be involved and strive to establish and sustain collaborative relationships: working together, giving recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community decision-making and, importantly, supporting the on-going aspirational efforts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples themselves towards justice and community well-being.</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities must always have the authorising voice in any thinking and decisions in matters which will affect them and their communities. This is usually where there is a higher level of community influence in the decision-making.</p> <p>A comprehensive guide of how to apply these standards are explained in our</p>
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*Community Engagement Toolkit.*

**Level of Community Engagement**

Engagement opportunities provided by Council will vary in level and type depending on the significance, complexity of projects, and level of interest, impact and influence that the stakeholders have on decisions being made.

At Darebin Council, we use the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation to guide our engagement approach. The Spectrum, as adapted and shown below, describes five different levels of engagement each with a different level of influence that the community should expect to have, and the related promise that we make to the community.

The levels of engagement are identified during the engagement planning process, but they can change throughout the course of projects due to factors like political impact, nature of the project, scope, resources, and influence from communities of interest.

Council will assess the following when identifying the levels of engagement and related engagement activities:

- Level of impact on the community
- Level of influence communities of interest have on the decision being made
- Complexity and associated risks of the issue, project or topic
- Resources available

Council will also assess our demographic data and identify the community groups that need to be targeted during the engagement planning process.

This policy requires the collection of postcodes linked to resident, work or connection to Darebin and basic demographic data from participants at all engagements undertaken with the community. The provision of name, email and postal address is optional only.

	<b>Infor m</b>	<b>Consult</b>	<b>Involve</b>	<b>Collaborate</b>	<b>Empower</b>
<b>Particip ation goal</b>	To provid e well balanc ed and objecti ve inform ation to assist our comm	To seek communit y feedback on analysis, alternativ es, and proposed decisions	To work directly with the commun ity througho ut the process to ensure that their concerns and aspiratio	To partner with the community in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and identification of preferred solution, and work together	To place decisions in the hands of the community, and build their capacity to deliver change

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		unity to understand or make them aware of the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions		ns are consistently understood and considered.	toward a jointly agreed outcome.	
	<b>Our promise to the community</b>	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations and provide feedback on how community input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how community input influenced the decision.	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide or recommend, or we will provide reasons if Council amends a decision or recommendation



<p><b>Example methods and practices</b></p>	<p>Information sessions Media releases Social media posts On-site signage Direct mail Project updates</p>	<p>Surveys (online and hardcopy) Ideas collection Drop-in sessions Opinion poll Submission processes Pop-up sessions</p>	<p>Advisory groups Workshops Deliberative polling Elements of deliberative engagement practices</p>	<p>Citizen advisory committees Participatory decision making Community ownership project governance Elements of deliberative engagement practices (i.e. deliberative panels)</p>	<p>Citizens' jury/ panel/ assembly Deliberative budgeting Consensus Conference Representative deliberative panels</p>
<p><b>Engagement Type</b></p>	<p><b>Consultative</b></p>		<p><b>Deliberative</b></p>		
<p><b>Minimum standards of engagement</b></p>	<p>Engaging with our diverse community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applying community engagement principles and commitments to community in practice</li> <li>• Ensuring accessibility: language, location, format, platform and time</li> <li>• Making sure there is translated materials and interpreters/ multilingual facilitators (languages other than English including Auslan)</li> <li>• Identifying demographics and priority groups: to ensure representativeness of the diverse community</li> <li>• Providing enough time and resources for engagement (planning and time for responses)</li> </ul> <p>Engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a first principle, Council will lead engagement activities with the Traditional Land Owners, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, on all matters of key importance</li> <li>• Culturally appropriate opportunities provided</li> <li>• Views and guidance must be sought from the earliest stages of an idea or proposal before moving into scoping and planning</li> <li>• Advice cannot be sought and then ignored</li> <li>• Advice must be integrated without adjustment or censorship.</li> <li>• Advice may need to be sought and integrated successively, at each stage of a project or initiative.</li> <li>• When engagement type is deliberative engagement there must be a partnership decision-making process</li> </ul>				

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	<p><b>Type of Community Engagement</b></p> <p>Engagement practices can largely be considered as ‘consultative’ or ‘deliberative’. Consultative engagement is where the engagement level is at ‘inform’ or ‘consult’ on the IAP2 Spectrum and deliberative engagement is where the engagement level is at ‘Involve’, ‘Collaborate’ and ‘Empower’.</p> <p><u>Consultative Engagement</u></p> <p>Consultative engagement includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information provided to the community to help them to understand a project or a matter</li> <li>• Feedback sought from the community such as ideas, thoughts and insights which are considered by Council and the outcome of the engagement is reported back to the community</li> </ul> <p><u>Deliberative Engagement</u></p> <p>Deliberative engagement is a process that involves an informative and engaging dialogue with an inclusive, diverse and genuine representation from our community, where considered views and joint outcomes can be developed. Participants are provided with a breadth of inputs, information and enough time and opportunity to engage and discuss issues in depth in a welcoming and respectful environment, then provide recommendations and feedback which is reviewed and considered for adoption by Council.</p> <p>Council will undertake deliberative engagement in the following circumstances:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Where it has a legislated obligation (including Community Vision, Council Plan, Financial Plan and Asset Plan) or</li> <li>2. Where it is assessed as appropriate to undertake this engagement approach for projects or processes, and meet the level of influence and promise required</li> </ol> <p>Example of deliberative methods and practices are shown in the table above. Council will use some of these methods and practices to meet the legislative requirements in the Act.</p>
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**Legislative environment and requirements**

There are some areas where our community engagement work is guided by legislation. Under the *Local Government Act 2020*, there are five community engagement principles that Council’s Community Engagement Policy need to give effect to, and four principles that need to be applied to the engagement undertaken for strategic documents and plans such as the four-year Council Plan, Community Vision, Financial Plan, and Asset Plan.

Community engagement principles

- a community engagement process must have a clearly defined objective and scope;
- participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation;
- participants in community engagement must be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter that is the subject of the community engagement;
- participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement;
- participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making

Principles of deliberative engagement

- authentic engagement with the community;
- accurate representation of the community in engagement activities;
- clear demonstration of how all views have been considered;
- accessible and relevant information available to the community to ensure the decision-making process and the community’s level of influence is clear in each instance and that participants are fully informed.

The following is a guide of how Council will meet the engagement requirements as outlined in the Act.

<b>Strategic document, plan or process</b>	<b>Engagement type</b>
Council Plan	Deliberative Engagement
Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan	Deliberative Engagement
Community Vision	Deliberative Engagement
Financial Plan	Deliberative Engagement
Asset Plan	Deliberative Engagement
Making of local laws.	Consultative Engagement
Budget	Consultative Engagement

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Governance Rules	Consultative Engagement
Acquiring, purchasing, selling, exchanging or leasing land	Consultative Engagement
Electoral structure review	Engagement type to be decided upon assessing the intricacies of the matter
Other Council policies, strategies and plans that directly impact the community	Engagement type to be decided upon assessing the intricacies of the matter
Projects that create new assets or change service levels	Engagement type to be decided upon assessing the intricacies of the matter
Guidance process – in addition to section 223 of the Local Government Act 1989.	<p>There is still a legislative requirement for certain submissions to be dealt with via s223 of the LGA 1989 (e.g. changes to the Road Management Plan and proposed declarations of roads as public highways).</p> <p>Moving away from formal submissions to increase the community influence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement approach is established on a case by case basis and is project specific, which follows the engagement practice outlined in the Community Engagement Policy</li> <li>• A minimum of three weeks engagement period unless there is a strong justification for a shorter engagement period</li> <li>• Significant engagements that affect the municipality could include an alternative to provide an opportunity for participants to be heard by the Hearing of Submissions Committee. This would be a decision made by ELT</li> </ul>

This policy also meets the Victorian Auditor General's Office recommendations for community engagement practices (VAGO 2017).

All of our community engagement processes and practices comply with the letter and spirit of the Charter of Human Rights and responsibilities Act 2020. The following rights are particularly relevant to community engagement:

- right to recognition and equality before the law (section 8), which implies that special measures can be taken to assist groups who are disadvantaged by discrimination
- right to freedom of expression (section 15) stating that people are free to say

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	<p>what they think and want to say, and have the right to find, receive and share information and ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• right to taking part in public life (section 18) stating that every person has the right to take part in public life</li> <li>• right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief (section 14)</li> <li>• cultural rights (section 19), notably Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural rights</li> <li>• right to protection of families and children (section 17)</li> <li>• right to privacy (section 13) - Every person has a right to enjoy their private life free from interference.</li> </ul> <p>Community engagement relating to planning permit applications and planning scheme amendments is outside of the scope of this policy, as these processes are governed by the <i>Planning and Environment Act 1987 (Vic)</i> and associated regulations. However, these processes should be interpreted in accordance with human rights principles as mandated by the <i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)</i>.</p>
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<p><b>Putting community engagement into practice – planning, implementation and evaluation</b></p>	<p>Council follows five steps to put community engagement into practice and undertake a successful engagement. This easy-to-use, step-by-step approach is applied to all community engagements undertaken at Darebin regardless of the complexity or scale.</p> <p>Each of these steps align with the principles of this Policy, which allows a consistent application of the principles to our engagements.</p> <p><b>Step 1</b> – think about what information you need to solve your problem or challenge (objective, background, scope engagement levels and type)</p> <p><b>Step 2</b> – identify the community members and groups you need to talk to (who to engage)</p> <p><b>Step 3</b> – identify the best engagement methods</p> <p><b>Step 4</b> – get the right data from your engagement, including for evaluation and ensure the information is housed accordingly for future use</p> <p><b>Step 5</b> – report back to the community: this is where Council will inform the community of engagement outcomes, which is usually via the Your Say Darebin online engagement platform, Council website, and directly to the participants who were involved and have provided contact details</p> <p>The steps of this policy will help staff consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- if they need to engage</li> <li>- how they can generate robust, useful, representative data, and</li> <li>- how they can report results of decision-making back to the community.</li> </ul> <p>Council staff can use the five steps to write their <i>Community Engagement Plan</i>, which is part of the <i>Community Engagement Toolkit</i> and has detailed information on how to apply these five steps.</p>
<p><b>References</b></p>	<p>IAP2 (International Association for Public Participation) (2020) IAP2 Published resources – spectrum and quality assurance webpage. Available at: <a href="https://www.iap2.org.au/Resources/IAP2-Published-Resources">https://www.iap2.org.au/Resources/IAP2-Published-Resources</a></p> <p>Local Government Act 2020. Available at <a href="https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/local-government-act-2020/003">https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/local-government-act-2020/003</a></p> <p>Victorian Auditor-General (2015) <i>Public Participation and Community Engagement: Local Government Sector</i>. Victorian Government: Melbourne. Available at: <a href="https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/file_uploads/VAGO_PP-Local-">https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/file_uploads/VAGO_PP-Local-</a></p>

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	<p><a href="#">Gov qQN5QyHk.pdf</a></p> <p>Local Government Act 1989. Available at <a href="https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/local-government-act-1989/157">https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/local-government-act-1989/157</a></p> <p>The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006. Available at <a href="https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/charter-human-rights-and-responsibilities-act-2006/014">https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/charter-human-rights-and-responsibilities-act-2006/014</a></p> <p>Towards Equality: Equity, Inclusion and Human Rights Framework 2019-2029. Available at <a href="http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/en/Your-Council/How-council-works/Organisation-and-Performance">http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/en/Your-Council/How-council-works/Organisation-and-Performance</a></p> <p>Statement of Commitment to Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Available at <a href="http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/Darebin-Living/Community-support/Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-Darebin">http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/Darebin-Living/Community-support/Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-Darebin</a></p> <p>Planning and Environment Act 1987. Available at <a href="https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/planning-and-environment-act-1987/144">https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/planning-and-environment-act-1987/144</a></p> <p>Bolitho A, Hendricks C &amp; Foulkes C (2012) Citizen's Committees in Local Government: the role of committees of management in Victoria. Research funded by the University of western Sydney and the New Democracy Forum. <a href="http://anniebolitho.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Citizens-Committees-in-Local-Government.pdf">http://anniebolitho.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Citizens-Committees-in-Local-Government.pdf</a></p> <p>Dalton RJ (2017) Is citizen participation actually good for democracy? Blog post London School of Economics and politics. Available at: <a href="https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/is-citizen-participation-actually-good-for-democracy/">https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/is-citizen-participation-actually-good-for-democracy/</a></p> <p>NHMRC (National Health and Medical Research Council) (2007) <i>National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research</i>. NHMRC: Canberra. Available at: <a href="https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2007-updated-2018">https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2007-updated-2018</a>. Accessed July 2019.</p> <p>NHMRC (National Health and Medical Research Council) (2018) <i>Ethical Conduct in Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Communities: guidelines for researchers and stakeholders 2018</i>. NHMRC: Canberra. Available at: <a href="https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/research-policy/ethics/ethical-guidelines-research-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples">https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/research-policy/ethics/ethical-guidelines-research-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples</a>.</p>
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	<p>Open Works (2015) <i>Designed to Scale: Mass participation to build resilient neighbourhoods</i>. Participatory Cities Website. <a href="http://www.participatorycity.org/report-the-research/">http://www.participatorycity.org/report-the-research/</a></p> <p>Parvin P (2018) Democracy Without Participation: A New Politics for a Disengaged Era. <i>Res Publica</i>. February 2018, Vol 24, 1: 31–52. Available at: <a href="https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11158-017-9382-1">https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11158-017-9382-1</a></p> <p>Pomagalska D, Putland C, Ziersch A, Baum F, Arthurson K, Orchard L &amp; House T (2009). <i>Practical Social Capital: a Guide to Creating Health and Wellbeing</i>. Flinders University: Adelaide. Available at: <a href="https://dspace.flinders.edu.au/xmlui/bitstream/handle/2328/25220/PracticalSocialCapitalAguide2009.p df?sequence=1&amp;isAllowed=y">https://dspace.flinders.edu.au/xmlui/bitstream/handle/2328/25220/PracticalSocialCapitalAguide2009.p df?sequence=1&amp;isAllowed=y</a></p>
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## GOVERNANCE

<b>Parent Strategy/ Plan</b>	Council Plan 2021-2025
<b>Related Documents</b>	This policy should be read in conjunction with the Council Plan 2021-2025
<b>Supporting Procedures and Guidelines</b>	Community Engagement Toolkit
<b>Legislation/ Regulation</b>	Local Government Act 2020
<b>Author</b>	Sarah-Jade Chung, Coordinator Community Engagement and Demographics
<b>Policy Owner/ Sponsor</b>	Jodie Watson, General Manager Governance & Engagement
<b>Date Effective</b>	28 February 2023
<b>Review Date</b>	28 February 2025
<b>Version Number</b>	1
<b>Document ID</b>	
<b>Content enquiries</b>	Coordinator Community Engagement and Demographics

! All Darebin policies and procedures must be developed through the lens of key Darebin strategies, plans and related considerations. See the **Darebin Policy Review Lens** to inform and guide policy development and review.

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**9.3 DAREBIN ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK DRAFT**

**Author:** Acting Head of Economic Development and Activation  
Business Engagement – Skills and Employment  
Coordinator Place and Behavioural Economics

**Reviewed By:** General Manager Community

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report presents a draft of the Darebin Economic Framework (the Framework) **Appendix A** to guide Council's investment, support and program delivery to enhance the health, wealth and prosperity of the Darebin community. The draft Economic Framework delivers on a range of key actions in the Council Plan 2021-2025.

An extensive consultation, research and development period commenced in October 2023 and has contributed to the understanding articulated in the draft Framework with the goal to assist prioritisation and decision-making for Council's activities in economic development.

Given the impending 2024 caretaker and general election period, it is recommended that Council adopts the draft Framework, with consultation on the draft Framework occurring at the conclusion of this period with findings presented to Council in 2025.

More generally, the Framework is intended to provide long-standing direction, within which rolling annual action planning can occur to strategically respond to emergent needs within the business community, developing opportunities and resourcing, and ongoing Council program and service reviews.

The Framework itself can be updated during its lifetime to remain a source of information and direction for Darebin's economy and the businesses and partnerships working within it.

To ensure that business views are well represented in the development of the Darebin Business Network Structure it is proposed to establish a project working group with business representatives.

<b>Officer Recommendation</b>
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**That Council:**

- (1) Notes and thanks those members of the Darebin business community and key stakeholders who participated in the development of the draft Economic Framework.
- (2) Endorses the draft Economic Framework as outlined in **Appendix A** for consultation and delegates to the Chief Executive or delegate the ability to make minor editorial changes that do not materially alter the content of the Framework to enable it to be published.
- (3) Notes that engagement on the draft Economic Framework will not commence until after the 2024 caretaker and general election period.
- (4) Notes that feedback received in part 3, together with input from Council will be used to further refine the Framework and develop an inaugural annual Economic Action Plan and that both will be presented to Council in 2025.

- (5) Requests the Chief Executive Officer or delegate convenes a Project Working Group with business representatives for a 3-month period to inform the development of a Darebin Business Network.

**BACKGROUND / KEY INFORMATION**

The draft Economic Framework is a wholistic response to the Council Plan 2021-2025 actions related to economic uplift, support to business, industry and investment attraction, and activation of main street activity centres and business precincts.

The draft Economic Framework sets out 4 pillars under which economic stability and growth can be realised for Darebin. The pillars of the Framework were determined through an analysis of the engagement and case study findings (**Appendix B & C**) and economic analysis report (**Appendix E**) that generated the themes of each pillar. All four pillars detail the challenges that the business community and data analysis required to be addressed, recommended solutions, locational opportunities within the Darebin municipal area, and lighthouse projects. Climate Emergency Plan actions have been woven through these actions in an integrated manner.





The draft Framework provides an opportunity for the current Council Plan action to be realised during the current Council term, whilst providing an opportunity for specific project planning to be undertaken in the lead up to the new Council Plan.

**Darebin’s key economic insights**




**155,683** Darebin population

**61,681** Local jobs


**Local business summary**

-  **13773** Locally registered businesses
-  **98%** Small businesses (<\$10 million turnover annually) 60-70% of is micro/sole trader
-  **17** Businesses with 200+ employees
-  **22%** Darebin’s workforce that also live in Darebin

**Top 3 employing industries**

-  **2178** Construction 30% with 1-4 employees
-  **1939** Professional, scientific & technical 92% with 1-4 employees
-  **1420** Rental, real estate & hiring 96% with 1-4 employees

**Youth employment**

-  **12.8%** Youth unemployment

## \$8.44 BIL Darebin's Gross Regional Product

### Top 5 resident local expenditure categories in Darebin (April 2024)

1. Grocery Stores & Supermarkets	\$21,659,477
2. Dining and Entertainment	\$19,482,679
3. Specialised Food Retailing	\$11,677,610
4. Specialised and Luxury Goods	\$10,374,824
5. Transport	\$9,670,532

### Top exports from the Darebin Economy, 2022/23

1. Manufacturing	\$858,600,000
2. Education and Training	\$675,800,000
3. Health Care and Social Assistance	\$378,600,000
4. Wholesale Trade	\$304,400,000
5. Retail Trade	\$282,900,000

Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024) using Spendmapp data by Geografia. Note: Only top 5 spending categories are included

### Community & stakeholder engagement

The Framework was developed through a distillation of outcomes from a consultation and engagement plan incorporating:

- Business Roundtable discussions and attendee survey (completed in 2023)
- Economic Summit (completed in 2023)
- Business survey
- Community survey – Darebin Your Say page
- Two workshops with key stakeholders including business, key industry, learning and training institutions, and Councillors
- Two workshops with internal Council department staff to explore collaborative, cross-functional opportunities within the organisation
- Fishbowl consultation – two-way business and Council feedback loop on how Council can improve its service and become a great place to do business
- High level stats from broad reaching engagement: 327 businesses and stakeholders came to a round table, summit or workshop
- 961 individual comments gathered
- 1162 votes were cast on comments
- 405 minutes of guest presentations
- 450 minutes of networking
- 750 minutes of group discussion
- 14 industries represented
- 109 people completed a business survey
- 26 people completed a community survey
- 8 departments of Council were engaged

**Previous Council Resolution**

At its meeting held on day month year, Council resolved:

*At its meeting held on 18 December 2023, Council resolved:*

*That Council*

- (1) Congratulates the attendees on the success of the Economic roundtable discussions and the Economic Forum held on November 30<sup>th</sup>.*
- (2) Notes that outputs from the roundtables and forum will be used to inform a new Economic Development strategy for the City of Darebin.*
- (3) Request that the CEO completes an evaluation report of the Economic roundtable and forum and presents this back to Council as part of the briefings on the new Economic Development strategy with the evaluation report to include:
  - a. Analysis of feedback from the events.*
  - b. An overview of the benefits of continuing a forum for the business community.*
  - c. An overview of future strategies that could be implemented to strengthen our business community within Darebin.**
- (4) Thanks staff for their work in conducting the round tables and forum.*

**ALIGNMENT TO 2041 DAREBIN COMMUNITY VISION**

Strategic Direction 2: Prosperous, Liveable and Flourishing

**ALIGNMENT TO 2021-25 COUNCIL PLAN**

Strategic Direction 2: Prosperous, Liveable and Flourishing

**ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

2.9 We will focus on our economic assets and recovery to ensure Darebin is a great place to do business

2.10 We will leverage investment, partnerships and advocacy to drive Darebin's growth and sustainability

2.11 We will support, promote, and attract diverse local businesses and industries

**DISCUSSION**

Darebin's Council Plan 2021 – 2025 sets a strategic direction for a prosperous, liveable and flourishing Darebin. There has never been a more important time for Council to better understand business experience and priorities. The new Economic Framework will help make Darebin a great place to do business and support community health, wealth and happiness.

Four priority themes emerged early in engagement with Darebin’s economic community and were validated through detailed economic analysis and case study learnings. The proposed pillars include:

1. Empowering small businesses for sustainable growth
2. Collaborative Mainstreet revitalisation
3. Mobilising health and education for community wealth
4. Activating enterprise clusters for growth

Themes have informed an economic vision statement, opportunity map and lighthouse projects as detailed in the draft Economic Framework.

The following tables show the themes, strengths, problems identified, possible solutions, what role Council can play and the measures that will inform whether the solutions have supported economic development.

**1. Empowering small businesses for sustainable growth**

***Darebin’s strengths***

- A strong small business sector
- A professionally oriented workforce
- A diverse, multicultural community
- Sustainability values including the Net-Zero Business Program and Climate Emergency Plan

Problems	Solutions	Councils role	Measures
Business sector is under pressure. They feel increasingly isolated and are seeking connection with local supply chains.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form a Darebin Business Network to:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Connect business for peer-to-peer support and localise supply chains</li> <li>▪ Promote industry champions / achievements and grant opportunities provided by third parties</li> <li>▪ Facilitate business peer-to-peer mentoring to help small business to learn, grow and scale</li> <li>▪ Partner with local providers to provide and assistance to small businesses and entrepreneurs – e.g. start-up support, business planning</li> <li>▪ Celebrate local climate and circular economy business champions to foster peer to peer inspiration and learning.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Action leader Connector  Communicator  Connector  Communicator	# Participants % Growth business connection # Businesses # Industries # Partnerships secured
98% of business is small and approx. 65% are micro/sole trader. Most are working from	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with local co-working hubs to develop special offers for network members</li> <li>• Explore potential of utilising Council assets to support business meeting spaces and shared work-spaces</li> </ul>	Partner  Action leader	# Participants # Businesses

Problems	Solutions	Councils role	Measures
home and they have low resilience.			
Only 17 businesses have more than 200 employees (one of which is the City of Darebin).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish relationships with big employers, health and higher education to explore interest in Anchor Network</li> <li>Collaborate with Anchor Network to plan for local workforce development and job pathways for youth, CALD, First Nations and disability to build an equitable workforce of the future</li> </ul>	<p>Connector</p> <p>Partner</p>	# Partnerships secured

**2. Collaborative Mainstreet revitalisation**

***Darebin’s strengths***

- A network of distinct retail and commercial centres and strips
- Places and destinations for visitors such as High Street, Northcote
- Preston market
- Northland as key retail hub for inner north-west

Problems	Solutions	Councils role	Measures
Consumer & business confidence trending down. Activity centre customers not local, only 15-20% of visitors are from Darebin.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaboratively develop shared place visions that amplify unique strengths, activate local communities and drive social and economic revitalisation</li> <li>Revive shop local campaigns to increase local visitation and reduce economic leakage</li> <li>Develop annual place measurement framework and place satisfactions survey to track impact of initiatives</li> </ul>	<p>Action leader</p> <p>Action leader</p> <p>Action leader</p>	<p># Participants</p> <p>% Social connection (met someone new)</p> <p># Business partnerships</p> <p># Landlord partnerships</p> <p># Annual report &amp; place satisfaction survey</p>
Online spend still a challenge to bricks and mortar. Foot traffic declining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empower local communities and grow locally-led activation skills and culture</li> <li>Provide placemaking and activation grants</li> <li>Establish regular local activation calendar</li> </ul>	<p>Capacity builder</p> <p>Action leader</p> <p>Action leader</p>	<p># Participants</p> <p># Businesses</p> <p># Grant funded projects</p> <p>% Local pride</p>
Youth unemployment high – 12.8%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with youth service providers and others to establish youth placemaking champions network</li> </ul>	<p>Referrer</p> <p>Capacity builder</p>	<p># Participants</p> <p># Partnerships secured</p>

**3. Mobilising health and education for community wealth**

***Darebin's strengths***

- A growing health and education sector
- Designated Northern Innovation and Sustainability Precinct in Bundoora
- A highly skilled and multilingual population and workforce
- A range of key anchor institutions - Latrobe University, Latrobe Hospital, Melbourne Polytechnic

Problems	Solutions	Councils role	Measures
Darebin's key growth industries not well supported by allied clusters of local supply chains.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify, promote and grow local allied clusters to strengthen localised supply chains in proximity with health providers</li> <li>• Formation of allied health network groups to strengthen localised supply chains</li> <li>• Grow relationships and formalize partnerships with hospitals, education and other big business to solve systemic problems and grow employment and wellbeing for youth and vulnerable communities</li> </ul>	<p>Action leader</p> <p>Action leader</p> <p>Partner</p>	<p># Participants</p> <p>% Business connection</p> <p># Business partnerships</p>
Only 22% of Darebin residents work in Darebin. Local employees with specialised skills are hard to find, especially in the north.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with strategic partners to submit funding application on the Northern Innovation &amp; Sustainability Precinct</li> <li>• Support better transport connection between education providers, health providers and other major employers</li> <li>• Attract talent and skilled workforce within the Northern Innovation &amp; Sustainability Precinct</li> </ul>	<p>Partner</p> <p>Partner</p> <p>Partner</p>	<p># Partners</p> <p>\$ Funding</p> <p># Grant funded projects</p>

**4. Activating enterprise clusters for growth**

***Darebin's strengths***

- A strong and resilient manufacturing sector
- Large areas of industrial land
- High value manufacturing activities
- A highly educated local workforce

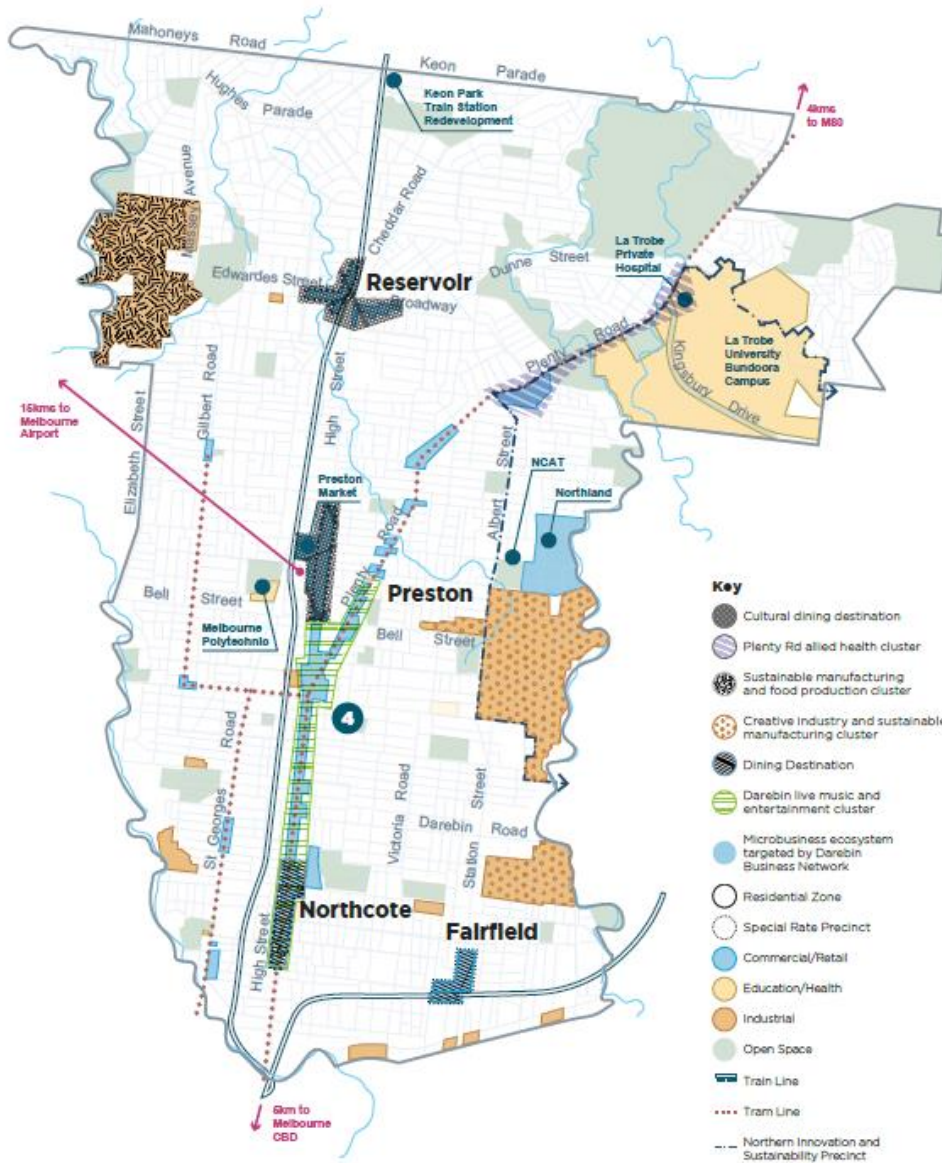


Problems	Solutions	Councils role	Measures
Declining manufacturing industry is transitioning and considering moving out of town where lot sizes are bigger.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify, promote and grow sustainable manufacturing zones to strengthen existing and Reza attract new business and investment</li> <li>Partner with a third party to support small and medium scale business to be climate resilient and plan well managed risks associated with business transition to a net-zero economy</li> <li>Engage with the growing creative manufacturing sector in Preston and Thornbury and linking to local startups and social enterprise</li> <li>Advocate for funding to support increased training opportunities, including free TAFE programs and workforce training, for local residents to take up job opportunities in the zero-carbon economy.</li> </ul>	<p>Action leader</p> <p>Partner</p> <p>Connector</p> <p>Advocate</p>	<p># New businesses</p> <p># Business participants</p>
Land use not optimised for local employment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake an employment land planning study to inform land use planning settings which respond to the strategic strengths, support economic development and long-term employment growth</li> </ul>	Action leader	Measures to be defined
Emergent enterprise clusters undefined. Darebin's unique identity and strengths undercapitalised on and opportunities are lost.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify, promote and grow Darebin's iconic live music cluster to strengthen ecosystem and attract new business and investment</li> <li>Collaborate with business associations to promote and grow Darebin's iconic dining destinations to attract visitation and new business investment</li> <li>Attracting last mile distribution, food a beverage and other large employers to Darebin</li> </ul>	<p>Action leader</p> <p>Partner</p> <p>Advocate</p>	<p># Partners</p> <p>\$ Funding</p> <p># Grant funded projects</p>

**Opportunity map & lighthouse projects**

The below Opportunity map presents economic opportunities spatially and is designed to be read in conjunction with proposed lighthouse projects.

16 x lighthouse projects are proposed to be delivered over a 4 year term. A rolling Economic Action Plan will inform annual actions for delivery that will be embedded into Unit Work Plans.



## Lighthouse projects

### Small Business



Partner with local businesses to establish a Darebin Business Network that supports networking, enables small business to participate in economic partnerships and scale

Maximise the utility of collaborative workspaces for small business by integrating and optimising local resources including Co-working spaces and Council Assets

Explore establish of a Small & Large Business Network to facilitate partnerships with big Darebin employers

Research feasibility of a B2B program for small businesses to apply for vouchers to be used with local businesses from a list of preferred Darebin business suppliers

### Mainstreets and Activity Centres



Develop Shared Place Visions to guide collaborative social & economic revitalisation and reconnect with local customers in activity centres

Review and revitalise Darebin's award-winning Active Spaces program to proactively address shopfront vacancy increase

Advocate for extension of Special Rates precinct boundaries in Reservoir

Developing locally-led place activation skills, with local communities and youth, and provide placemaking grants to empower locally-led activation ecosystem

### Health and Education



Define the Plenty Road allied health cluster around Latrobe Hospital, develop vision and investment attraction prospectus

Grow citywide local allied health and care networks to wellbeing grow supply chains

Northern Innovation & Sustainability Precinct (NISP) funding submission with La Trobe University, Banyule Council & NorthLink to drive social, economic and sustainability outcomes in the North

### Enterprise Clusters



Municipal Economic Land Use Study to understand the future needs and opportunities to optimise land use for job creation

Partner with third party to undertake a Net-Zero Business Program to support small and medium scale business to transition to a net-zero economy

Identify, define and promote existing informal clusters:

- Sustainable manufacturing & food production clusters in Reservoir Industrial Precinct
- Live music cluster in Thornbury and Croxton

Develop a Circular Economy & Creative Industry Investment Attract Strategy to develop new vision to revitalise Preston and Thornbury industrial precinct

*Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024) using data from ABS Census 2016 and 2021 – Place of work data.*

**Proposed year 1 lighthouse project actions:**

1. Establishment of a Darebin Business Network – with Reference Group recommendations being considered by Council for endorsement in 2025 when it considers the Economic Framework.\*
2. Grow relationships with Darebin employers and explore interest in an Anchor Network to facilitate future partnerships.
3. Develop Shared Place Visions to guide collaborative social & economic revitalisation and reconnect with local customers in activity centres (budget/resources allocated in 24/25).
4. Review and revitalise Darebin's award-winning Active Spaces program to proactively address shopfront vacancy increase (budget/resources allocated in 24/25)
5. Northern Innovation & Sustainability Precinct (NISP) funding submission in with La Trobe University, Banyule Council & NorthLink to drive social, economic and sustainability outcomes in the North (budget/resources allocated in 24/25).
6. Municipal Economic Land Use Study to understand the future needs and opportunities to optimise land use for employment and jobs in Darebin.\*

Some lighthouse project actions may be actioned early and delivered within recurrent budgets. Others, marked with an asterix\*, will require project budget allocation with delivery planned in 2025/26.

**Peer review**

Peer review of draft Economic Framework was undertaken by an independent economist on the early Economic Framework considered by Council on 12 August at Council Briefing. Their feedback was considered and has informed an updated draft Economic Framework for consultation purposes as per **Appendix A**.

**CONSIDERATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (2020) PRINCIPLES****Financial Management**

Should Council decide to adopt the Economic Framework, operational resources are in place to conduct further engagement with business, stakeholders, and potential partners to determine the initial action plan of activities for the delivery of projects and programs. Delivery will be phased and reviewed each year as part of Council's annual budget and planning process to enable Council to respond to emerging needs from business and align this with the resources available to Council at any particular point in time.

**Community Engagement****Darebin Business Network Project Working Group**

A short-term Working Group is proposed to be convened that will meet for a period of three months to explore and make recommendations on:

- Darebin Business Network purpose
- Governance structure
- Membership criteria
- Resourcing requirements

It is proposed that a representative group is recruited, through an EOI process, which includes the following blend:

- 16 people in total
- Reasonable balance of genders and ages
- 2 x culturally diverse business owners or managers
- 2 x health business representatives
- 2 x manufacturing business representatives
- 2 x higher education representatives
- 2 x Mainstreet trader representatives
- 6 x open seats, available for individuals with economic interest in Darebin

It is proposed that the EOI process is undertaken in November 2024 (at the conclusion of the 2024 caretaker period), with the group meetings commencing in early 2025. Three workshop meetings are proposed to be held, with summary report and recommendations being presented for considered by Council in 2025 alongside the Economic Framework.

A professional Economic Development practitioner will be appointed to provide unbiased, third-party economic advice. They will not be a formal member of the panel or participate in decision making in any form.

A third-party facilitator will be appointed to lead the sessions and prepare a summary report of outcomes.

### **Proposed consultation to finalise the Economic Framework**

Broad community feedback will be undertaken to finalise the Economic Framework for consideration by Council in 2025.

**Purpose:** to gather broad feedback from Darebin businesses, community and stakeholders to finalise the Economic Framework.

#### **Proposed techniques:**

- Online engagement page on Your Say Darebin, featuring online survey and polls
- One on one discussions with big employers
- Meetings with Council's 4 x Traders Associations

**Promotions:** Email invitation to all participants of previous engagement to date (Round Tables, Summit, Workshops, Fishbowl, Your Say Darebin), social media promotion on Council's platforms, website, e-Business Newsletter, email invitation to stakeholders and Traders Associations.

**Dates:** Engagement to be open for 4 weeks, to be delivered in April 2025.

A report is proposed to be presented to Council in May 2025, that includes:

- Consultation outcomes
- Proposed Darebin Business Network structure
- Final Economic Framework & Economic Action Plan 2025/26 for endorsement

Upon adoption of the Economic Framework, a communications plan will be developed to share the Framework with the community, businesses and our partners.

### **Other Principles for consideration**

#### **Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles**

- (d) The municipal community is to be engaged in strategic planning and strategic decision making;

#### **Public Transparency Principles**

- (c) Council information must be understandable and accessible to members of the municipal community;

#### **Strategic Planning Principles**

- (b) Strategic planning must address the Community Vision;
- (e) Strategic planning must provide for ongoing monitoring of progress and regular reviews to identify and address changing circumstances;

#### **Service Performance Principles**

- (d) A Council should seek to continuously improve service delivery to the municipal community in response to performance monitoring;

## **COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)**

Consultation with business has demonstrated an interest in circular economy business, waste management infrastructure, solar and renewables, and energy efficiency being further explored as components of the Framework and future strategic action plans. Examining Council's current service and program delivery in this space will form part of the action plan.

The Framework acknowledges the role of Council in providing an enabling environment for clusters of business sustainability practices and infrastructure to attract investment of business.

### **Equity, Inclusion, Wellbeing and Human Rights Considerations:**

In preparation for the Economic Roundtable and Summit stakeholder engagement series an Equity Impact Assessment process was commenced with EIA and GIA subject matter experts consulted. A follow up engagement occurred at the early stages of the Economic Framework build to ensure that the vision for Darebin's economic participation includes people of diverse backgrounds.

### **Economic Development and Cultural Considerations**

This paper outlines Council's commitment to supporting business and economic growth through strategic approaches, with particular emphasis on social enterprise, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business opportunities and models, and the potential of care economies, local employment, and skills development to support local people. Factors of the built environment including transport connections, infrastructure optimisation, co-working opportunities, micro-business supports have been examined in the development of the Framework.

### **Operational Impacts**

Operational impacts have been forecasted and currently absorbed within operational budgets and work plans. Each year careful resource planning will be undertaken, and initiatives phased in a way to ensure that delivery of the framework is sustainable for Council.

### **Legal and Risk Implications**

The draft Economic Framework is intended to capture the current state of Darebin's economic profile to guide and direct future projects, programs, and funding to ensure that the needs of the business community are at the forefront of our priorities. The Framework's implementation allows for iterative rolling action plans to help in mitigating risks, by providing a flexible and adaptable approach. The pandemic experience demonstrated the need to have this style of strategic planning in place for local economies.

## **IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

### **The lifecycle of the Framework**

This Framework is intended to guide future priorities, projects, programs and partnerships of Council to strengthen Darebin's economy while remaining agile and resilient to change.

Council will continue to listen to the community, businesses, and our stakeholders to ensure that it is responsive and relevant, throughout the lifecycle of the Framework. This lifecycle will involve consultation, design, action plan delivery and evaluation.

### **Annual survey**

An annual business survey will be conducted to provide an understanding of what is happening for business and stakeholders within Darebin's economy.

### **Design**

Every action will have process, performance, outcome and impact evaluation measures built into its design.

### **Delivery**

Following endorsement of the Economic Framework by Council a rolling Economic Action Plan will inform annual actions for delivery. This annual model will provide flexibility and agility ensuring deliverables is sustainable for Council given its available resources year by year.

Businesses and partners working with Council on actions will be provided opportunities to engage with their customers and stakeholders to cultivate a feedback loop.





### **Evaluation**

Participant and recipient feedback, new research and statistical analysis will be used to identify changes, trends, and innovation.

## **RELATED DOCUMENTS**

Nil.

**Attachments**

- Draft Economic Framework for consultation purposes - August 24 (**Appendix A**) [↓](#) 
- Darebin Economic Framework - Engagement, Research & Case Study Summary - August 24 (**Appendix B**) [↓](#) 
- Darebin Business Engagement Survey Summary - July 24 (**Appendix C**) [↓](#) 
- Darebin Economic Research - Background Report - July 24 (**Appendix D**) [↓](#) 

**DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST**

Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires members of Council staff and persons engaged under contract to provide advice to Council to disclose any conflicts of interest in a matter to which the advice relates.

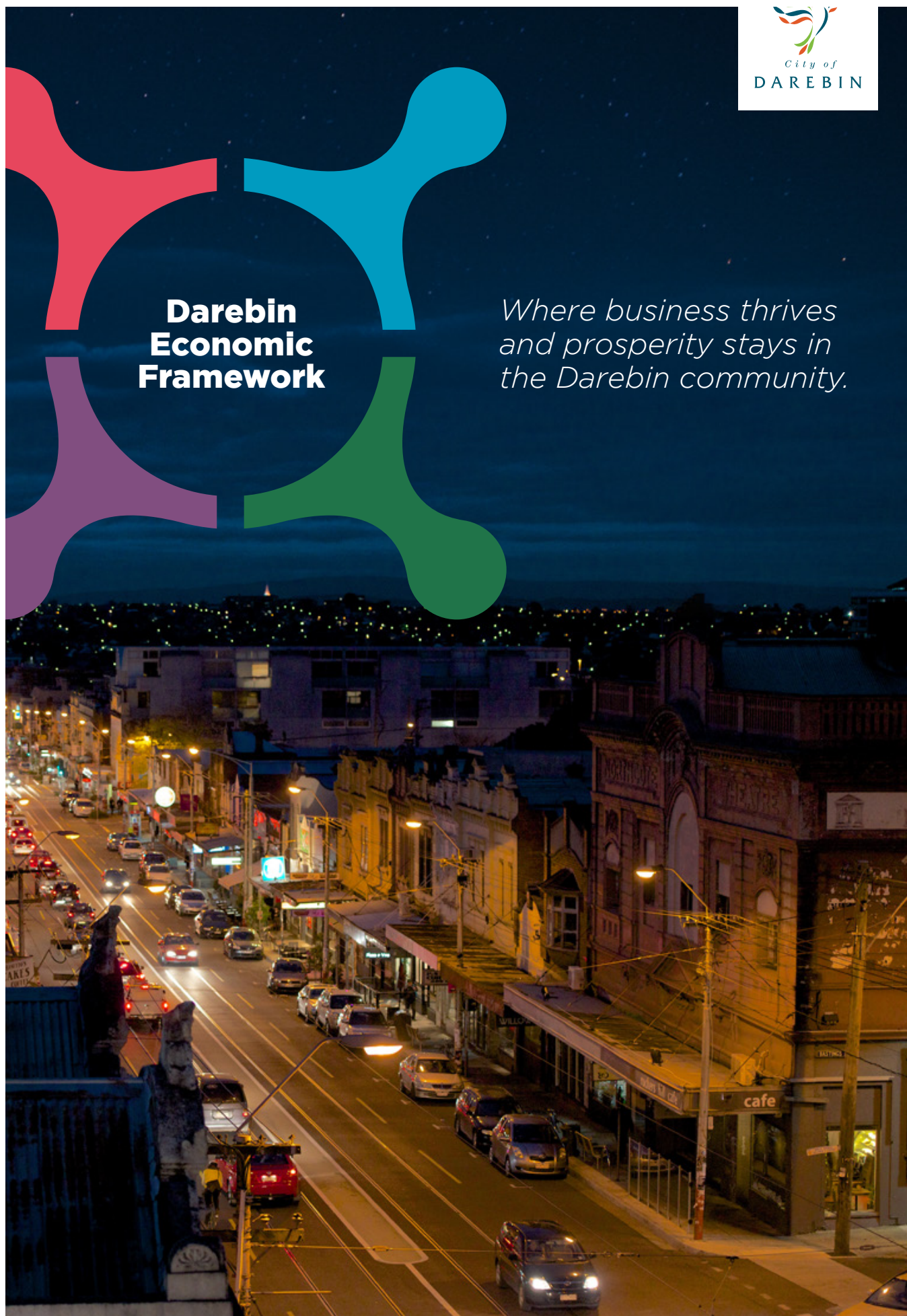
The Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.





# Darebin Economic Framework

*Where business thrives  
and prosperity stays in  
the Darebin community.*



Darebin City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and waters we now call Darebin and affirms that the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people have lived on this land for millennia, practicing their customs and ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. Council acknowledges that Elders past, present and emerging are central to the cohesion, intergenerational wellbeing and ongoing self-determination of Aboriginal communities. They have played and continue to play a pivotal role in maintaining and transmitting culture, history and language.





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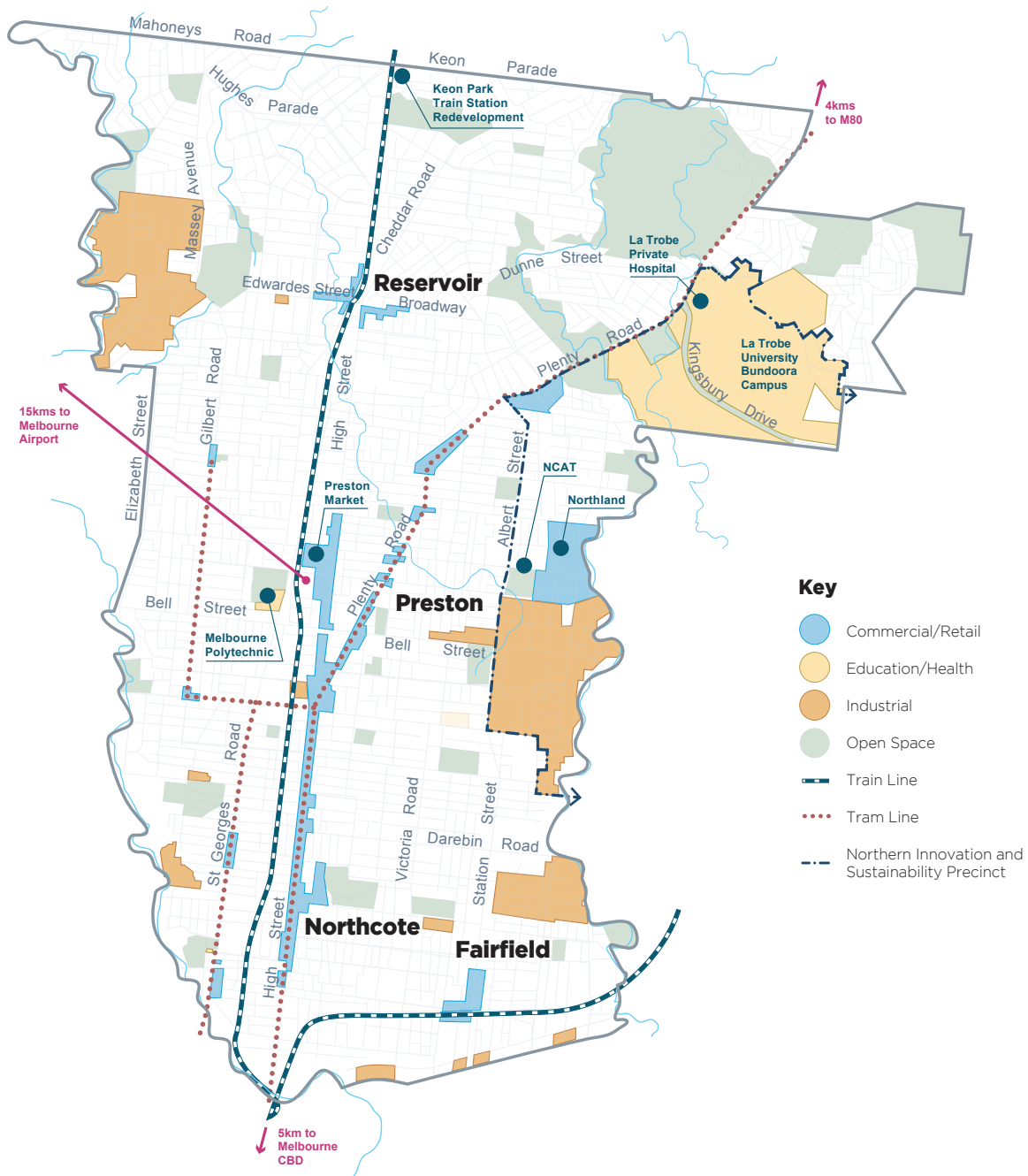
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# Introduction

## Purpose of the Framework

At Darebin, we understand how economic, environmental, and social drivers both enable and constrain economic growth and job creation within our community. The current cost of living pressures have highlighted the need for adaptable and resilient economic strategies.

Our Economic Framework provides a guide for how Council works with its businesses, industry, and partners to build a cohesive and clear economic direction for Darebin. It aims to leverage Darebin’s strengths, such as its vibrant arts and media sector, strong educational institutions, and diverse workforce, to grow health, job opportunities, and overall prosperity.



### Research and consultation approach

A thorough and comprehensive research and consultation approach was undertaken to develop this Economic Framework. Between October 2023 and July 2024, a series of consultations with local businesses and economic stakeholders were conducted. This involved engaging with 327 businesses and stakeholders through round tables, summits, and workshops, resulting in 961 individual comments and 1162 votes on those comments.

The consultation process also included 405 minutes of guest presentations, 450 minutes of networking, and 750 minutes of group discussion, covering 14 different industries. To ensure the framework is grounded in best practices and evidence-based development, an extensive review of case studies was conducted.

This review identified successful strategies and innovative approaches, providing valuable insights and benchmarks for Darebin.

Local knowledge and experience were carefully examined alongside these case studies to tailor the framework to Darebin’s unique context. Data analysis played a crucial role in shaping the framework. Statistical data was analysed to identify trends, opportunities, and challenges within the Darebin economy.

This evidence-based approach ensures that the framework is not only responsive to current economic conditions but also strategically positioned to anticipate and address future changes. The integration of robust data analysis underscores the importance of making informed decisions and crafting economic development plans that are backed by evidence, enhancing the framework’s effectiveness and relevance. The commitment to a rigorous, data-driven development process reflects the Council’s dedication to ensuring a resilient and prosperous economic environment in Darebin.



Darebin Economic Framework

### Engagement contributions



**327**

businesses and stakeholders came to a round table, summit or workshop



**961**

individual comments gathered



**1,162**

votes were cast on comments



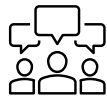
**405**

minutes of guest presentations



**450**

minutes of networking



**750**

minutes of group discussion



**14**

industries represented



**109**

people completed a business survey



**26**

people completed a community survey



**8**

departments of Council were engaged



**Why Darebin?**  
A diverse,  
multicultural  
community  
passionate about  
great food!



**Why Darebin?**  
A business community that prioritises hiring locals.



## Role of Council in economic development

Local government operates in a complex economic environment. We serve as both major employers and catalysts for job creation within our communities.

As significant consumers and purchasers of goods and services, we also play a vital role in stimulating local economies.

However, our ability to influence broader economic outcomes is often constrained by external factors and Council's key revenue base is rate capped.

Our Framework therefore positions Council in differing roles depending upon local economic needs and resource capability.

<b>Council's role</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Advocate</b>	Advocate for our business and wider community on economic reform, including industry, business, place, sustainability, and social issues.
<b>Capacity builder</b>	Facilitate and support businesses, employers, and employees with capacity-building training.
<b>Communicator</b>	Share knowledge and information to improve economic, business, and place outcomes and partnerships.
<b>Connector</b>	Connect Darebin's communities together and to the wider regions to drive and strengthen partnerships and investment.
<b>Action leader</b>	Make impactful and/or sustainable change by successfully delivering on agreed actions in an efficient manner.
<b>Partner</b>	Work in collaboration with internal and external partners to provide value to each other and strategic outcomes for Darebin.
<b>Placemaker</b>	Enhance the physical and social fabric of our community spaces to foster thriving business environments and retail precincts.
<b>Planner</b>	Strategically plan to optimize land-use to support industry, business growth, and employment, and encourage business size diversification.
<b>Regulator</b>	Support and work with business to attract and efficiently process regulatory applications and solve compliance issues.
<b>Referrer</b>	Direct businesses to appropriate stakeholders and levels of government for information, grants, and support to help their business grow.

### Place led approach

By adopting a place-led approach, we ensure that economic development strategies are tailored to the specific needs and strengths of each community within Darebin. This involves close collaboration with local businesses, residents, and other stakeholders to create vibrant, resilient, and prosperous neighbourhoods. Council acts as a vital referrer, guiding businesses to relevant stakeholders and higher levels of government for additional resources and support, to enhance their growth and sustainability.

### Economic development within a climate emergency

Darebin City Council was the first government in the world to declare a Climate Emergency in response to community calls in 2016. Local businesses play a crucial role in addressing climate change as they are responsible for around half of our greenhouse gas emissions and are also highly vulnerable to its impacts. However, disruption brings opportunity. Darebin offers significant growth prospects for businesses in clean tech and sustainable food tech, which can leverage the local community’s passion, expertise, and commitment to climate action. The transition to a circular economy presents numerous opportunities and benefits, including lower operating costs, enhanced resilience, and new avenues for growth in electrification and sustainability.

Our Economic Framework highlights these opportunities and encourages businesses that prioritise social and environmental responsibility to establish themselves in Darebin. By fostering a supportive environment for clean tech and sustainable food tech, we aim to attract businesses that align with our community values and contribute to a sustainable future. This strategic focus on climate adaptation and the green economy ensures that Darebin not only addresses the challenges of climate change but also capitalises on the economic benefits of becoming a hub for sustainable innovation and entrepreneurship.












**Why Darebin?**  
It's home to a dynamic social enterprise sector.

# Darebin’s economic profile




Darebin’s economic landscape is anchored by its resilient manufacturing sector, despite national trends, remaining a major export earner and provider of local jobs. The health and social assistance sectors are trending for significant growth, supported by major educational providers like La Trobe University and Melbourne Polytechnic, who supply skilled professionals to meet increasing industry demands. Darebin is becoming a hub for green technology and sustainable practices, attracting businesses committed to environmental sustainability. We have a diverse, multicultural and creative community that contributes a wide array of skills and innovative ideas, to make for a dynamic business environment.

### Local business summary

	155,683	Population <a href="#">Economic profile   Darebin   economy.id</a>
	\$8.44	<b>Billion</b> Gross Regional Product <a href="#">Economic profile   Darebin   economy.id</a>
	13,773	Locally registered businesses
	98%	Small businesses (<\$10 million turnover, <b>70%</b> micro/sole trader)
	17	Businesses with <b>200+</b> employees
	250	Businesses with a turnover over <b>\$10 million</b>
	61,681	Local jobs <a href="#">Economic profile   Darebin   economy.id</a>


  

### Top 3 employing industries

	2,178	Construction ( <b>30%</b> with 1-4 employees)
	1,939	Professional, scientific and technical ( <b>92%</b> with 1-4 employees)
	1,420	Rental, real estate and hiring

### Youth employment

	12.8%	Youth unemployment
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Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024) using data from ABS Census 2016 and 2021 - Place of work data.

### Comparative advantage by industry

#### Expanding sectors with a traditional strength (Top 3)

-  **1** Education and Training
-  **2** Retail Trade
-  **3** Healthcare and Social Assistance

#### Emerging sectors (Top 3)

-  **1** Construction
-  **2** Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
-  **3** Transport, Postal and Warehousing

#### Declining Industries with a traditional strength

-  **1** Manufacturing

#### Declining industries without comparative advantage (Top 3)


-  **1** Financial and Insurance Services
-  **2** Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services
-  **3** Wholesale Trade

Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024) using data from ABS Census 2016 and 2021 – Place of work data.


While manufacturing has declined in Darebin, it still plays a vital role in the Darebin economy. Manufacturing is Darebin’s largest export earner and remains a key industry of employment. Health and social assistance are projected to show the greatest growth over the next decade.

### Local economic drivers

#### Top 5 resident local expenditure categories in Darebin (April 2024)

-  **1** Grocery Stores and Supermarkets  
\$21,659,477
-  **2** Dining and Entertainment  
\$19,482,679
-  **3** Specialised Food Retailing  
\$11,677,610
-  **4** Specialised and Luxury Goods  
\$10,374,824
-  **5** Transport  
\$9,670,532

#### Top exports from the Darebin Economy, 2022/23

-  **1** Manufacturing  
\$858,600,000
-  **2** Education and Training  
\$675,800,000
-  **3** Healthcare and Social Assistance  
\$378,600,000
-  **4** Wholesale Trade  
\$304,400,000
-  **5** Retail Trade  
\$282,900,000

Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024) using Spendmap data by Geografia.  
Note: Only top 5 spending categories are included.

# Economic vision for the future

## ‘Where business thrives and prosperity stays in the Darebin community.’

Darebin is an economy where local independent business prospers, providing a catalyst for job growth within our community. An interconnected and resilient entrepreneurial ecosystem is perfectly positioned for growth, enhancing the livelihoods of our residents and reinforcing the local economy.

Strengthened supply chains ensure the benefits of our economic progress – wealth, jobs, and talent - remain within Darebin, helping more residents live out their career dreams without the commute.

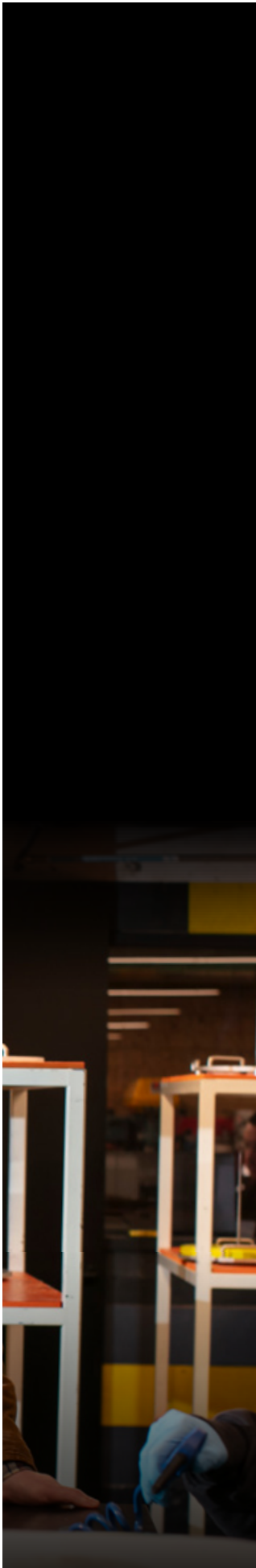
Darebin’s sustainability commitments are nationally recognised with our manufacturing sector leading transition towards a net-zero, climate-resilient economy. Our reputation as a sustainable and innovative business hub continues to attract investments in circular economy initiatives.

People feel connected, welcomed and proud to call Darebin their home. Darebin’s thriving main streets are celebrated as among the ‘coolest High Streets’ globally. Vibrant street culture, live music, art and unique Darebin ‘vibe’ are an integral part of local identity. Cultural dining destinations, markets and community events draw visitors back time and again.

The Northern Innovation and Sustainability Precinct is an economic powerhouse driving education, health and research innovation. La Trobe University is a thriving city of the future, driving advancement in education, health, and research while connecting communities within a vibrant urban precinct. La Trobe Private Hospital is surrounded by a thriving cluster of health professionals and entrepreneurs. Local talent and supply chains have bolstered Darebin’s health and education sector and reinforcing our vision of a thriving, job-rich local economy.

**Why Darebin?**  
A community that supports local independent business.





## Framework pillars

**Empowering small businesses for sustainable growth**

**Collaborative mainstreet revitalisation**



**Mobilising health and education for community wealth**

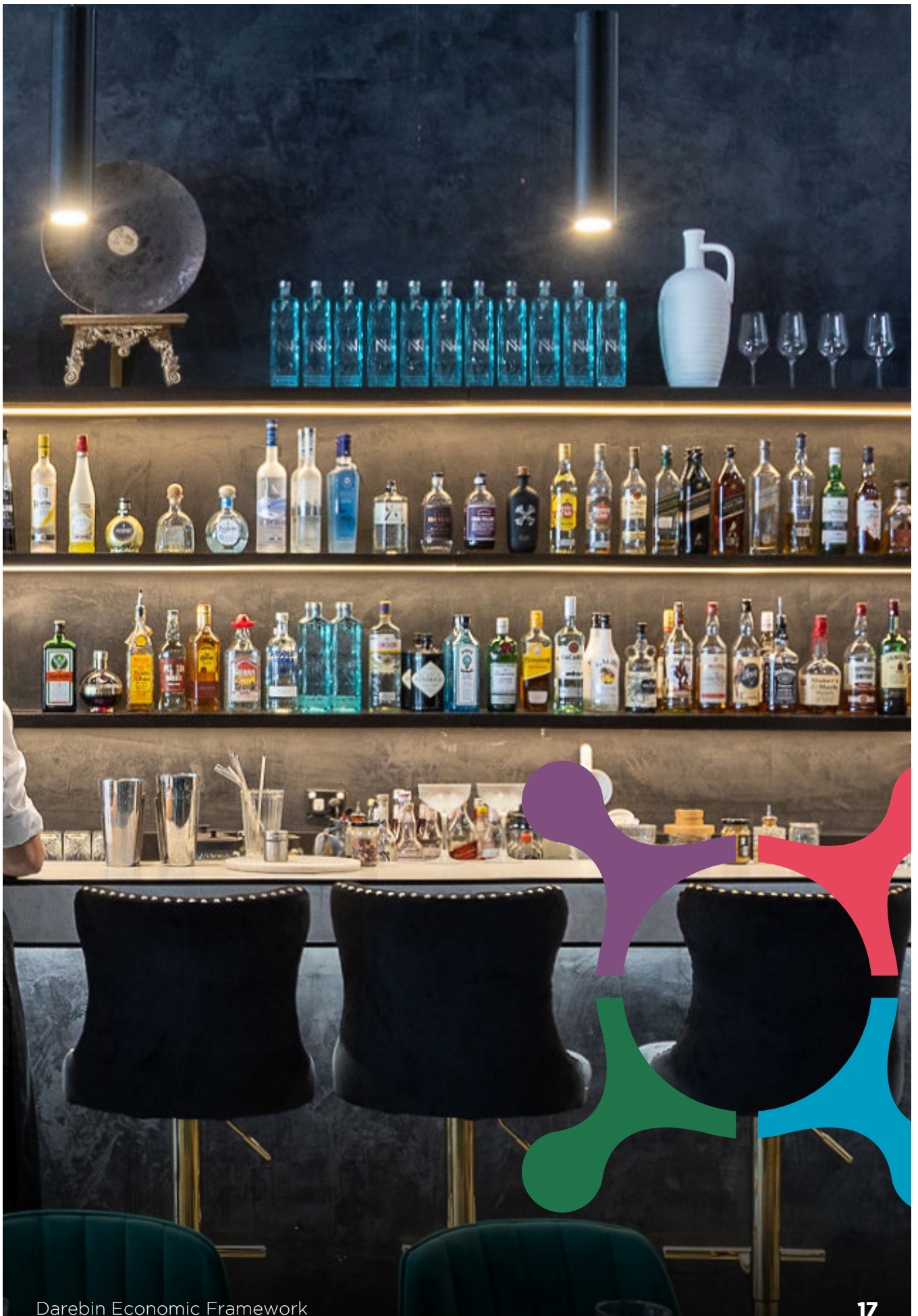
**Activating enterprise clusters for growth**



**Why Darebin?**  
The dining destinations are outstanding!

*Local residents strongly support independent businesses, many of which choose to expand within Darebin.*





# Empowering small businesses for sustainable growth



**Strategic goal**  
 Enable partnerships that support business of all scales for sustainable growth and workforce equity.

**Strengths**

- A strong small business sector.
- A professionally oriented workforce.
- A diverse, multicultural community.
- Sustainability values including the Net-Zero Business Program and Climate Emergency Plan.

Problems	Solutions	Council's role	Measures
<b>Business sector is under pressure. They feel increasingly isolated and are seeking connection with local supply chains.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form a Darebin Business Network to:</li> </ul>	Action leader	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Connect business for peer-to-peer support and localise supply chains</li> </ul>	Connector	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote industry champions / achievements and grant opportunities provided by third parties</li> </ul>	Communicator	# Participants % Growth business connection
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitate business peer-to-peer mentoring to help small business to learn, grow and scale</li> </ul>	Connector	# Businesses # Industries
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Partner with local providers to provide and assistance to small businesses and entrepreneurs – e.g. start-up support, business planning</li> </ul>	Partner	# Partnerships secured
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Celebrate local climate and circular economy business champions to foster peer to peer inspiration and learning.</li> </ul>	Communicator	



Problems	Solutions	Council's role	Measures
<p><b>98% of business is small and approx. 65% are micro/sole traders. Most are working from home and they have low resilience.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with local co-working hubs to develop special offers for network members</li> </ul>	Partner	<p># Participants # Businesses</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore potential of utilising Council assets to support business meeting spaces and shared work-spaces</li> </ul>	Action leader	
<p><b>Only 17 businesses have more than 200 employees.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish relationships with big employers, health and higher education to explore interest in Anchor Network</li> </ul>	Connector	<p># Partnerships secured</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with Anchor Network to plan for local workforce development and job pathways for youth, CALD, First Nations and disability to build an equitable workforce of the future</li> </ul>	Partner	

# Collaborative mainstreet revitalisation



**Strategic goal**  
 Collaborate for social and economic revitalisation and grow local stewardship.

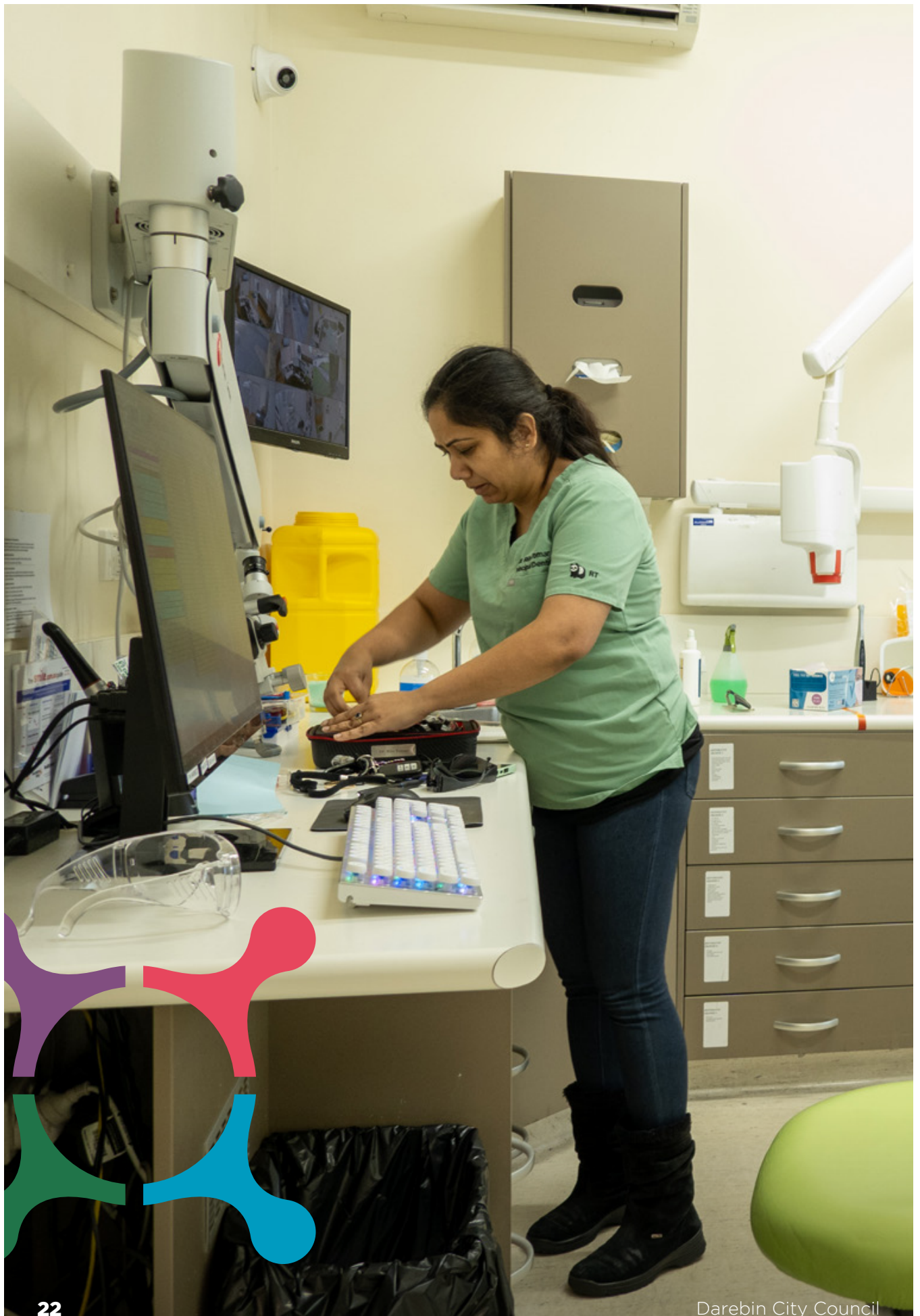
**Strengths**

- A network of distinct retail and commercial centres and strips.
- Places and destinations for visitors such as High Street, Northcote. Preston market. Northland as key retail hub for inner north-west.

Problems	Solutions	Council's role	Measures
<b>Consumer and business confidence trending down. Activity centre customers not local, only 15-20% of visitors are from Darebin.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboratively develop shared place visions that amplify unique strengths, activate local communities and drive social and economic revitalisation</li> </ul>	Action leader	# Participants % Social connection (met someone new)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revive shop local campaigns to increase local visitation and reduce economic leakage</li> </ul>	Action leader	# Business partnerships # Landlord partnerships
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop annual pace measurement framework and place satisfactions survey to track impact of initiatives</li> </ul>	Action leader	# Annual report and place satisfaction survey
<b>Online spend still a challenge to bricks and mortar. Foot traffic declining.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empower local communities and grow locally-led activation skills and culture</li> </ul>	Capacity builder	# Participants # Businesses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide placemaking and activation grants</li> </ul>	Action leader	# Grant funded projects
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish regular local activation calendar</li> </ul>	Action leader	% Local pride
<b>Youth unemployment high - 12.8%.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with youth service providers and others to establish youth placemaking champions network</li> </ul>	Partner Capacity builder	# Participants # Partnerships secured



**Why Darebin?**  
Preston is central.  
Our work is all  
over Melbourne.



# Mobilising health and education for community wealth



**Strategic goal**  
 Mobilise partnerships, clusters and localised supply chains to grow community wealth.

**Strengths**

- A growing health and education sector.
- Designated Northern Innovation and Sustainability Precinct in Bundoora.
- A highly skilled and multilingual population and workforce.
- A range of key anchor institutions - Latrobe University, Latrobe Hospital, Melbourne Polytechnic.

Problems	Solutions	Council's role	Measures
<b>Darebin's key growth industries not well supported by allied clusters of local supply chains.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify, promote and grow local allied clusters to strengthen localised supply chains in proximity with health providers</li> </ul>	Action leader	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formation of allied health network groups to strengthen localised supply chains</li> </ul>	Action leader	# Participants % Business connection
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grow relationships and formalise partnerships with hospitals, education and other big business to solve systemic problems and grow employment and wellbeing for youth and vulnerable communities</li> </ul>	Partner	# Business partnerships
<b>Only 22% of Darebin residents work in Darebin. Local employees with specialised skills are hard to find, especially in the north.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with strategic partners to submit funding application on the Northern Innovation and Sustainability Precinct</li> </ul>	Partner	# Partners
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support better transport connection between education providers, health providers and other major employers</li> </ul>	Partner	\$ Funding # Grant funded projects
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attract talent and skilled workforce within the Northern Innovation and Sustainability Precinct</li> </ul>	Partner	

# Activating enterprise clusters for growth



**Strategic goal**  
 Activate clusters, support transition and plan for optimised land use for long term prosperity.

**Strengths**

- A strong and resilient manufacturing sector.
- Large areas of industrial land.
- High value manufacturing activities.
- A highly educated local workforce.

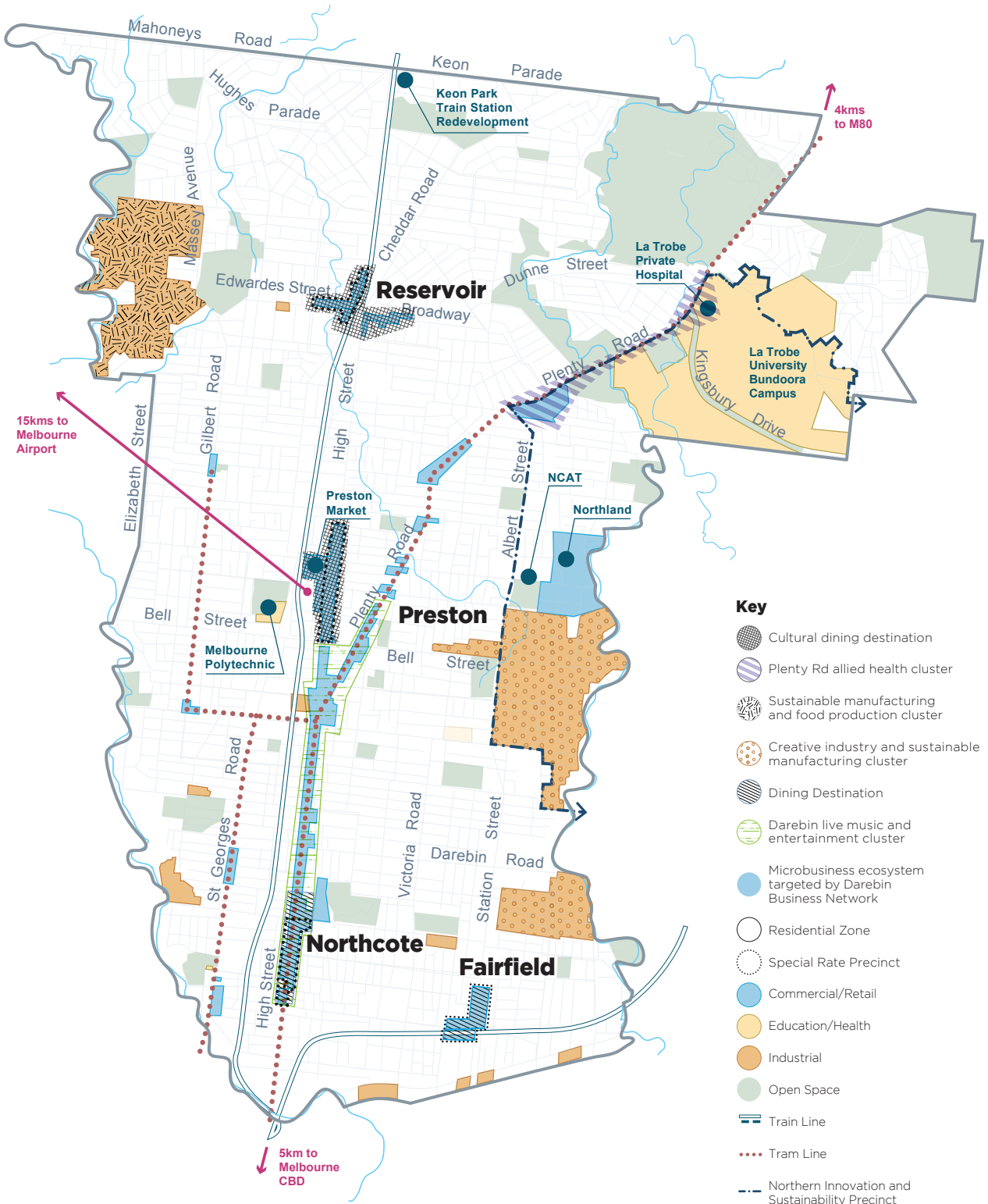
Problems	Solutions	Council's role	Measures
<b>Declining manufacturing industry is transitioning and considering moving out of town where lot sizes are bigger.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify, promote and grow sustainable manufacturing zones to strengthen existing and Reza attract new business and investment</li> </ul>	Action leader	# New businesses # Business participants
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with a third party to support small and medium scale business to be climate resilient and plan well managed risks associated with business transition to a net-zero economy</li> </ul>	Partner	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with the growing creative manufacturing sector in Preston and Thornbury and link to local startups and social enterprise</li> </ul>	Connector	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for funding to support increased training opportunities, including free TAFE programs and workforce training, for local residents to take up job opportunities in the zero-carbon economy.</li> </ul>	Advocate	





Problems	Solutions	Council's role	Measures
<b>Land use not optimised for local employment.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake an employment lands planning study to inform land use planning settings which respond to the strategic strengths, support economic development and long terms employment growth</li> </ul>	Action leader	Measures to be defined
<b>Emergent enterprise clusters undefined. Darebin's unique identity and strengths under-capitalised on and opportunities are lost.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify, promote and grow Darebin's iconic live music cluster to strengthen ecosystem and attract new business and investment</li> </ul>	Action leader	# Partners \$ Funding # Grant funded projects
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with business associations to promote and grow Darebin's iconic dining destinations to attract visitation and new business investment</li> </ul>	Partner	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attracting last mile distribution, food a beverage and other large employers to Darebin</li> </ul>	Advocate	

# Economic opportunity



## Lighthouse projects

### Empowering small businesses for sustainable growth



Partner with local businesses to establish a Darebin Business Network that supports networking, enables small business to participate in economic partnerships and scale

Maximise the utility of collaborative workspaces for small business by integrating and optimising local resources including Co-working spaces and Council Assets

Explore establish of a Small & Large Business Network to facilitate partnerships with big Darebin employers

Research feasibility of a B2B program for small businesses to apply for vouchers to be used with local businesses from a list of preferred Darebin business suppliers

### Collaborative mainstreet revitalisation



Develop Shared Place Visions to guide collaborative social & economic revitalisation and reconnect with local customers in activity centres

Review and revitalise Darebin’s award-winning Active Spaces program to proactively address shopfront vacancy increase

Advocate for extension of Special Rates precinct boundaries in Reservoir

Developing locally-led place activation skills, with local communities and youth, and provide placemaking grants to empower locally-led activation ecosystem

### Mobilising health and education for community wealth



Define the Plenty Road allied health cluster around Latrobe Hospital, develop vision and investment attraction prospectus

Grow citywide local allied health and care networks to wellbeing grow supply chains

Northern Innovation & Sustainability Precinct (NISP) funding submission with La Trobe University, Banyule Council & NorthLink to drive social, economic and sustainability outcomes in the North

### Activating enterprise clusters for growth



Municipal Economic Land Use Study to understand the future needs and opportunities to optimise land use for job creation

Partner with third party to undertake a Net-Zero Business Program to support small and medium scale business to transition to a net-zero economy

Identify, define and promote existing informal clusters:

- Sustainable manufacturing & food production clusters in Reservoir Industrial Precinct
- Live music cluster in Thornbury and Croxton

Develop a Circular Economy & Creative Industry Investment Attract Strategy to develop new vision to revitalise Preston and Thornbury industrial precinct



**Why Darebin?**  
There's support for  
creating change in  
the community.



# The lifecycle of the Framework

This Framework is intended to guide future priorities, projects, programs and partnerships of Council to development Darebin’s economy. Council will continue to listen to the community, businesses, and our stakeholders to ensure that we are responsive and relevant, throughout the lifecycle of the Framework. This lifecycle will involve consultation, design, action plan delivery and evaluation to develop regular action plans from the Framework.

Each action plan from the Framework will be preceded by an interim Evaluation Report, bringing together updated consultation outcomes, new data analysis, feedback and measurements to invest into the next action plan.

**Annual survey**

- An annual business survey will be conducted to provide an understanding of what is happening for business and stakeholders within Darebin’s economy

**Design**

- Every action will have process, performance, outcome and impact evaluation measures built into its design

**Delivery**

- Following endorsement of the Economic Framework by Council a rolling Economic Action Plan will inform annual actions for delivery
- Our businesses and partners working with Council on actions will be provided opportunities to engage with their customers and stakeholders to cultivate a feedback loop

**Evaluation**

- Participant and recipient feedback, new research and statistical analysis will be used to identify changes, trends, and innovation.

## Acknowledgements

The development of this Framework was supported through the contributions of hundreds of businesses and economic partners in and near Darebin through participation in workshops, completing surveys, sharing their experiences, and reflecting on the materials gathered. Thank you for your contribution. Council looks forward to the many partnerships and projects to be created to realise this Framework’s objectives.

## Further reading

If you would like to find out more about the various pieces of information gathered through research and consultation that contributed towards this Framework, please follow this link to information on the Darebin City Council website. **Insert link to be provided for final edit.**

Please contact the Economic Development Unit at Darebin City Council for more information by phone **(03) 8470 8344** or email **business@darebin.vic.gov.au**






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relayservice.gov.au

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 **Speak Your Language**  
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# DAREBIN ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK

Engagement, research & case study  
summary findings

12 August 2024



## Acknowledgement of Country

I acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung People who are the Traditional Owners of the Land. I recognise their continuing connection to Land, Water and Culture. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

*Artwork by Natasha Ellis-Corrigan, proud Jinibara/Bundjalung woman.  
Aboriginal artist from Jinibara Designs.*



## BACKGROUND

- Darebin's Council Plan 2021 – 2025 sets a strategic direction for a prosperous, liveable and flourishing Darebin
- There has never been a more important time for Council to better understand business experience and priorities
- We are delivering new Economic Framework that will help make Darebin a **great place to do business** and support community **health, wealth and happiness**
- This document provides high level distillation of engagement, research and case study findings





# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT





**Round Table 1: Social Enterprise, Not for Profits and Community Sector**

**10 Oct 23 - 10 Oct 23**  
9:15 AM - 11:45 AM



**Round Table 2: Manufacturing and Large Industry**

**12 Oct 23 - 12 Oct 23**  
2:00 PM - 4:45 PM



**Round Table 3: Retail, Activity Centres and Hospitality**

**17 Oct 23 - 17 Oct 23**  
9:15 AM - 12:00 PM



**Round Table 4: Health and Education**

**19 Oct 23 - 19 Oct 23**  
9:15 AM - 12:00 PM



**Round Table 5: Creative Industries and Micro Businesses (0-4 employees)**

**24 Oct 23 - 24 Oct 23**  
9:15 AM - 12:00 PM



**Round Table 6: Real Estate and Construction**

**26 Oct 23 - 26 Oct 23**  
9:15 AM - 12:00 PM



**Economic Summit  
November 23**

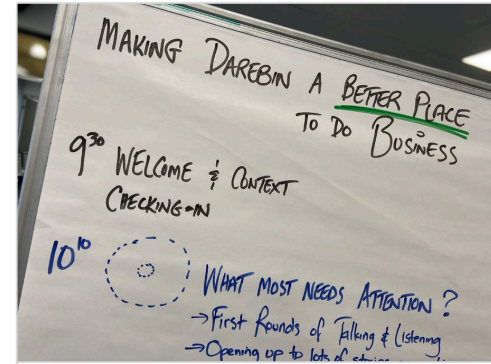




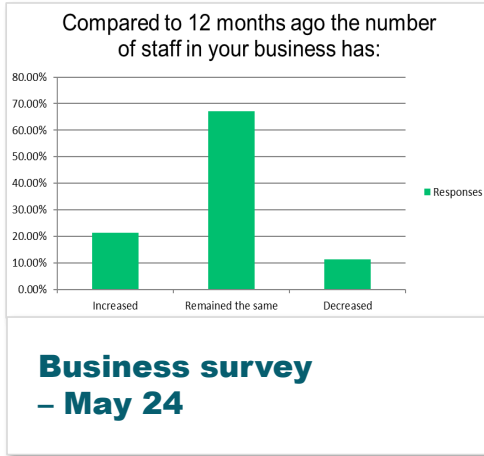
**Stakeholder workshop  
#1 – June 24**



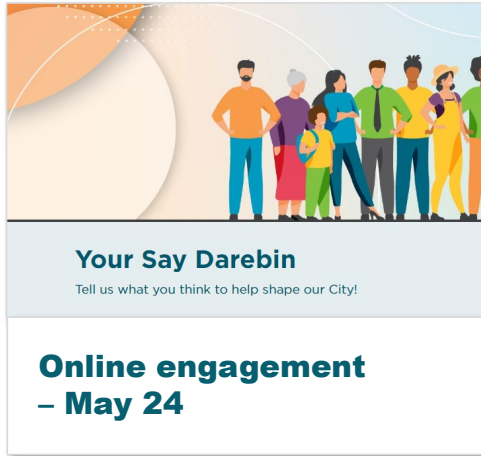
**Stakeholder workshop  
#2 – July 24**



**Fishbowl workshop  
– July 24**



**Business survey  
– May 24**



**Online engagement  
– May 24**



**327**

**Key  
stakeholders**

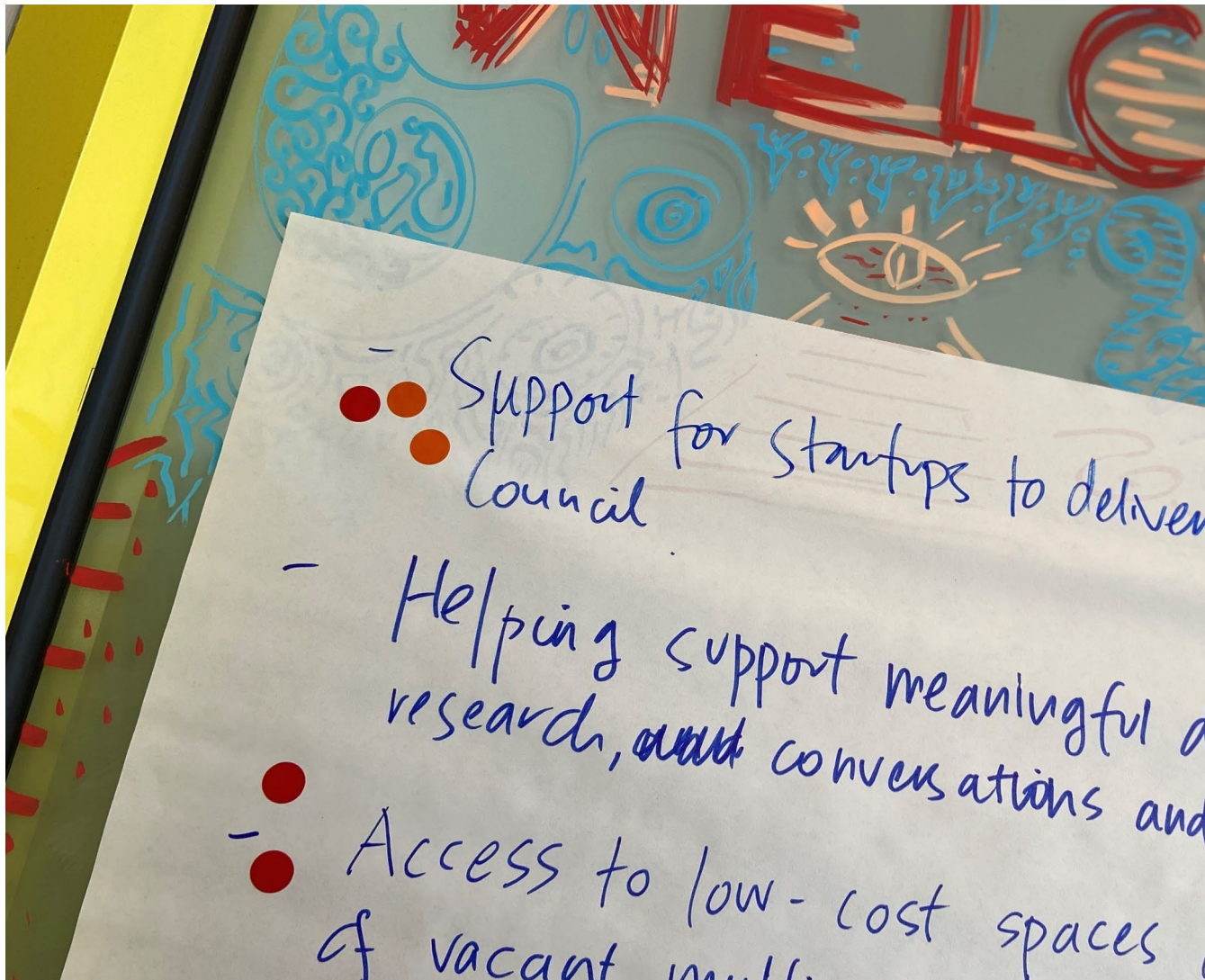
**14+**

**Industries**

**10+**

**'Repeat attendees'**





**961**

**Individual comments**

**1162**

**Votes**

**12**

**Conversation stations**

**405** Mins of guest presentations

Mins of networking **450**

**750** Mins of group discussion

Food items consumed **2200**





# WHAT DID WE HEAR?





## SURVEY FINDINGS

- 60% of respondents feel connected or somewhat connected to business & community in their areas
- Staffing numbers largely remained the same – reinforced by economic data telling us the small business has plateaued
- Perceptions of customers does not match economic data
- Barriers for innovation are lack of resources (time & money) and fear of taking risks
- 28% of businesses actively support the growth of culturally safe workplaces for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTQIA+, people with disability and young jobseekers.

### Challenges:

- Cost pressure
- Declining sales & foot traffic
- Business leaves to scale
- Affordable worker housing

### Enabling support desired

- Increased awareness of grants
- Council promotion of industry achievements
- Networking opportunities

## Participation summary

- Online survey was conducted in May 2024
- 109 people from business
- 17% spoke a language other than English at home
- Approx 40% identified as LGTBQIA+, having a disability or being a young person
- Balance of genders
- High proportion from retail industry



## WORKSHOP THEMES

**Escalating costs putting pressure on business**

**Business networks for peer support and localising supply chains**

**Making permits easier and more affordable by scaling Council rates and fees to size of business**

**Enhanced local street amenity, activation and events**

**Assisting with online 'visibility & searchability'**





## ROUND TABLE / SUMMIT THEMES

# 138

**Why Darebin?  
Why do you stay?**

- “Council supports business.”
- “Darebin is diverse, welcoming and inclusive.”
- “Darebin supports impact and social enterprise.”

# 127

**What are your  
employment and  
staffing  
challenges?**

- “Quality, skilled and experienced staff are difficult to find, labor market is tight and competitive.”
- “Partnerships to provide work experience, opportunities and support initiatives for jobseekers.”
- “Businesses need to build awareness of cultural safety and young people’s needs.”

# 120

**Support need to  
innovate for  
efficiency and  
growth?**

- “Help with investment towards machinery, processes, research and development and infrastructure upgrades.”
- “More visibility and showcases for local innovators, social enterprise and community groups.”
- “Networking events for cross collaboration.”



# ECONOMIC RESEARCH



# ECONOMIC STATS

## Local business summary



**13773** # of businesses

**61681** # of jobs



**98%** Small businesses  
(<\$10 million turnover annually)  
60-70% of is micro/sole trader



**17** Businesses with  
200+ employees



**155683** Darebin population

**22%** Darebin's residents  
that work in Darebin

## Top 3 employing industries



**2178** Construction  
30% with 1-4 employees



**1939** Professional, scientific  
& technical  
92% with 1-4 employees



**1420** Rental, real estate &  
hiring 96% with 1-4  
employees

## Youth employment



**12.8%** Youth  
unemployment



## LOCAL ECONOMIC DRIVERS

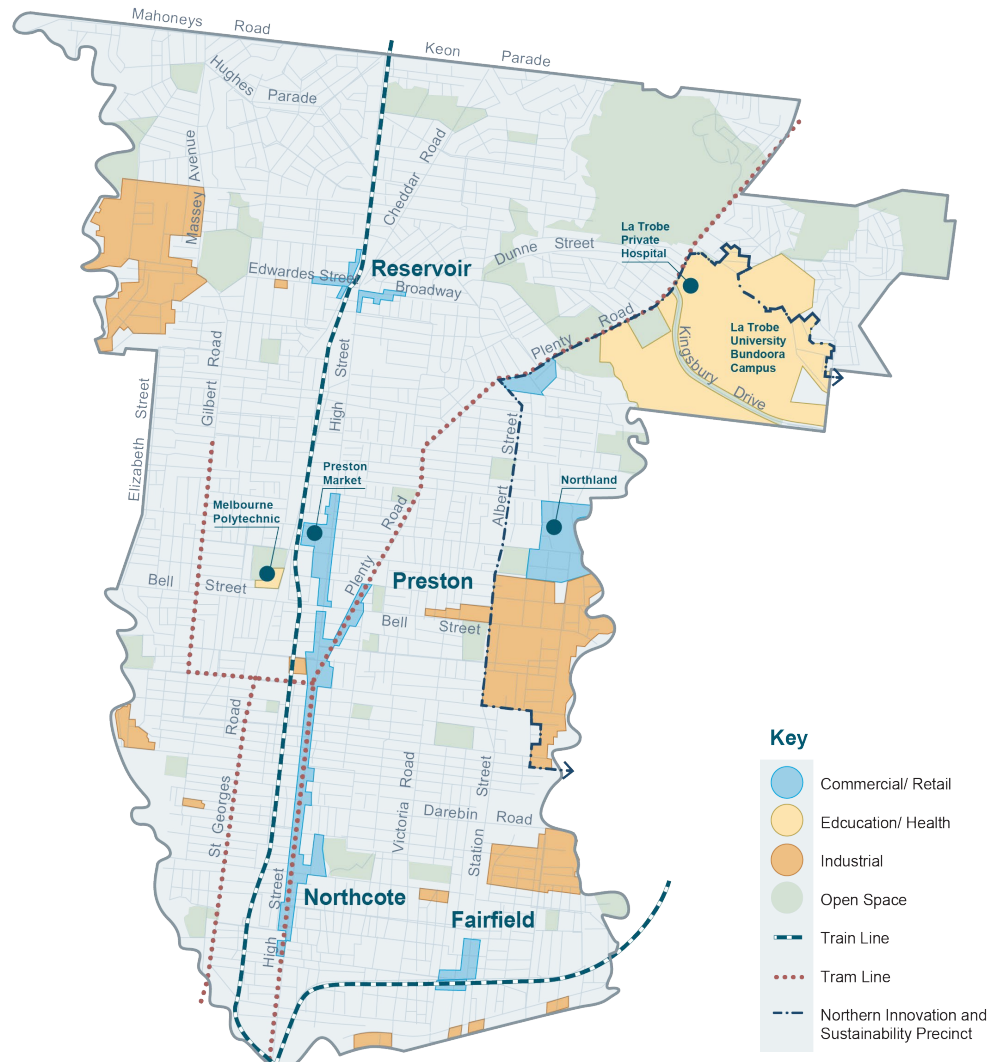
### Top 5 resident local expenditure categories in Darebin (April 2024)

1. Grocery Stores & Supermarkets	\$21,659,477
2. Dining and Entertainment	\$19,482,679
3. Specialised Food Retailing	\$11,677,610
4. Specialised and Luxury Goods	\$10,374,824
5. Transport	\$9,670,532

Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024) using Spendmapp data by Geografia. Note: Only top 5 spending categories are included

### Top exports from the Darebin Economy, 2022/23

1. Manufacturing	\$858,600,000
2. Education and Training	\$675,800,000
3. Health Care and Social Assistance	\$378,600,000
4. Wholesale Trade	\$304,400,000
5. Retail Trade	\$282,900,000





# CASE STUDIES



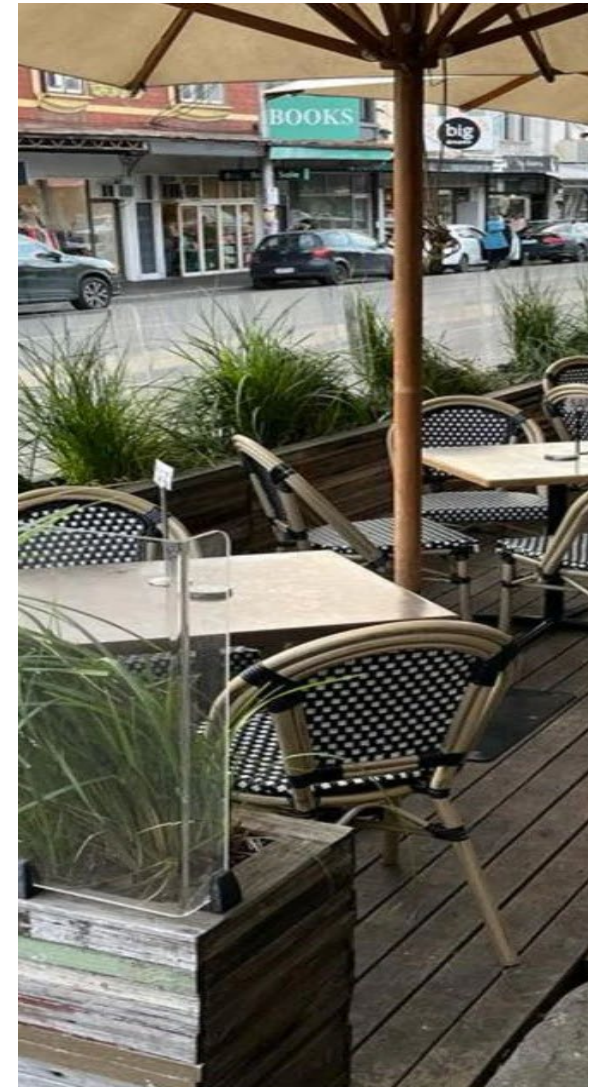
## Small Business Support through Networks and Grants

**Location:** Victoria, Australia

\$3.5 million in Victorian government grant funding distributed to 185 business networks strengthened activity centres across the state, kept a State-wide network of small businesses connected, grew capacity, expanded memberships, enhanced promotions, activated centres and improved amenity during COVID-19. 28,900 businesses were positively impacted. An additional \$1.2MIL local sponsorship and volunteering was unlocked providing amplified community benefits, increased social capital and a local financial 'return on grant investment' in activity centres of 31%.

### ***3 key lessons to apply:***

- **Empowering networks** with grant fundings will achieve greater collective and systemic impact than providing grants to individuals.
- **Grants unlock additional resource investment**, volunteerism and co-contribution.
- Shared challenges & hardship drives **collective action** and networking which supports a **more resilient system**.





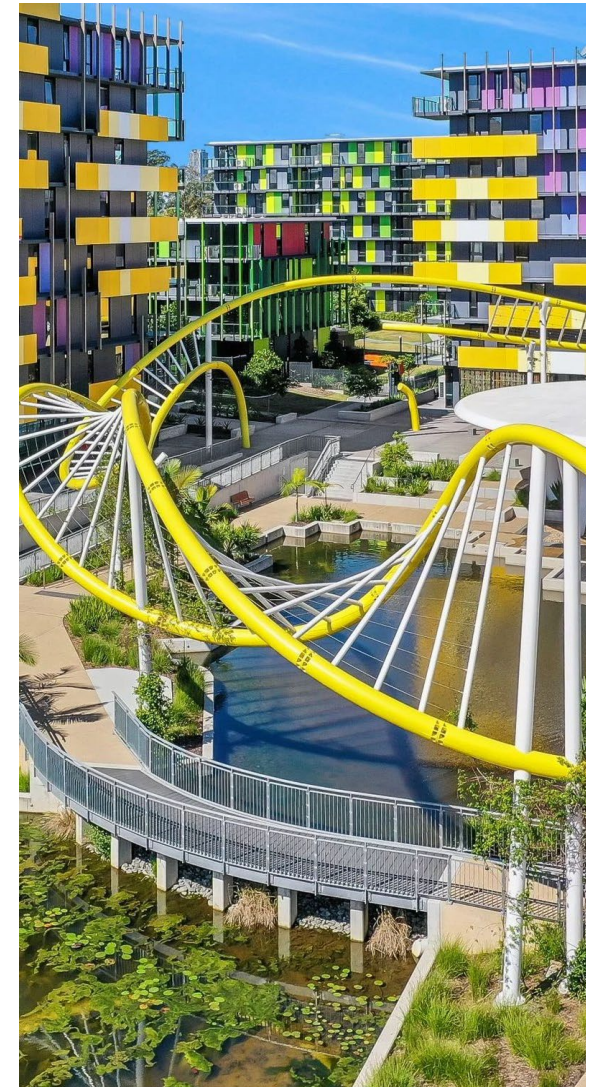
## Parklands Health & Knowledge Precinct

**Location:** Gold Coast, Queensland

The Gold Coast Health and Knowledge Precinct is a collaborative healthcare and innovation hub driven by government, universities, and hospitals, leveraging a former athlete's village for its build-to-rent housing.

### *3 key lessons to apply:*

- **Strategic partnerships:** forge strong partnerships between government, leading research institutions, and private enterprise to leverage collective resources and expertise for long-term development.
- **Location & Infrastructure:** select a strategic location with strong anchors and access to transport infrastructure to create a foundation for future growth and investment.
- **Sustainable development:** combine economic development with environmental considerations by creating a mixed-use precinct that offers commercial opportunities, research facilities, and attractive public spaces to foster a vibrant and sustainable community.





## Cremorne; Creating a Future Vision

**Location:** City of Yarra, VIC

Cremorne transformed into a global tech hub by developing a vision, leveraging its strengths, strategic partnerships, and state government support.

### ***3 key lessons to apply:***

- **Evidence based place-led vision:** compelling vision for the precinct, based on existing assets was developed after deep research into demographics, and economic trends and technological infrastructure feasibility.
- **Strategic partnerships:** Foster collaboration between government, industry, and education to attract investment through public and private funding opportunities and create a competitive market development environment.
- **Land use:** pressure to rezone land use to also include residential was resisted to ensure employment lands were maintained to enable long terms jobs and employment.





## Community Wealth Building in Birmingham

**Location:** Birmingham, United Kingdom

The Centre for Local Economic Strategies created an 'anchor network' of Birmingham's biggest employer including Council, universities, hospitals and more to deliver targeted projects to tackle escalating poverty and create community wealth across the region. Partnerships have attracted millions in Govt funding, created 450 job offers, supported over 180 youth from disadvantaged areas.

### ***3 key lessons to apply:***

- **Formalised partnerships:** a formalised network between large scale employers can provide a powerful agent in shaping the economy that has the ability to tackle wicked social problems
- **Collective impact:** combined budgets achieve greater collective impact and amplify community benefit
- **Get funding ready:** partnerships are much more likely to attract and win funding in fiscally tight environment





## Te Taiwhanga Rangatahi: Empowering South Auckland's Young Designers

**Location:** Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland), Aotearoa (NZ)

Te Taiwhanga Rangatahi, a collective of seven young designers from south Auckland, focuses on transformative change through a peer-based 'buddy' model and support from The Southern Initiative\*. Established through a 12-week design training experience in 2021 and employed as Junior Designers at Auckland Council, participatory and indigenous design is used to address challenges in education and employment. The program fosters skill-building and employment pathways, empowering rangatahi to drive meaningful economic development and societal change in Auckland.

### **3 key lessons to apply:**

- **Empowering youth** to lead and innovate through participatory design, mentoring and 'buddy' model
- Using **indigenous frameworks** to address local challenges effectively and empower vulnerable youth cohorts
- Building tangible skills, backed up with demonstrated project experience, creates **pathways into meaningful employment** for young people







## Port Augusta's transition to renewable energy

**Location:** Port Augusta, South Australia

Port Augusta's transition from a coal-dependent city to a renewable energy hub has yielded significant economic benefits, including job creation, investment attraction, economic diversification and infrastructure development.

### ***3 key lessons to apply:***

- **Leverage Local Resources:** Port Augusta's success highlights the importance of identifying and capitalising on renewable energy resources. Cities should conduct thorough assessments of their potential to harness solar, wind, hydro or other renewable energy sources.
- **Foster Collaboration and Partnerships:** Effective collaboration between government, industry and the community is essential for a successful transition. Public-private partnerships can facilitate investment, knowledge sharing and skill development.
- **Invest in Workforce Development:** A skilled workforce is crucial for the renewable energy sector. Cities should prioritise training and education programs to equip residents with the necessary skills for emerging job opportunities.





# **BUSINESS SURVEY ENGAGEMENT 2024 SUMMARY**



## BUSINESS SURVEY SUMMARY FINDINGS

- 60% of respondents feel connected or somewhat connected to business & community in their areas
- Staffing numbers largely remained the same – reinforced by economic data telling us the small business has plateaued
- Perceptions of customer location does not match economic data
- Barriers for innovation are lack of resources (time & money) and fear of taking risks

### Barriers & challenges:

- Cost pressure
- Declining sales & foot traffic
- Business leaves to scale
- Affordable worker housing

### Enabling support desired

- Increased awareness of grants
- Council promotion of industry achievements
- Networking opportunities

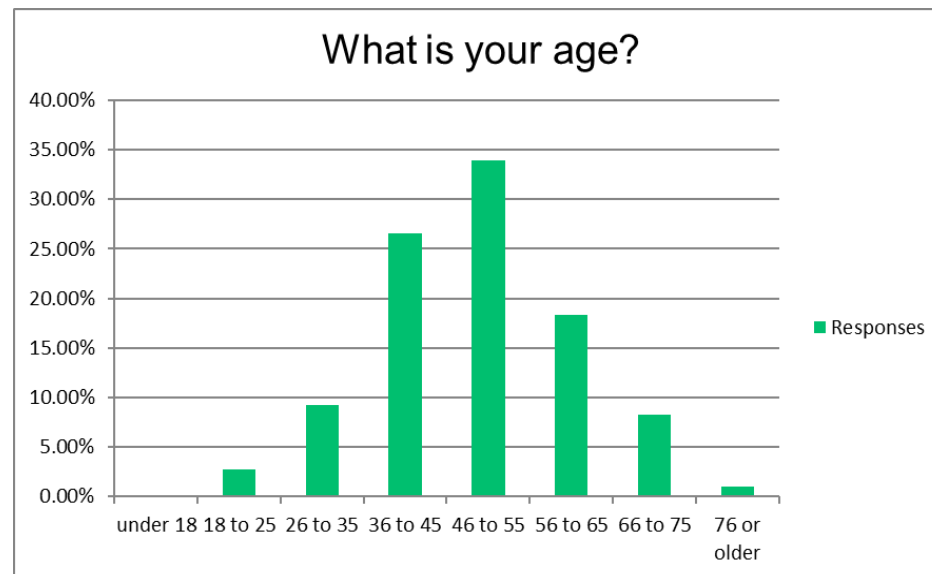
### Participation summary

- Online survey was conducted in May 2024
- 109 people from business community responded
- 17% spoke a language other than English at home
- Approx 40% identified as LGTBQIA+, having a disability or being a young person
- Balance of genders
- High proportion from retail industry



## PARTICIPATION

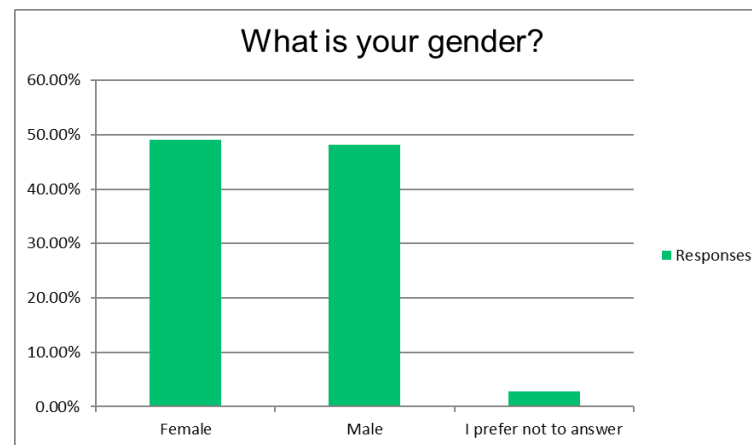
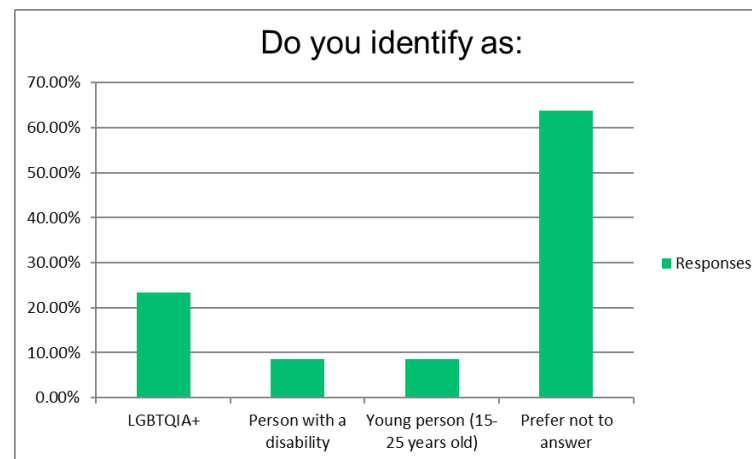
- Online survey was conducted in May 2024
- 109 people from business community shared their views with us
- 60% of respondents were 36-55 in age
- This survey provides a benchmark and will be undertaken annually going forward to track change





## PARTICIPANTS

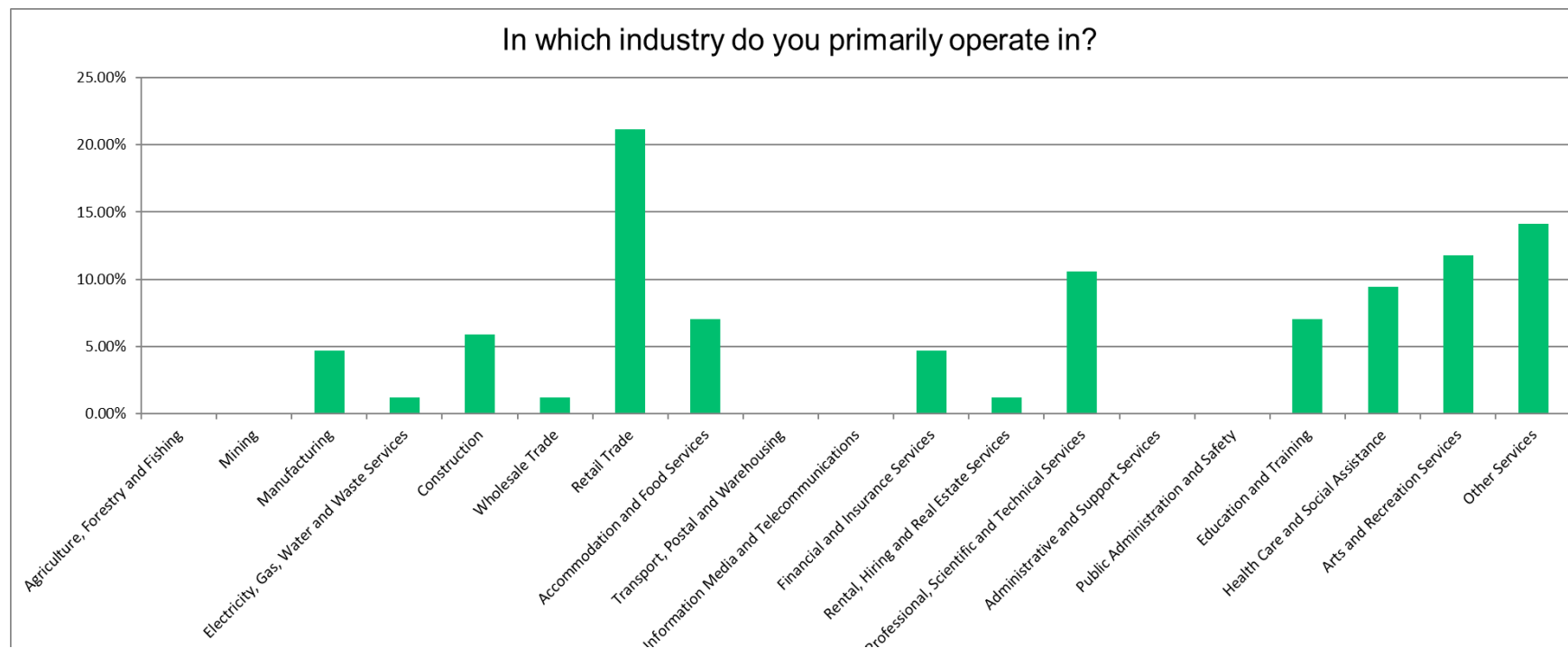
- 19 respondents (17%) people spoke a language other than English at home
- Approx 40% of respondents identified as LGTBQIA+, having a disability or being a young person
- Reasonable gender balance with 3% preferring not to answer





## RESPONDENTS INDUSTRY

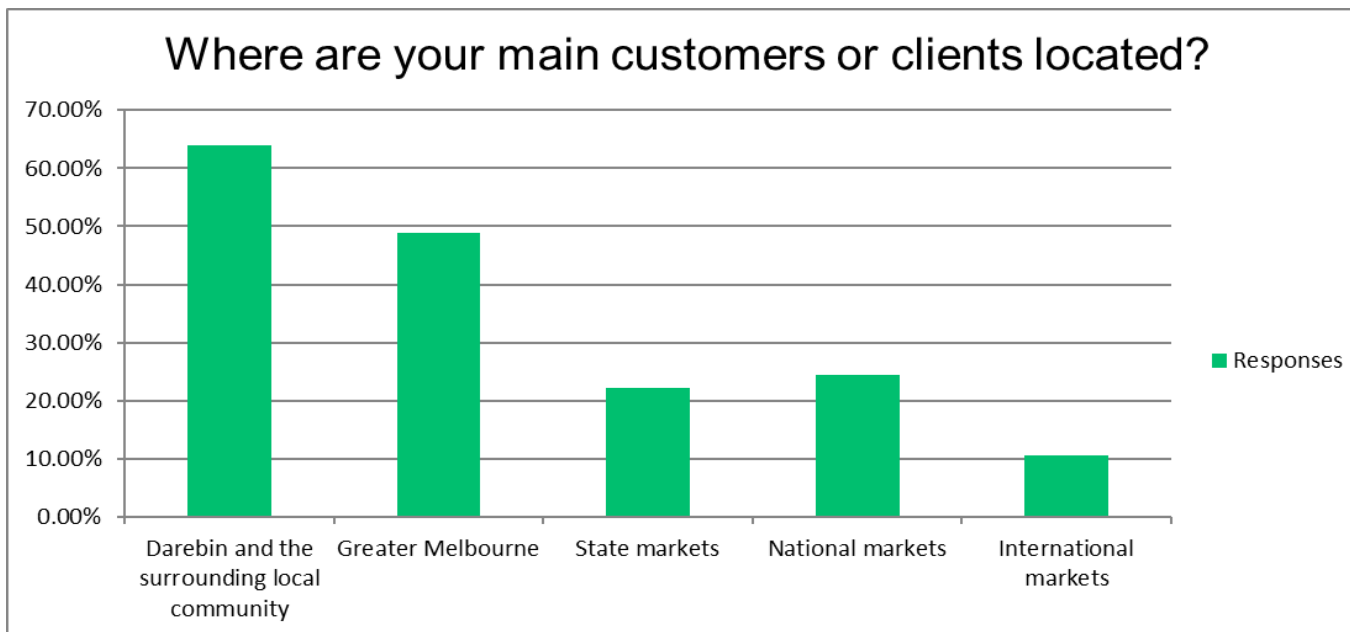
- Majority of respondents were from retail sector – note retail is 5<sup>th</sup> biggest industry in Darebin. Likely influenced by shop front door knocking & Business Association members participation





## CUSTOMERS

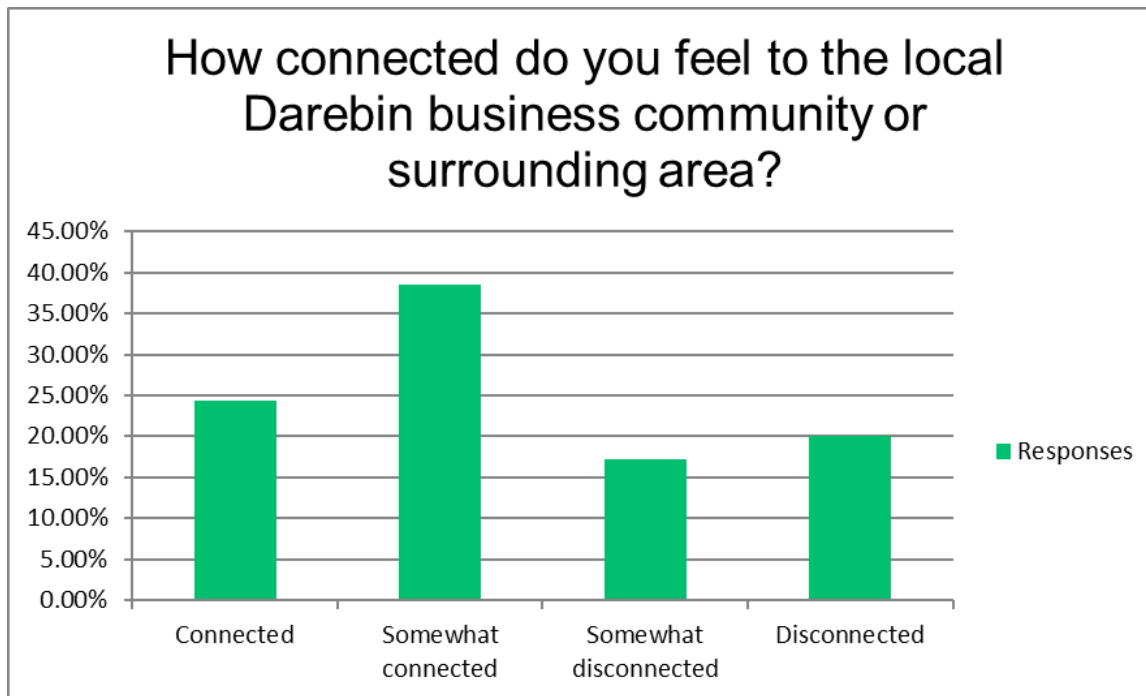
- Respondents rated Darebin residents as biggest customer base
- Note: data tells us Darebin activity centres have bigger customer base from outside of Darebin





## SENSE OF CONNECTION

- Approx 60% of respondents feel connected or somewhat connected to business and community in their areas

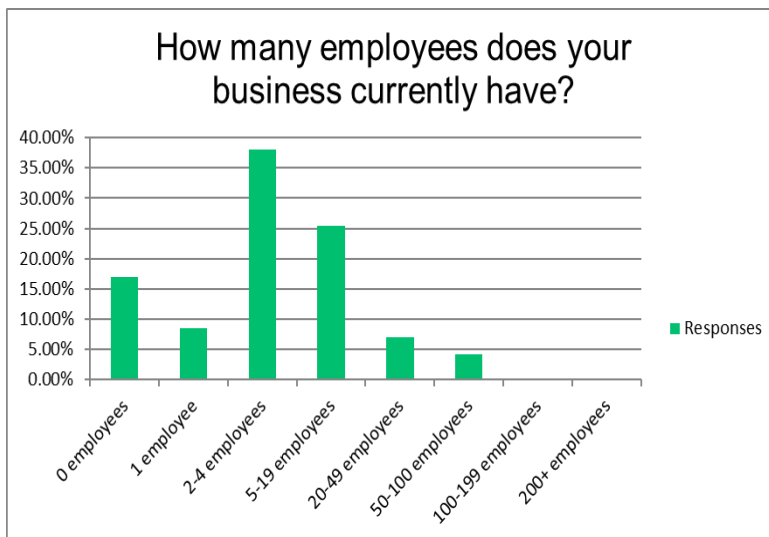






# STAFFING

- Majority of responded reported having 2-4 employees
- Staffing numbers largely remained the same
- Note: this is reinforced by economic data telling us the small business has plateaued





## STAFFING CHALLENGES

- 40% challenges attracting skill and experienced staff
- 36% not experiencing staffing challenges

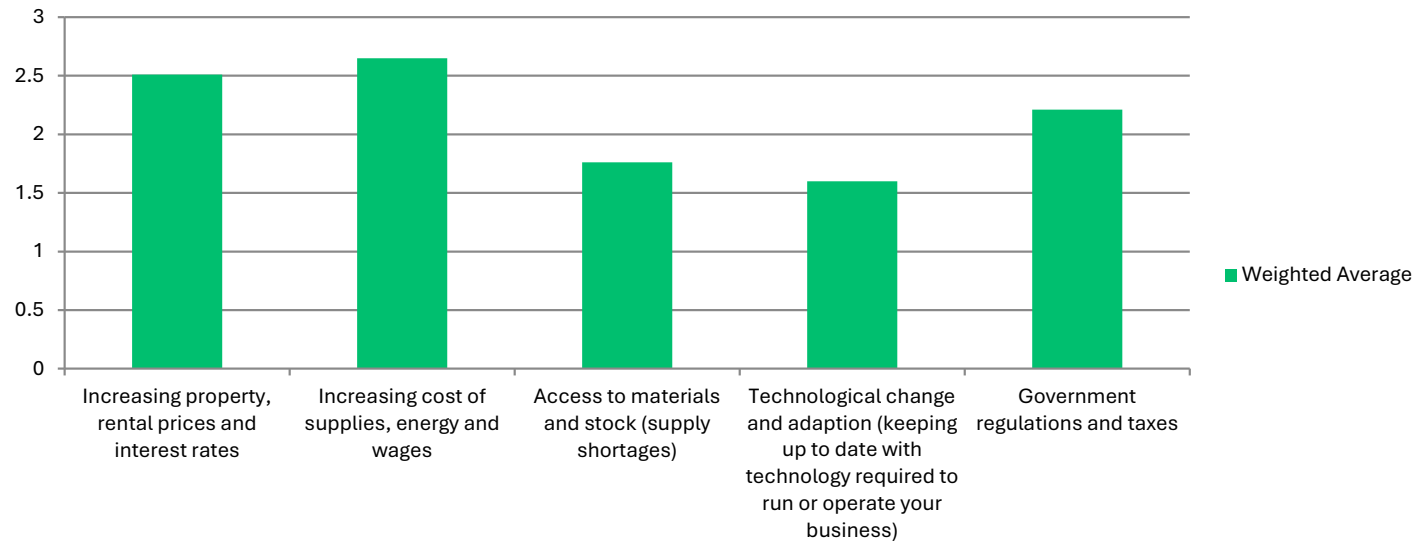




## FACTORS HOLDING BACK GROWTH

- Cost increases, supply shortages, government regulations and taxes, and technology changes are all important costs and factors which hold back growth

Have these factors made it harder for your business to grow and/or be profitable?





## GENERAL BUSINESS CHALLENGES

Key challenges for respondents right now

### **Cost pressure**

- "Cash flow since pandemic."
- "Drastic increase in commercial rents."
- "Land tax / council rates."

### **Declining sales & foot traffic**

- "The foot traffic is getting bad."
- "Lack of consumer confidence."

### **Business leakage & discount pressures**

- "Darebin is an incubator for businesses and once established they tend to move to other areas in Melbourne."
- "High percentage of NFP's expect product at discounted rates."

### **Affordable worker housing**

- "No affordable housing for employees to live close by."





## CHALLENGES FOR BUSINESS GROWTH

- Key challenges for small businesses are attracting customers and managing costs and financial pressures.

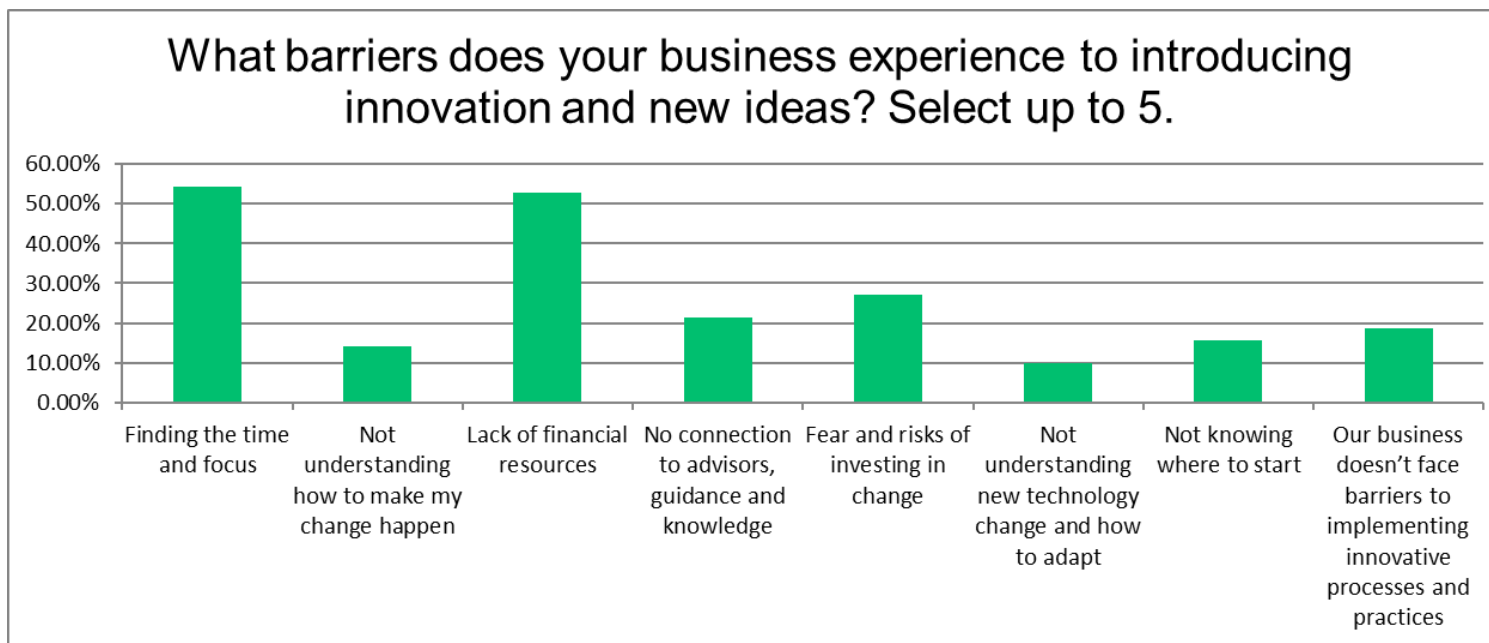
- "Getting customers in the door. Attracting new young clients. Connecting with customers and the community."
- "Foot traffic is getting bad. People are land-banking shopping strip land and not putting businesses into them – many vacant shop fronts."
- "Reduction in parking."
- "The number of drug affected people in the street."

- "Rising costs at every level"
- "Increased competition. More food shops keep opening,"
- "Government regulations, permits, work cover."
- "Maintaining cash flow. Keeping prices reasonable."
- "Finding appropriate studio space. Cannot find a shop"



## BARRIERS TO INNOVATION

- Top barriers for respondents included lack of resources (time & money) and fear of investing in change

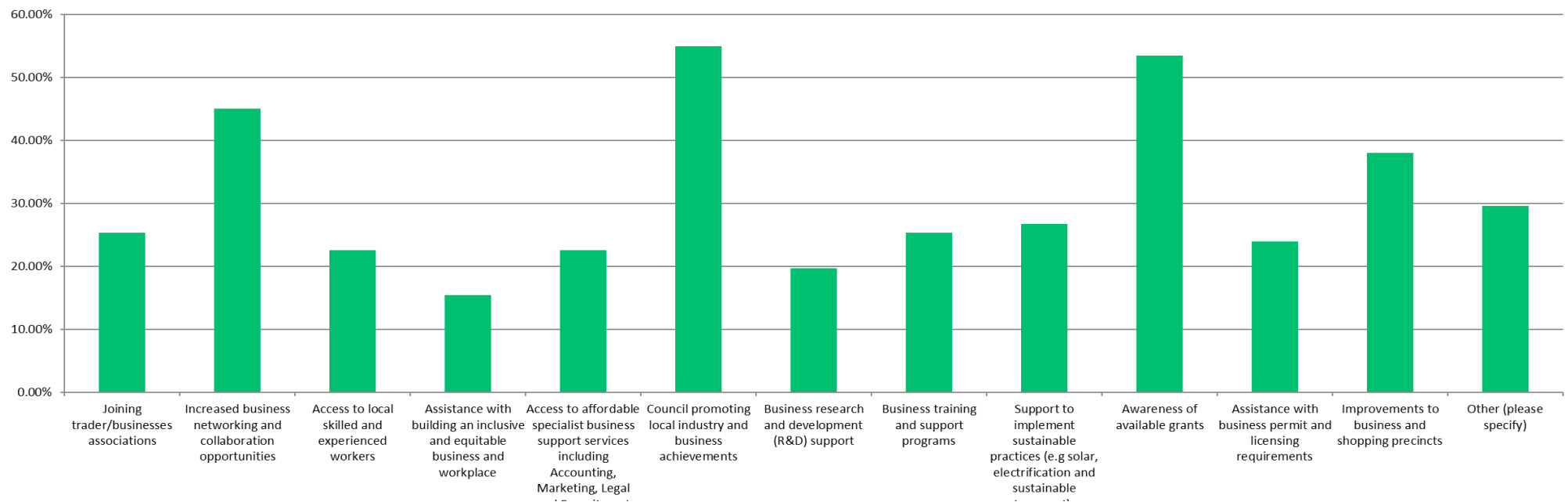




## ENABLERS

- Increased awareness of grants, Council promotion of industry achievements, networking & amenity in shopping precincts

Which of the following options would make doing business in Darebin easier? Select up to 5.





## CULTURALLY SAFE WORKPLACES

28% of respondents supporting the growth of culturally safe workplaces for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTQIA+, people with disability and young jobseekers.

- "I, the owner of my business, am a part of the LGBTQIA+ Community and it's great to not have to worry about being discriminated against at work."
- We are undertaking (indigenous engagement) training as a team. Our business is 50% First Nations, 100% LGTBQIA+, and 100% women and nonbinary."
- "We work on pro bono projects like an Indigenous Entrepreneurship Academy, and mentor Female Founders and often migrants via other programs."
- "We make it clear that we are allies with our posts, stickers on the window etc."
- "We are founders who are first-generation migrants ourselves, we recognize the importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace."
- "We're queer-friendly and support local artists who also identify as queer, and we stock items that specifically cater to queer and neurodivergent people."
- "We have a 5-year Reconciliation Action Plan endorsed by Reconciliation Australia."





# Darebin Economic Framework: Background Analysis Report

City of Darebin

25 | 07 | 2024





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## Executive summary

### What is an Economic Development Framework and how will it help the community?

Council is developing an Economic Development Framework (EDF) to guide how Council works with Darebin's businesses and industry. The Framework will build a cohesive and clear strategic direction for how economic priorities are identified around advocacy, leadership and investment. Recently there has been a great deal of economic change, impacting the City in both positive and negative ways, and understanding Darebin's economic priorities for advocacy, leadership and growth is imperative to its recovery and resilience. To assist Council in its formulation of an EDF this report reviews the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in and to the Darebin economy.

### How does the Darebin economy function?

Wealth in the local economy is generated through inter-regional sales of goods and services (exports) and income retention where wealth is reinvested and captured through local value chains. The purchase of goods and services from outside the local area (imports) can be seen as 'leakages of income', some of which may be reduced though prospects are limited in an integrated, linked metropolitan economic context.

Community wealth building (CWB) is a critical 'lens' for local economic development in Darebin. CWB is about developing more resilient, inclusive, sustainable local economies, with more local employment and a larger and more diverse business base, an increased share of wealth that is locally owned to benefit local people, and cleaner and greener economic activity. CWB in Darebin will be amplified through actions and partnerships between institutions that 'anchor' the local economy, including for example the Council, Latrobe University and other education institutions, Latrobe Private Hospital and other major health providers, and key businesses and land-owners in local retail, commercial and industrial precincts. In practice CWB will require a focus on generating community economic benefits from the goods and services that are bought and sold locally, how people are employed and their skills deployed, how assets are utilised and the extent wealth is re-invested locally.

Income retention and local community wealth building in Darebin is underpinned by the strong small business sector (including retail and local services but also in home-based professional and trades and light industry service sectors). The major 'exporters' are the clusters of entertainment and dining businesses with Melbourne wide appeal, as well as large businesses serving the wider metropolitan area and beyond including in manufacturing, university education and health). *Places* within Darebin should be a focus for its economic development. Thriving entertainment and retail districts are essential to Darebin's economy and identity while larger education, health and industrial precincts are vital for Darebin's anchor institutions.

**There are a number of wider trends impacting on the Darebin economy**

Darebin's economy must be viewed within its regional, state, national and global contexts. Businesses have been experiencing tight labour markets and low job vacancies meaning that recovery and growth in key sectors could be stymied by labour and particular skills shortages. Darebin businesses report difficulties in accessing trained and skilled staff.

Inner city economies in particular have seen a shift towards increased knowledge-based economic activity, with the growth of professional and advanced business service industries and employment a key characteristic. While Darebin is integrated into the metropolitan and inner-city economy, it has no real major local concentrations of business service activity. It does have a resident workforce increasingly employed in these knowledge based activities, including professional services and creative industries.

An ageing population is adding to labour market challenges, but also boosting the importance of the health industry.

Inflation and interest rate rises are adding to cost of living pressures, affecting peoples' spending and impacting on local business sales and profitability. Since Covid-19, tight labour markets have caused businesses to feel the pressure of staff shortages. Digital innovations are bringing with them a fourth industrial revolution, but also a long-term shift to online retail has posed ongoing challenges for local retail centres and strips.

**Darebin's economy is dependent on its small business community**

Ninety eight per cent of Darebin's businesses are small businesses, serving both local and metropolitan markets. Their presence reflects a level of entrepreneurship and experience which will underpin resilience in the local economy, as it adjusts to new trading challenges. There are also a smaller number of big 'exporters' which trade beyond the local area, including to interstate and international markets, and they are important to local economic sustainability and employment.

**Small businesses have been doing it tough recently**

Engagement has revealed that small business growth has plateaued. Increasing costs of supplies, energy, wages as well as rental and property prices are impacting the ability of businesses to grow and innovate. Many small businesses have found trouble attracting skilled staff and experienced job seekers. Resident and visitor spending is down with discretionary spending impacted significantly. Online retail remains a challenge for brick-and-mortar shops. Engagement outcomes have confirmed these issues and identified priorities that include:

- Enhancing business networking and events,
- Making the permit process easier to navigate,
- Street revitalisation, and

- Increasing awareness of local businesses.

#### The role of major industries

Darebin's major industries include health, education and manufacturing. These are all significant employers that contribute greatly to the local economy. The continued growth of these sectors is pivotal to the strength of the Darebin economy. These sectors provide wide employment opportunities and generate wealth. While health and education are forecast to continue to grow, manufacturing has seen continued decline in employment. However, manufacturing still plays a vital role in the Darebin economy. Manufacturing is Darebin's largest export earner and remains a key industry of employment.

#### Top priorities for the Darebin economy

The analysis and engagement findings point to a local economy characterised by the following themes:

- **Small business economy** – noting the preponderance of small businesses in numerous contexts including in industrial precincts, operating from home and in retail and commercial centres, and sustaining a large share of local employment opportunities.
- **Retail centres and destinations**– these are the places that give the local Darebin economy its visible identity, for locals and visitors alike, and host diverse multi-cultural, night-time and creative economy activities
- **Education and health** – dominated by the place based Bundoora cluster of Latrobe University and Latrobe private hospital, but growing throughout the local economy in centres including Melbourne Polytechnic at Preston, and in distributed health and social care activities caring for older and disadvantaged Darebin residents.
- **Enterprise clusters** – principally in the large industrial precincts of East Preston and Reservoir, but also in smaller precincts elsewhere, providing a home to evolving and high value manufacturing and creative enterprise activities.

A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis has summarised key findings under these theme headings. Broad directions and priorities emerging from the analysis and engagement to address these SWOTs, including applying a Community Wealth Building lens, could include:

<p><b>Small business economy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Developing business networks and events to expand peer networks and local supply chain connections</li> <li>▪ Linking businesses to local staff to increase employment self-containment</li> <li>▪ Providing more help to small businesses and entrepreneurs</li> <li>▪ Addressing Council related cost pressures where reasonable</li> <li>▪ Promoting the unique offerings of Darebin, its diverse centres and growing industries.</li> <li>▪ Leveraging the strong sustainability interest in the Darebin community and business ecology</li> </ul>
<p><b>Retail centres and destinations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Revitalising and reactivating local centres through place-led planning and partnerships</li> <li>▪ Enabling locally led festivals and events ecosystem</li> <li>▪ Reviewing and revitalising Darebin’s award winning Active Spaces program to proactively address shopfront vacancy increase</li> <li>▪ Capitalising on the Preston Central precinct redevelopment for social and economic uplift, including embedding a permanent fresh food market in the local economy</li> <li>▪ Developing a tourism destination strategy for key precincts</li> </ul>
<p><b>Education and health</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promoting the growing health and education sector</li> <li>▪ Identifying, promoting and growing local allied clusters to strengthen localised supply chains in proximity with education and health providers</li> <li>▪ Further developing the Bundoora cluster of Latrobe University and Latrobe private hospital and ancillary activities, including for local community wealth development</li> </ul>
<p><b>Enterprise clusters</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Supporting a creative manufacturing sector</li> <li>▪ Better understanding the needs of local manufacturing and creative enterprise, and linking to local community wealth initiatives</li> <li>▪ Embracing industry 4.0 advancements and last mile distribution opportunities</li> <li>▪ Developing a Creative Industry and Circular Economy Precinct Investment Attract Strategy for Preston and Thornbury industrial precincts</li> <li>▪ Establishing a pilot Preston and Thornbury Industrial Precinct Business Association that supports networking and enables businesses and landowners to participate in economic partnerships.</li> </ul>



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background and purpose

Council is preparing an Economic Development Framework (EDF) that, in turn, will guide the formulation of a future Economic Development Strategy. The Framework will guide how Council works with businesses and industry to build a cohesive and clear economic direction. The Framework will provide a high level 'opportunities roadmap' that can be adapted and focused in an iterative approach through the development of the Strategy, being both contemporary and relevant.

To support Council's work on the EDF, SGS Economics & Planning Pty Ltd (SGS) was commissioned to explore the strengths, weaknesses, issues and opportunities in the Darebin economy. SGS's work included desktop research and data analysis, distribution and analysis of a Darebin business survey and completion of a 'town hall engagement' with the business community.

## 1.2 How the economy functions

### Model of the local economy

SGS applies a particular model of the local economy (see Figure 1). Starting on the left of the diagram, 'exports' inject income into the local economy. Exports refer to any product or service traded to anyone outside of Darebin. This includes dollars spent by those outside Darebin on manufactured goods made in Darebin, on health services in local hospitals, and in local retail or activity centres. Income injected into the local economy creates a multiplier effect as exporting firms draw on local suppliers and workers to meet the demand from external customers.

Figure 1: SGS Model of a Local Economy



Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024)

External private investment provides capital to finance new and enhance existing industries, boosting infrastructure and productivity and creating its own income and employment multipliers. External private investment also brings new businesses with connections in different markets into the area, opening additional export opportunities. External public investment is similar but provided by State Government or the Commonwealth Government to invest in services, infrastructure or businesses in Darebin.

As well as money injected into the economy, the other side of the diagram shows that income can leak back out. Income leaks out as local firms import inputs to production (for instance, using suppliers from interstate or elsewhere in Melbourne or Victoria). Similarly, consumers import goods and services, like clothing or products, in nearby areas or online. These leakages dilute the multiplier effect from export sales and other income injections. Another leakage occurs when the local economy is dominated by firms owned elsewhere, which sees the wealth generated (as profits and dividends) flowing to shareholders and investors outside the local economy.

An objective for good local economic performance is to maximise inter-regional export income and the associated employment by identifying opportunities for export industry growth while also minimising income leakage.

Maximising export income depends on growing economic activity where a comparative or competitive advantage exists or can be developed. In economic development this will typically involve developing governance and market enablers that support exporting sectors, as well as targeted industry attraction to build capacity.

Addressing income leakages usually focusses on strengthening ‘bottom up’ capacity and locking wealth and economic activity into the local area. It involves ‘doing more locally’ – where realistic.

**Community wealth building** Community wealth building (CWB) is increasingly applied as an approach to lock in productive inclusive economic activity. CWB is about developing more resilient, inclusive, sustainable local economies, with more local employment and a larger and more diverse business base, an increased share of wealth that is locally owned to benefit local people, and cleaner and greener economic activity. CWB is a new economic policy and practice for people, place and planet.

The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) has developed the CWB movement in the UK. CLES has evolved the concept of community wealth building for application in the UK and now distils the action agenda around five pillars.

- **Progressive procurement of goods and services:** to leverage ‘anchor institutions’ – typically public, though potentially private entities embedded in ‘place’ – to use their procurement processes, spending and decision making to deepen local supply chains and socially virtuous business development, spending and investment. This ultimately develops dense local supply chains of local enterprises, SMEs, employee-owned businesses, social enterprises, cooperatives and other forms of community-owned enterprise. These types of businesses typically support local employment, have greater propensity to retain wealth and surpluses locally, and are more engaged with local communities and environments given their standing and responsibilities as ‘local corporate citizens’.
- **Fair employment and just labour markets:** to ensure the employment practices and wages paid by anchor institutions and their suppliers are fair and provide opportunities for greater workforce engagement including for disadvantaged and marginalised workers.
- **Socially productive use of land and property:** to utilise the land and property of anchor institutions in ways that generate wealth and benefits for local citizens rather than for remote, private interests. Anchor institutions are often major landholders and can support the development of under-utilised assets and land for positive community outcomes.
- **Making financial power work for local places:** to harness wealth and savings for local community and economic benefits, as an alternative to pursuing or relying on national or international capital with no enduring loyalty to place.
- **Plural ownership of the economy:** to encourage different models of business ownership in order to build wealth that stays in local communities. Cooperatives, mutually owned businesses, SMEs and municipally owned companies can enable wealth to stay local, and play a vital role in counteracting the extraction of wealth that otherwise occurs when corporate economics prevails.

CWB is about applying these pillars through actions and partnerships between local anchor institutions, such as councils, hospitals and key local businesses. In practice this means a focus on generating community economic benefits from the goods and services that are bought and sold, how people are employed and their skills deployed, and how assets are utilised.

Given the metropolitan context of Darebin, a CWB focus for Darebin is less about locally measurable wealth retention or economic self-reliance, and more about a holistic agenda of a fairer, stronger and more sustainable local economy. The aim is to 'lock in' – and amplify - the authenticity, uniqueness and economic vitality of the area, while spreading the benefits to the excluded and marginalised.

### 1.3 Policy context

The **Council Plan 2021-2025** guides how Darebin moves towards achieving the Darebin 2041 Community Vision, the Council Plan includes a focus on economic wellbeing with one of the *10 Big Actions* being to champion local business and creative industries. It includes objectives to expand their Aboriginal Employment Strategy, greater economic participation of women (with Council's Equity, **Inclusion and Human Rights Framework, Towards Equality**, addressing equity generally), foster local urban streetscapes and activity centres to support economic recovery, Council procurement from within Darebin, invest in economic reactivation and recovery initiatives to support existing and new industries, and develop an Economic Development Strategy.

Council's **Social and sustainable procurement policy 2021-2025** sets out how Council can contribute to the economic health and wellbeing of local businesses by sourcing goods and services from the local economy. Procurement is concerned not only with locality, but social equity (e.g., gender, age, Aboriginal status) and environmental sustainability. The **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy and Action Plan (2017-2027)** contains three objectives: create a culturally safe workplace; attract recruit and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in a culturally safe workplace, and strengthening procurement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and employment opportunities.

The **Darebin Climate Emergency Plan 2024–2030** intersects with the local economy through identifying opportunities for a more renewable, circular economy. Opportunities include new local jobs and training in electric, renewable and circular economy trades, pursuing zero emissions through minimising waste to landfill and back into the economy instead, and develop a program and materials to support small and medium business to be safe, climate resilient and manage transition risks associated with the shift to a net-zero economy.

Council's **Economic Land Use Strategy (2014)** guides how land use in the community can support dynamic economic activity that supports the wellbeing of the community more broadly. It has a strong focus on industrial land, with some needing to be retained and some industrial land better serving more mixed uses. It identifies that some smaller local centres are no longer performing a retail or commercial role and recommends a shift to residential in the short to medium term. Demand for office space was seen to be on the rise for the long-term, and investigating ways to develop a greater presence of La Trobe University with its surrounding community.

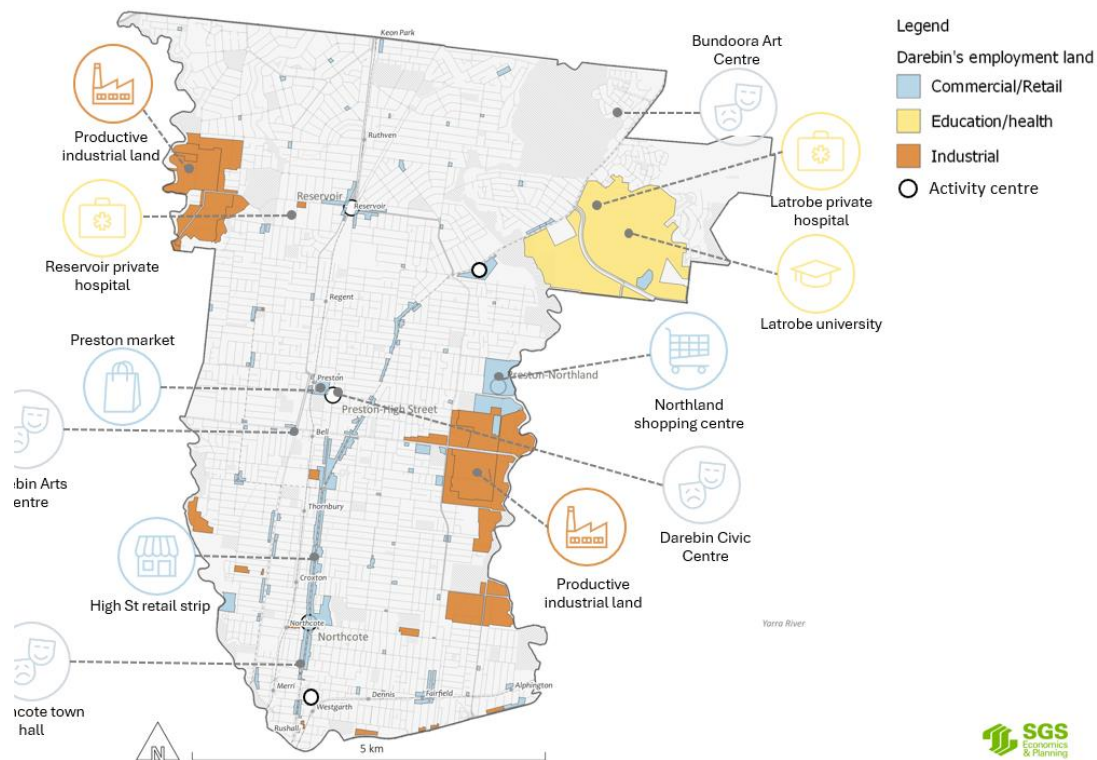
The Reservoir Investment Attraction Strategy (2023) outlines the case for investment in Reservoir, and strategic directions and actions to realise revitalisation opportunities. The Strategy includes both the Reservoir Activity Centre (Reservoir Village Shopping Centre and Broadway shopping strip) and the Reservoir Industrial Precinct. The Strategy sets three strategic directions, underpinning 12 themes for investment attraction:

1. A higher order activity centre: recognising the potential to provide a variety of housing retail and commercial, and civic uses that leverage its strategic location.
2. Position the Reservoir Industrial Precinct for revitalisation: Leveraging growth in e-commerce and supply chains, growth of the food and beverage sector and create a multi-dimensional role.
3. Maximise regional partnerships and connectivity: Leveraging the Precinct's location close to La Trobe Bundoora, the Bundoora NISP, the Northern SSIP and regional economic hubs and taking advantage of good public transport connections to unlock economic development.

Darebin is home to the Latrobe National Employment and Innovation Cluster (as designated in Plan Melbourne) in Bundoora. Darebin Council, in conjunction with Banyule Council produced the **Latrobe NEIC Opportunities Paper** (2023-24). This found the NEIC supports around 36,000 jobs and generates \$9.5 billion in economic output per annum. The paper calls for investment to progress key initiatives in further understanding the area's competitive advantage, improving public transport and active transport connections, land use planning to further protect the NEIC and sustainable energy generation to meet evolving needs.

## 2. Darebin’s employment precincts

Figure 2: Darebin's employment lands and key employment precincts



Darebin’s economic hubs are diverse, ranging from the acclaimed High St retail strip running from Northcote to Preston, to traditional industrial land in Preston East that contributes significantly to the local export economy. There are three designated activity centres from *Plan Melbourne* (Melbourne’s overarching planning and spatial strategy), which include Reservoir, Preston and Northcote.

Preston Central is one of the largest traditional, multi-dimensional activity centres in northern Melbourne. It’s a major focus for business, shopping, community, culture and recreation. High Street is the spine of Darebin and one of the longest, vibrant commercial strips in Melbourne. Reservoir currently fulfils a role as a neighbourhood centre providing weekly food shopping, business services and personal services. Preston is home to both Preston Market and Northland shopping centre. Preston Market, adjacent to the railway station, will undergo major change through a mixed-use redevelopment while the Northland shopping centre is a key anchor in the local, retail economy.

Latrobe University and Latrobe private hospital are located in Bundoora, with associated and ancillary activities. This cluster was nominated as the National Economic and Innovation Cluster in *Plan Melbourne* and anchors Darebin’s growth in the education and health industries. Melbourne Polytechnic is also located in Preston.

Darebin’s traditional industries, such as manufacturing, remain important to the local economy occupy large, consolidated areas of productive industrial land. Small clusters of shops and enterprise nodes are scattered throughout the residential areas.



## 3. A summary of Darebin's economic profile

This section sets out relevant macro trends impacting the Darebin economy and provides a summary of Darebin's economic profile. A detailed economic profile is provided in Appendix A.

### 3.1 The changing economic context

A range of trends that are outside the control of local decision-makers continue to impact on economic performance and community wellbeing, both positively and negatively. The below summarises the major trends impacting the local economy.

#### Industry 4.0

Industry 4.0, also known as the Fourth Industrial Revolution, refers to the current automation and data exchange trend in manufacturing and other industries. It involves the integration of advanced technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, cloud computing, and robotics, among others, into industrial processes and systems. Industry 4.0 is expected to profoundly impact the manufacturing sector, logistics, healthcare, and energy (amongst other industries). It is also expected to lead to significant changes in the nature of work, as many routine tasks are automated, and workers are required to have more advanced skills and knowledge to operate and maintain the new technologies.

#### The Knowledge Economy

Economic growth in major Western countries, including Australia's cities, is increasingly driven by innovation in knowledge-based service industries. The shift from traditional sectors to advanced services, like finance and professional services, has reshaped Australia's economy. Competitive advantage now lies in high-value activities up the value chain, where innovation and creativity are central. Darebin, with its strong and still-emerging professional services sector, benefits from agglomeration economies—environments fostering innovation and attracting skilled labour. This reflects a broader global trend where economic success is tied to specialisation in high-value, knowledge-intensive sectors.

**Place-based economic development**

Local economic leaders increasingly recognise the value and growth potential from supporting sustainable approaches and local businesses to create a virtuous growth cycle. Place-based economic development initiatives are aligned with Community Wealth Building and aim to retain and build wealth that adds social value from within rather than relying on external inward investment.

**Inflation and interest rate rises**

Inflation in Australia recently reached its highest level in decades, with prices rising 7 per cent in the year to March 2023 alone, the fastest pace since 2001. Non-discretionary goods have seen the largest increase, meaning Australian consumers and businesses are paying more for food, fuel, and other necessary expenses.

In response, with the aim of dampening spending and inflationary pressures, the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) has implemented a series of increases to the cash rate target, most recently in November 2023 which flows through to interest rates on mortgages and business loans. The cash rate now sits at 4.35 per cent, with mortgage interest rates at around 6.5% and higher. This policy rate tightening cycle has slowed economic activity which is expected to remain subdued in the coming years. Increasing borrowing costs in the wider economy have many unavoidable implications for small businesses, including increasing repayments on loans, reducing consumer spending (as observed over the last year in Darebin), and squeezing profit margins. Inflation affects small businesses by increasing the cost of goods and services, which can reduce purchasing power and profitability if businesses cannot pass these costs onto consumers through higher prices.

**Changing work patterns**

Working-from-home, the rise of technology that enables work to be done anywhere, the growth of the sharing economy, the use of alternative labour to provide flexibility to scale up or down resources (consultants/ freelancers, crowdsourced labour, contract-based workers and transactional remote-workers) and workers seeking more flexible work and lifestyles are all impacting on labour markets and the economy.

These trends are not only having significant implications for 'how' people work, but also 'where' and 'when' they work. A July 2023 report from the McKinsey Global Institute found that office attendance remains 30 per cent lower than pre-pandemic, indicating hybrid working may be here to stay. Based on these trends, under a modest scenario, they predict that demand for office space in major cities around the world will be 13% lower in 2030, but even lower in areas with expensive housing, dense office spaces, and large employers in the knowledge economy.

In Australia, this spurred a spreading out of economic activity from cities to regions, with some incumbent residents being displaced from more affordable areas. This trend appears to have stabilised or may be reversing.



Nevertheless, the trend of working from home, at least some days a week, is seemingly here to stay. This has brought along with it a reconnection of residents working from home to local places, activity centres and businesses. In Darebin, with its professionally oriented workforce, the opportunity to work from home will continue to be strong. With existing and new residents working online, the need for local household-serving industries will continue to rise across Darebin communities as the population grows.

### **Tight labour markets**

A tight labour market and low job vacancies have until recently impacted on the economy. Low job vacancies led to a more competitive labour market with strong demand for labour across all industries, and consumers as well as businesses feeling the pressures of staff shortages.

Many businesses are struggling to keep up with workload and consumer demand, with a stretched workforce and work backlogs, meaning they are resorting to reduced operating hours or hiring staff without the desired level of skill and experience. This may mean that recovery and growth in key sectors could be stymied by labour and skill shortages. An uptick in unemployment and a slowing economy may impact or moderate these trends in the near future though the labour 'mismatch' and shortages in some sectors (e.g. construction, care services) appears entrenched.

### **Circular and low-carbon economy**

Unfettered resource use and the externalisation of environmental costs has for too long led to profound adverse impacts on the environment. Circular economy models and the transition to low-carbon technologies are gaining momentum globally, as economies restructure to sit within (or at least better acknowledge) environmental boundaries. Rising energy costs are a significant concern for small businesses in most sectors.

The space for renewable energy technology offers a win-win situation to capitalise on a growing market, as well as for a successful transition of existing industries. Ultimately, this transformation can drive innovation opportunities, reduce economic leakages, and increase productivity, all while protecting and enhancing the natural environment. But the transition will not be without challenges – the waste and recycling industry in Victoria is in a state of uncertainty. There is significant work to do in building up stronger links to create a resilient 'loop' of suppliers, processors, and distributors. This could be a focus for the major industrial and manufacturing precincts in Darebin, noting that the circular economy is relevant to all businesses and sectors across Darebin.

### **Onshoring of manufacturing**

The trend of onshoring manufacturing has gained significant momentum in recent years, driven initially by recent events, including trade tensions and the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed the risks of over-reliance on offshore production. The rise of new industries, particularly in renewable energy and clean technology, has created opportunities for domestic manufacturing growth. Governments are incentivising onshoring in these strategic sectors to build local capacity and reduce dependence on foreign suppliers. The global political landscape has seen a rise in

populist and isolationist sentiments, leading to policies that favour domestic production. This shift has encouraged governments to seek to bring manufacturing back to their home countries to align with national interests and avoid potential trade barriers. Onshoring can contribute to job creation and economic growth, though may be inflationary. As companies relocate their manufacturing operations, they create new employment opportunities and stimulate local economies. While onshoring offers benefits, it may also confront challenges such as higher labour costs compared to overseas producers, regulatory hurdles, and the need for significant upfront and renewal investment (often in enabling infrastructure for sectors which have declined). Due to Darebin's existing strength in manufacturing, the continued trend of onshoring, including policies like the Federal Government's A Future Made in Australia approach, could see growth in manufacturing's role in the local economy.

### **Night-time economy**

A night-time economy (NTE) balances daytime activities with a vibrant night life from 6pm to 6am. Many cities are recognising the importance of NTEs in creating more economically diverse cities, and building strategies around supporting this. In turn, this creates opportunity for growth in jobs across food, drink, and entertainment sectors, improved brand attractiveness/ visitor appeal, activation of precincts, and improvements to social, cultural, and economic value. High Street Northcote/Thornbury is already a hub for night-time economy activities, underpinned by creative and entrepreneurial small businesses.

### **Ageing population**

Like many western countries, the Australian population is ageing. This has significant implications for health, policy, and the role of the workforce and economy. By 2050, around one quarter of all Australians will be aged 65 years and over, with this demographic group anticipated to overtake the number of children (aged 0-14 years) by 2025. This trend will further fuel demand for healthcare services; the number of nurses has already grown by 49 per cent since 2000, the largest employment growth occupation in Australia.<sup>1</sup> Harnessing the growth in the health and care sectors in general should be a focus for Darebin given an increasing cohort of older residents, the presence of hospital and ancillary health activities, and health science teaching and research capability at Latrobe University.

### **Evolution of the retail and hospitality sectors**

The retail industry is particularly exposed to ongoing structural changes in the economy which threaten viability and vibrancy of 'high street' shopping. Retail trends show that there has been a continued shift away from 'bricks and mortar' retailing towards online retail. In just over 10 years online retail turnover has increased by over 400 per cent and now makes up a total of over 10 per cent of all retail turnover in Australia.

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<sup>1</sup> Trading Economics (2023), 'Australia nurses': <https://tradingeconomics.com/australia/nurses>

This peaked in 2021 during the pandemic at 15.3 per cent of all retail turnover. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) recognises that this dataset is likely to be a significant undercount of total online retail sales occurring in Australia as it does not account for goods purchased directly from overseas and third-party websites while 'click and collect' purchases are noted as being severely underreported. The impact of online sales on retailing has led to a redefinition of how businesses operate and how consumers shop. The integration of online and in-store operations has become essential for the success of many retailers. While the data points to a decline in retail expenditure affecting Darebin's shops and small businesses the vibrancy and diversity of the retail strips, and the 'experiential' possibilities they offer, will likely underpin a resilience in the Darebin retail sector. Opportunities for significant redevelopment, including additional residential development in key hubs (at Preston Market for example) offer prospects for retail sector development if geared towards local small business opportunities.

The pandemic years also greatly influenced how people purchase food, as the percentage of online food sales increased dramatically over this period. While online food sales had been climbing in the years preceding the pandemic, the total percentage of online food sales jumped from below 6 percent in 2019 to over 15 per cent in 2021.

#### **Health and education**

Health care and social services are essential services that help people to lead the life they want, regardless of age, language barriers or disability. They are also major economic sectors. They provide jobs, can drive innovation, and act as exporters by selling services to the region and products overseas. The industry has enormous potential to drive local economic growth in tandem with population growth.

The health care sector is one of Australia's highest-performing sectors, growing at double the pace of Australia's GDP. With an ageing population, new technology innovations and continued investment post the pandemic, the health care sector will only continue to expand.

Education and training as an industry remains strongly linked to Australia's growing population. While Covid-19 caused a fluctuation in international student enrolments, the industry has seen continued growth in employment at both the national level and within Darebin. The Bundoora precinct cluster of education and health activities is an obvious focus for strategic economic activity planning.

#### **Summary and implications**

The wider economy has undergone a long-run transformation to one predominantly led by knowledge based activity. The knowledge economy often has higher value added outputs. While local services and retail employment remains foundational, over recent years, Darebin has been growing knowledge economy related activities, including in its industrial precincts, and in the Bundoora health and education area, but also in smaller commercially focussed precincts elsewhere. The local economy is maturing..

Darebin was not immune from the wider economic impacts of Covid-19 and has experienced a tight labour market with low job vacancies and local skill shortages. Covid-19 also boosted investment into an already fast-paced growing health sector. As the population ages, the health care economy is only going to continue to grow and attract State and Federal Government investment. Inflation and interest rate rises continue to impact both small businesses and the wider population with cost of living pressures continuing to climb.

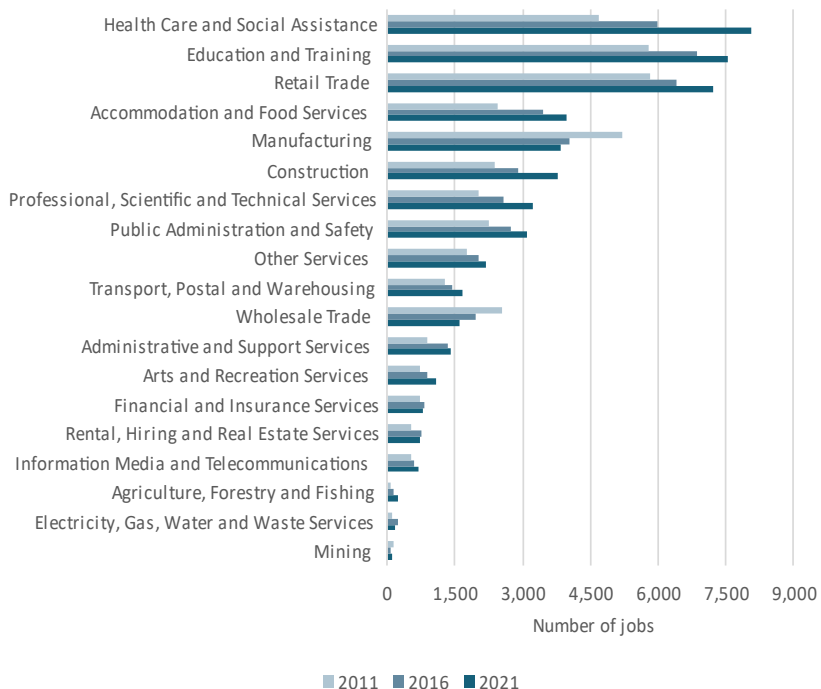
### **3.2 Economic profile summary**

#### **The local workforce and skills**

Over the past decade, Darebin has seen significant changes in its workforce and economy.

Health care and social assistance sectors have grown substantially, in line with trends elsewhere in Australia, and this trend is expected to continue. In Darebin growth in health is also partly attributable to the Latrobe private hospital redevelopment. Education, training, and retail trade remain prominent, reflecting an evolving local economy with increases in these population serving sectors. Professional, scientific, and technical services, accommodation and food services, and information, media, and telecommunications sectors have all increased, reflecting the shift towards a knowledge-based economy which has been particularly pronounced in inner and middle ring suburban areas (like Darebin). Some of this increase in white collar professionals in 2021 is likely influenced by the rise in remote work during the pandemic. Employment in the manufacturing industry, a former economic anchor, has declined significantly from 2011 to 2021. Despite this, manufacturing remains vital, with job numbers stabilizing between 2016 and 2021.

Figure 3: Employment by industry in Darebin, 2011-2021



Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024) using data from ABS Census 2021 – Place of work

Human capital is crucial for economic performance. In Darebin, arts and media professionals, legal, social and welfare professionals, educational professionals, and hospitality workers have high representation, while mobile plant operators, automotive and engineering trades workers, and factory process workers are underrepresented. Future skill shortages are expected amongst technicians, trade workers, and labourers.

Education is a strong asset of Darebin, with institutions like La Trobe University and Melbourne Polytechnic offering diverse research, tertiary and vocational study opportunities. Many residents hold degrees in management, commerce, society and culture, creative arts, health, and

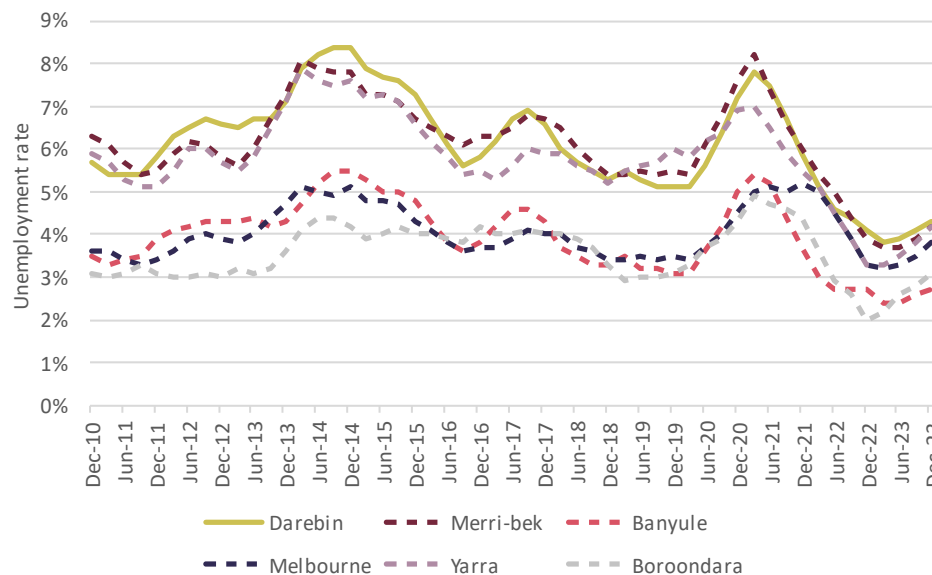
engineering. Compared to Greater Melbourne, Darebin has a higher proportion of residents with qualifications in society and culture, creative arts, natural and physical sciences, and agriculture.

Employment self-containment in Darebin is low, with only 22% of residents working within the municipality, indicating strong integration into the broader metropolitan economy.

**Unemployment**

Unemployment in Darebin was 4.3% as of December 2023. Unemployment rates have historically been higher than in neighbouring LGAs. Peaks occurred in 2014 and during the initial COVID-19 lockdowns, but current low rates present staffing challenges for local businesses.

**Figure 4: Unemployment rate of Darebin and neighbouring LGAs, December 2010 to December 2023**



Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024) using data from Small Area Labour Markets (December quarter 2023).

Increasing female workforce participation offers significant economic benefits, providing financial security for households and access to diverse talent pools for businesses. Female unemployment in Darebin dropped from 6.9% in 2016 to 4.8% in 2021. Similarly, youth unemployment decreased from 16.7% to 12.8%, though both rates remain higher than in neighbouring LGAs.

### **Darebin's industries and competitive advantage**

Key sectors contributing to Darebin's economy include health care, education, retail trade, construction, and manufacturing. Knowledge-intensive industries, such as professional services and public administration, also play significant roles. Employment projections indicate continued growth in healthcare, education, leisure, community service, and business services. The tertiary education sector faces a short term challenge due to new federal legislation limiting international student enrolments.

A location quotient (LQ) analysis of industry strength and change reveals expanding sectors with traditional strength, such as health care, education, retail trade, and arts and recreation services. Emerging sectors include construction, professional services, transport, administrative support, and information media. Manufacturing, though traditionally strong, is declining in employment within Darebin. Nevertheless it still plays a vital role in the local economy. Manufacturing is Darebin's largest export earner and remains a key industry of employment. There are a number of creative manufacturing sectors that have benefitted from modest growth in recent times. These includes sectors such as furniture manufacturing, beverage manufacturing, and clothing and footwear manufacturing. These are manufacturing industries that often operate on a small scale and are dependent on a local, creative workforce.

Sales of goods and services to other regions (exports), and the local economic activity they generate, are important for Darebin, with manufacturing and education (notably La Trobe University) being significant contributors. Both sectors saw a decline in export value over the previous 5 years but would likely be a focus for value-adding strategies to generate local benefits.

### **The business community**

As of June 2023, Darebin had 13,773 locally registered businesses, with 98.1 per cent being small businesses with a turnover under \$10 million. There are 250 businesses with a turnover over \$10 million, and these act as key economic anchors, major employers, and export earners. The largest industry by business count is construction, likely due to many in trades and related activities operating as sole traders or small businesses. This is followed by professional, scientific, and technical services, and rental, hiring, and real estate sectors, which include landlords and property investors. These industries also provide the bulk of employment in the municipality.

Most businesses in Darebin are small, employing four or fewer people. Small businesses play an essential role in any economy, including Darebin's. Their presence reflects a level of entrepreneurship and experience which will sustain the local economy as it adjusts to a new trading environment.

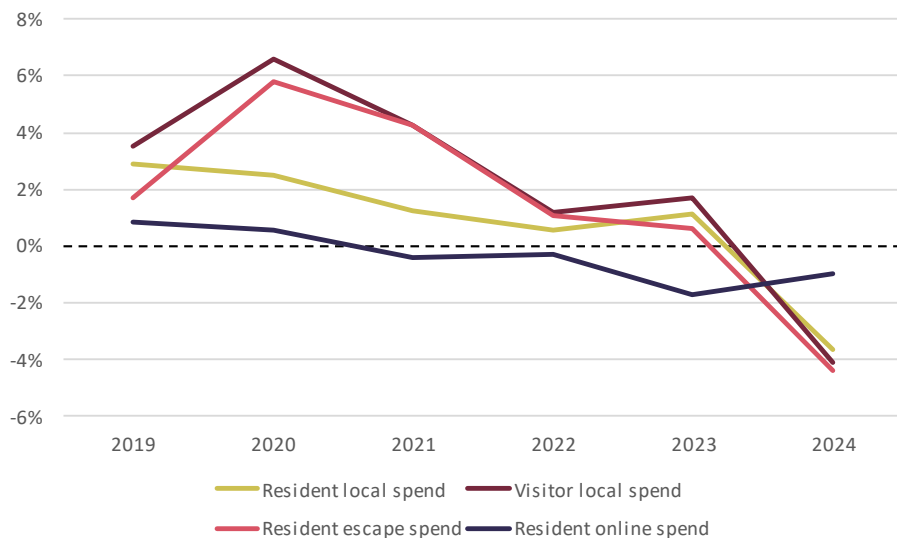
**Local spending**

Local spending patterns have fluctuated, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Grocery and supermarket spending surged during lockdowns, while dining and entertainment spending decreased. Post-pandemic, spending has declined overall due to rising living costs, although local spending has fallen at a slower rate than spending outside the municipality.

As of April 2024, spending by both residents and visitors in Darebin is significantly lower than in previous years, with an average decline of 4% on the previous year, likely due to rising living costs in Australia. The only exception is resident online expenditure, which has increased since 2023.

Economic hubs like Preston and Northcote exhibit distinct spending patterns. Preston residents spend more on department stores and luxury goods, influenced by Northland Shopping Centre. Northcote residents, on the other hand, prioritize dining and groceries, driven by its vibrant cultural scene.

**Figure 5: Average change in resident local, visitor local and resident escape spend in Darebin, 2019-2024**



Source: Spendmapp data by Geografia, 2024



### Summary and implications

Darebin is underpinned by a strong small business sector including retail and local services, but also in home-based professional services, trades and light industry service sectors. In fact, around 98 per cent of Darebin's businesses are small businesses (which includes non-employed and employing businesses with less than 20 employees). The major sources of 'export' income are generated by the clusters of entertainment and dining businesses with Melbourne wide appeal, as well as large businesses serving the wider metropolitan area and beyond including in manufacturing, tertiary education and health. What is concerning for the Darebin's economy is that small business growth seems to have plateaued. Online spending is becoming an increasing challenge as both resident and visitor spend within brick-and-mortar stores has continued to decline. While online spending did suffer a small decline over recent years, there has been an uptick between 2023-24, while local spending has only continued its trend downwards.

In Darebin, arts and media professionals, legal, social and welfare professionals, educational professionals, and hospitality workers have a high representation demonstrating an educated, skilled and creative local workforce.

Key implications for the EDF to consider will be:

- The challenge the tertiary education sector faces in the short term due to new federal legislation limiting international student enrolments.
- Increasing female and youth employment.
- Capitalising on the manufacturing sector, which despite recent declines in employment, remains a key local industry sector, and continues to evolve into niche areas of broadly described 'creative' production (see below).
- Enabling growth in the small business community that underpins the local economy.
- Leveraging opportunities for local business development and growth from the growing health care and education activities..

There are other economic trends that emerged from the pandemic that present opportunities for the economy. Federal Government support to increase the level of local manufacturing to secure supply chains represents a major opportunity for the manufacturing industry. The push toward a circular and low carbon economy also represents a growing opportunity at all levels and scales.

### 3.3 Places driving Darebin's economy

#### Growing and potential clusters

While the previous section established that manufacturing has seen a decline in employment numbers over the last decade, employment numbers largely stabilised between 2016 and 2021, and employment growth has been observed in a small number of manufacturing sub-industries, particularly within what is considered 'creative manufacturing' industries.

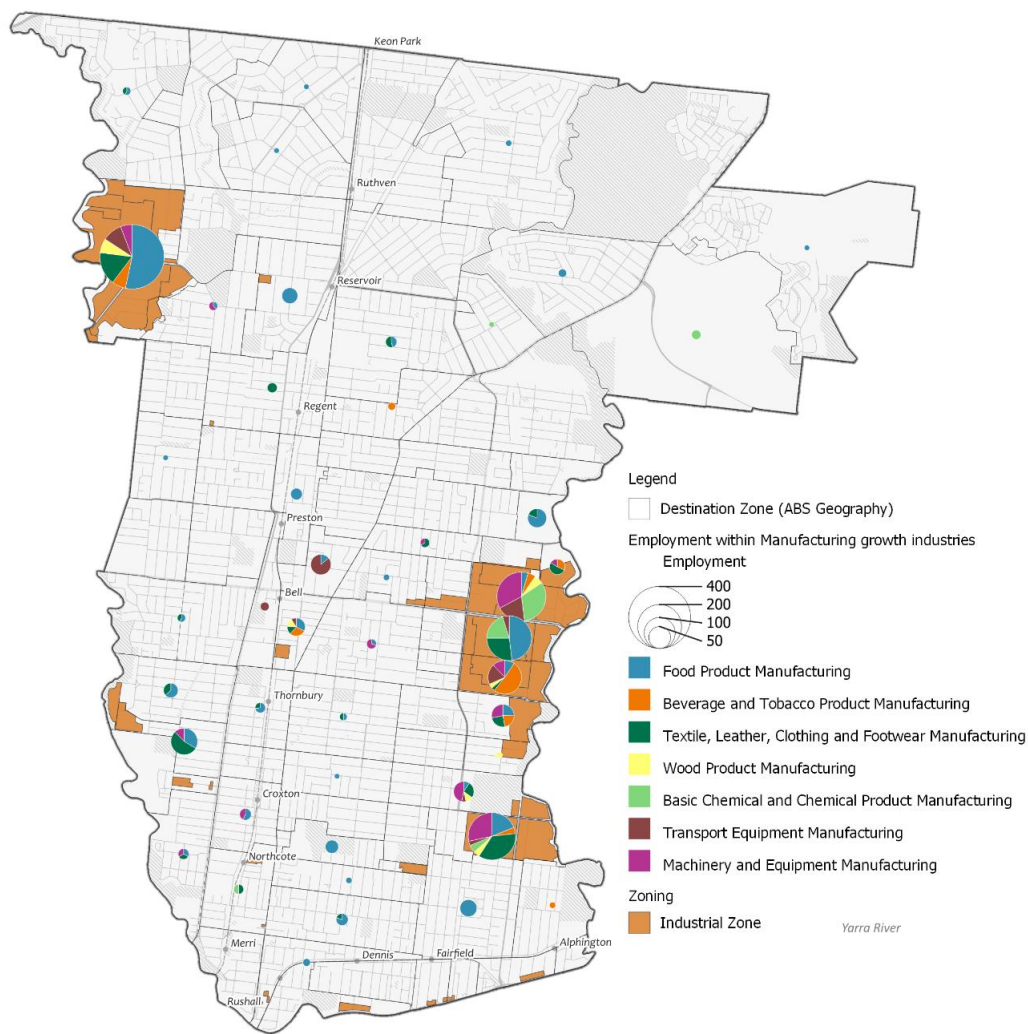
Figure 6 shows the 2021 employment numbers of manufacturing sub-industries that grew in employment between 2016 and 2021. This shows distinct strengths within Darebin's different industrial areas, including:

- food and beverage manufacturing in Reservoir
- food and beverage, textile, leather and clothing manufacturing and some traditional manufacturing industries in East Preston
- textile, leather and clothing manufacturing and some traditional manufacturing industries in Fairfield.

Reservoir has previously been identified as a hub for food manufacturing that is an opportunity to leverage. The industrial precinct also has a number of smaller anchors that are conducive to a sustainable business and circular economy hub including the Darebin Resource and Recovery Centre.

The Preston East industrial hub is home to a number of social enterprises with strong potential for growth, consistent with CWB aims.

Figure 6: Manufacturing industries that experienced employment growth between 2016-2021 (showing 2021 total employment)



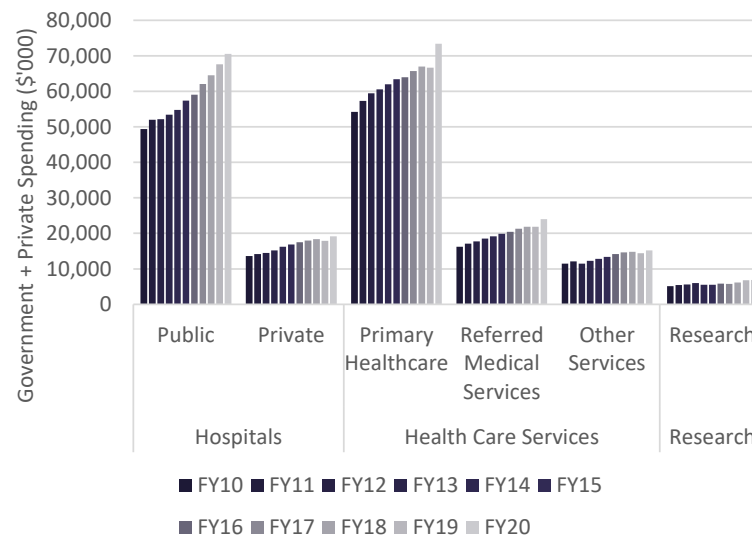
Source: ABS Census, 2021 using Place of Work data.

**The health and education anchors of Darebin**

As noted, the health care sector is one of Australia’s fastest-growing, expanding at double the pace of Australia’s GDP. The Commonwealth and Victorian State Governments are also making record-breaking investments in health infrastructure. Within Darebin, the industries of Health Care and Social Assistance, and Education and Training, are the two largest employing industries, seeing high rates of growth that are expected to continue into the future, following national trends. With an ageing population, new technology innovations and continued investments post-pandemic, the health care sector is only continuing to grow.

Figure 7 below tracks government and private spending on health care since 2010. It shows an increase in expenditure across hospitals, health care services and research, with a spike in 2019/20 as the covid-19 pandemic began. Between 2010 and 2020 total government and private spending on health care increased by 3.4 per cent per annum.

**Figure 7: Total investment by health care sector**



Source: Health care Expense Report, AIHW, 2021

Darebin's Health and Education industries are underpinned by the presence of a select few anchor institutions, including La Trobe University and La Trobe Hospital (both in the Bundoora NEIC) and Melbourne Polytechnic (Preston).

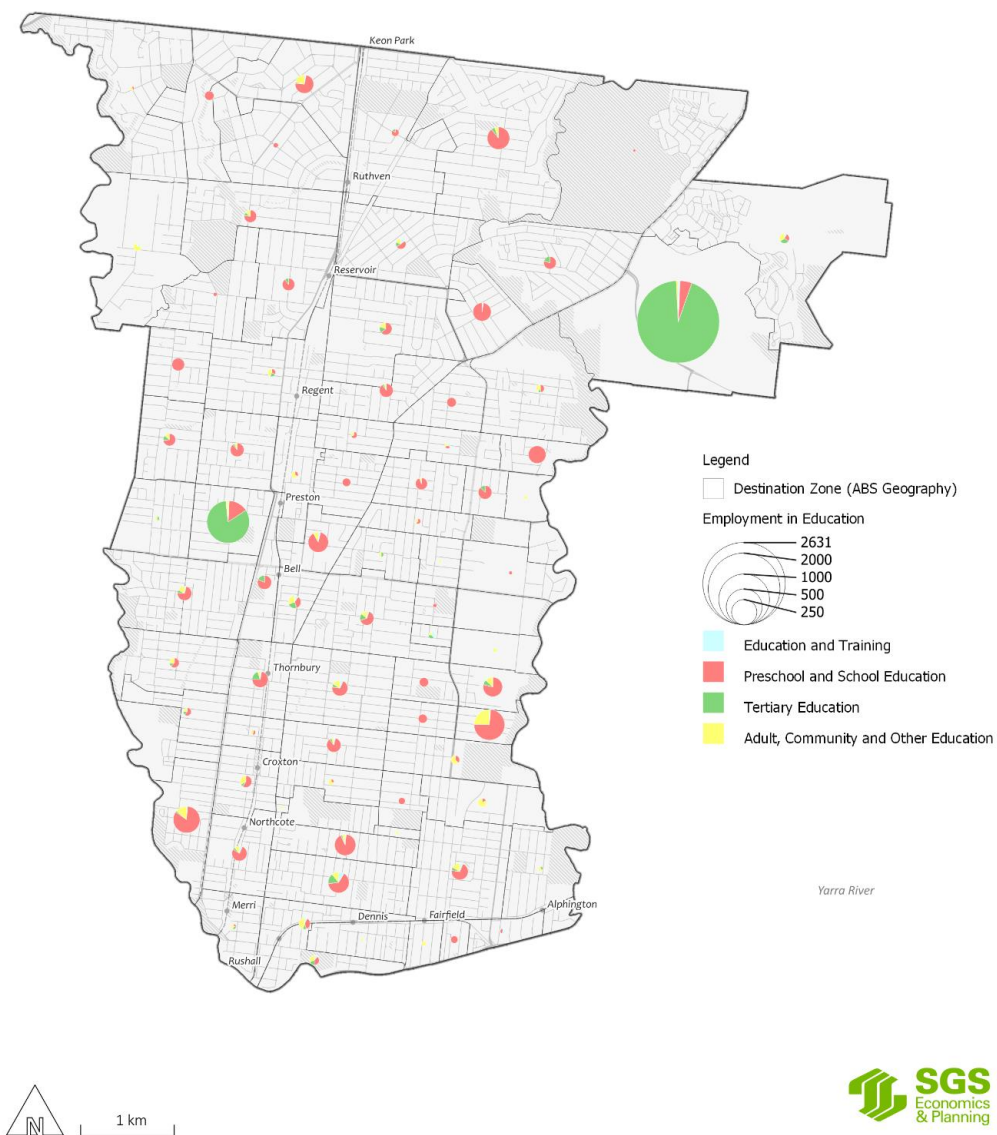
These institutions contribute significantly to both the local and broader economy and their value cannot be understated. They also attract significant State and Federal Government investment. Recent investment in the Bundoora NISP includes:

- \$24 million refurbishment of the existing La Trobe University Medical Centre Building
- \$127 million dollar development of a 200-bed acute orthopaedic, general medical and emergency care hospital.
- \$116 million from both the Victorian Government and Federal Government towards the State Rugby Union Centre of Excellence, State Football Centre, and a new base for the Australian women's football team.
- The Victorian State Government contributed \$1.3 million towards the opening of a 1.9 km shared cycling and pedestrian pathway.
- The Victorian Government announced funding of \$1.5 million towards the proposed establishment of the Australian Food Innovation Centre (AFIC). The proposed facility will feature PC1 & PC2 labs, bench scale manufacturing, a commercial kitchen, and research and industry collaboration spaces on a 1.49ha site.
- \$1.5 million for the development of an advanced manufacturing lab.

#### **Employment in health and education sub industries**

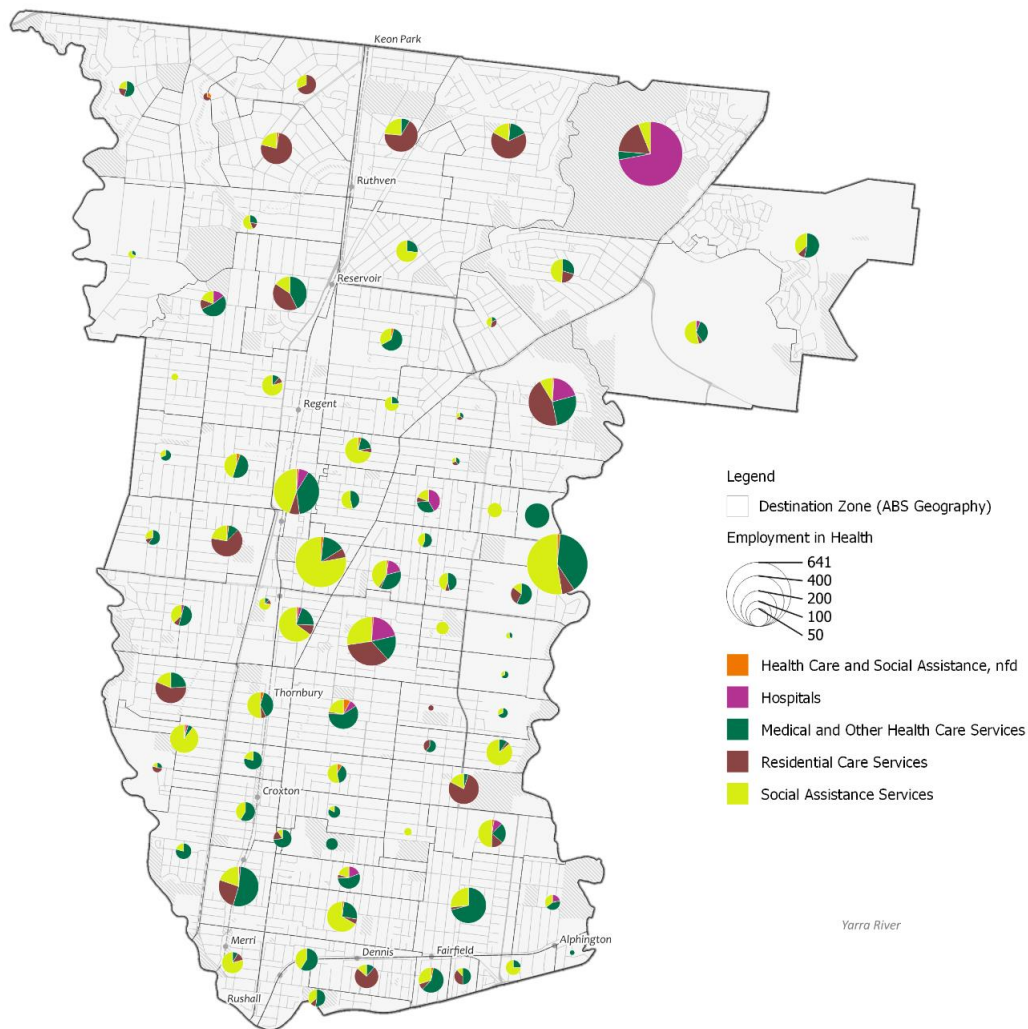
Figure 8 and Figure 9 below show the employment distribution of health and education sub-industries within Darebin. Tertiary education is concentrated in the Bundoora NEIC and Preston Polytechnic areas, while health and social assistance employment is generally more dispersed across the municipality, though with jobs in hospitals concentrated in the Bundoora NEIC area.

Figure 8: Employment in Education Sub-Industries, 2021



Source: ABS Census, 2021 using Place of Work data.

Figure 9: Employment in Health Care and Social Assistance Sub-Industries, 2021



Source: ABS Census, 2021 using Place of Work data.

## 4. The five pillars of Community Wealth Building in Darebin

Council's economic development framing and activities are supportive of the general idea of community wealth building, but there is currently no comprehensive approach against each of the CWB pillars. What success looks like is set out below for the five pillars.

### **Progressive procurement of goods and services**

#### *What does this look like?*

Darebin and other anchor institutions would deliberately and strategically use their purchasing power to contribute to the development of dense, local supply chains of local enterprises, SMEs, employee-owned business, social enterprises, cooperatives and other forms of community-owned enterprise. This is not necessarily about keeping existing wealth inside the boundaries of Darebin, but rather catalysing new wealth and securing the multiplier effects that flow from encouraging enterprises to innovate and thus contribute to collective, broad-based and equitable economic wellbeing.

These multiplier effects have benefits beyond Darebin, and are expressed across:

- Employment: more, better jobs for people in Darebin and adjacent areas
- Environment: shorter, less carbon-intensive supply chains
- Economy: maintaining a diverse, resilient, responsive commercial base
- Society: encouraging community buy-in to commercial success and collective solidarity

By communicating, collaborating and sharing best practice on progressive procurement, a network of anchors would develop that, in turn, would support innovation and growth in the Darebin economy in a different way. This will socialise the principles represented by progressive procurement into the economic mainstream.



### *The current state*

Darebin Council is already using its purchasing power to contribute to the development of local supply chains. Darebin Council adopted the Social and Sustainable Procurement Policy in 2021 which aims to increase the social benefit and economic prosperity of the local community as a direct result of purchasing goods, services and construction work locally. The policy sets out evaluation criteria tailored to each sourcing event to encourage suppliers to consider delivering on socially inclusive outcomes. The mandatory selection criteria and overall weighting of 25 per cent applies to:

- Local businesses at 5%
- Social at 5%
- Sustainability at 5%
- Remaining 10% aligned to either category according to the procurement type or activity
- And, an aspirational 10% youth dividend will form part of mandatory tender requirements.

### **Fair employment and just labour markets**

#### *What does this look like?*

Darebin City Council and other anchor institutions would offer lower-income and other marginalised groups dignified work, fair pay and conditions, upward mobility, diverse career paths and accessibility. This can be done directly, through the anchors' own employment practices, as well as indirectly, by procuring from enterprises aligned with these principles. Darebin Council and other anchors can create a collective culture of fair employment across the area, countering the expansion of unpaid, underpaid, insecure and unfulfilling work. It is important that those who work in Darebin can also live in and around Darebin. The arts, hospitality, care, education and retail sectors all employ large numbers of people in the area; workers should be employed on terms that allow them to be part of the community and share its benefits.

### *The current state*

In 2023 Darebin Council employed a total headcount of 1,270 people or the full-time equivalent of 803 employees. This makes Council a key anchor in terms of employment in the local economy and one of only 17 businesses or organisations that has over 200 employees in Darebin. Darebin maintains a focus on inclusive employment and in 2021 adopted the Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. Darebin's focus on inclusive employment has been supported with the introduction of the Workforce Planning, Diversity and Inclusion Lead Officer and the Aboriginal Employment Officer in the People and Culture Department. Council's Gender Equality Action Plan aims to support staff to recognise and progressively remove systemic barriers and work inclusively together right across the organisation.

### **Socially productive use of land and assets**

#### *What does this look like?*

Darebin City Council and other anchor institutions would deploy its capital, land and property in ways that offer community benefit and equity, rather than extractive, exclusionary or inequitable development. Policies related to land development, land use planning and land economy should ensure that community wellbeing is given priority in investment decisions, thereby contributing to heterogeneous, affordable, inclusive, diverse land uses.

In terms of property and asset management Council should firstly understand the commercial value of its assets. It should then consider how the assets might be used to contribute to community wealth objectives, explicitly checked against financial considerations (that is, the extent of any implied subsidies if relevant). This represents a transparent and responsible approach to asset management and a way to better understand the benefits of asset deployment for community wealth building objectives.

#### *The current state*

Council has a 10-year Asset Management Plan, adopted in 2022. The Asset Plan outlines, at a high level, the challenges, opportunities and community-identified asset priorities, as well as summarising asset performance and approaches to managing and investing in assets. Asset performance in the plan is measured by their current condition, the functionality of assets to meet community needs, the capacity or ability of assets to meet user demand and the environmental sustainability of assets and their resilience and adaptability to climate change impacts.

### **Making financial power work for local places**

#### *What does this look like?*

Investment into Darebin should sustain a positive local legacy, with strong buy-in from, and the ownership of outcomes by, the local community. Wherever possible, savings should be divested from socially or environmentally harmful uses, particularly fossil fuel investments. While it is generally difficult to address or influence financing and capital flows, investment and credit should come from (in order of priority):

1. Local financial instruments which can harness and recirculate wealth, with due regard to the neighbourhood-level financial ecosystem featuring local credit unions, local trading schemes and community shares.
2. Macro-level public banking and investment – credit cooperatives, industry mutuals.
3. Public pensions, superannuation and anchor institutions' own investments locally and further afield.
4. Big capital – national, global, institutional investors, including from adherence to ESG in corporate investment.

Darebin Council's own financial approach should uphold the principle of financial power working for local places. A wider view would consider the conditions of financial security for the entire community.

#### *The current state*

As of 2023 Darebin Council held almost \$56 million in total financial assets. Councils must undertake responsible spending and investment that ensures financial, social, and environmental sustainability. Under these principles, the revised Local Government Act 2020 seeks to provide a legislative environment that embraces innovation, modern business practices, and microeconomic reform. Council can leverage this legislative environment to make Council's financial assets work best for the local economy while meeting the obligation to manage these finances responsibly to ensure the delivery of important services and facilities.

### **Plural ownership of the economy**

#### *What does this look like?*

Darebin City Council and other anchors would contribute to an expanded footprint of a democratic economy, including cooperatives, mutuals, SMEs and community-focused enterprises to ensure that wealth in Darebin is broadly held, place-based, democratically-governed and directed toward the nourishment of the local capital base. Even where capital inflows are large and externally-sourced (and ultimately repatriated), effective local stewardship can ensure more plural, democratic governance of economic activity. Most radically, this can be done by reorganising the operations of anchors. It can also be achieved via progressive procurement and commissioning of goods and services toward plural ownership forms through which Council and other anchors will help minimise concentrations in wealth, ownership and economic power that erode community wellbeing and damage productivity.

#### *The current state*

Darebin's economy is dependent on its small businesses. Darebin Council already provides a highly supportive environment to help these businesses start and grow. Melbourne North Investment Attraction Strategy identifies that Darebin, especially in the north, is home to a large network of social enterprises. Creating an environment to help nurture and grow social enterprises while providing education to the community about the benefits of cooperative and mutual business models will help to strengthen the local business community and increase plural ownership of the economy.

As redevelopment occurs in places like the Preston Central precinct Council should expect and work with partners to embed community wealth building outcomes, including fostering an environment and opportunities for collective and cooperative enterprises, as well as local small businesses. The importance of establishing a permanent fresh food market in the local economy, as part of this redevelopment, can be viewed from this 'plural economy' perspective.

## 5. What we heard from the community

This section sets out a summary of what SGS heard from the community through its engagement sessions. A detailed report of each engagement can be found in Appendix B.

### 5.1 Overview

Up to the time of this report, three separate engagements with the community had been undertaken to inform the EDF.

- In 2023, Council led a business summit and roundtables series to hear from local industries on current dynamics given Darebin's rapidly changing economy, environment and culture.
- In May 2024, an online survey was distributed to collect information about the health of businesses as a 'pulse check'. The survey was also used to introduce the EDF project to the wider community and call for future engagement in the following Workshop.
- A Workshop was held on June 19 2024. This was intended to engage a broad, representative group of individuals and businesses through a deeper dive into strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats of the economy and local business community.

### 5.2 Key findings

The **business summit and roundtables series** revealed that local businesses are keen to innovate and adapt to changes, with a strong emphasis on social and environmental outcomes. The community values Darebin's diversity and is eager to showcase this strength of the local area.

The top three discussion themes included:

- Business and community
- Jobs and employment
- Innovation and growth

There were also specific ideas that were popular with participants at the roundtables. These include:

- Using targeted procurement practices to support Indigenous businesses, social enterprises, and a circular economy
- Developing the Reservoir industrial precinct into a hub for specialist wholesale food and beverage
- Supporting artists and creatives with dedicated space in underutilised or vacant Council facilities
- Addressing staff shortages in the care economy through access to worker accommodation
- Further supporting businesses to attract entry level positions within Darebin, and
- Addressing staff shortages, particularly in the care economy, and enhancing support for attracting entry-level positions within Darebin were also highlighted as priorities.

The **Business Survey** provided insights into current business performance and identified the key challenges and opportunities business are facing and have identified. Fifty per cent of businesses reported the same performance as last year while only 24 per cent had seen improvement in business results. A stagnation in growth is in evidence. This could suggest that businesses are struggling to adapt or innovate in a challenging economic environment.

Businesses were also asked about their connection to the local community. The fact that 63 per cent of businesses reported feeling connected to the local community is positive, as community support can be crucial for business resilience.

Over the past year, 67 per cent of businesses had maintained their staff levels, indicating job market stability. Additionally, 21 per cent had increased staffing, reflecting some growth, while only 11 per cent had reduced staff, showing limited contraction.

At a high level, the survey identified:

*Top 3 staffing challenges:*

1. Attracting skilled staff and experienced job seekers
2. My/our business is not experiencing staffing challenges
3. Accommodating flexible work arrangements

*Top 3 factors making it harder for business growth and profitability:*

1. Increasing cost of supplies, energy and wages
2. Increasing property, rental prices and interest rates
3. Government regulations and taxes

*Top 3 barriers to business innovation:*

1. Finding the time and focus
2. Lack of financial resources
3. Fear and risks of investing in change

*Top 3 options that would make doing business easier in Darebin:*

1. Council promoting local industry and business achievements
2. Awareness of available grants
3. Increased business networking and collaboration opportunities

The June 19 **Workshop** identified opportunities such as enhanced local business to local business connections, creating safe and accessible precincts, revitalising main streets, and leveraging events and festivals to promote local business. Challenges included rising costs, staff training and skills, poor amenity, and regulatory barriers among others.

Priority areas for development focused on:

- Enhancing business networking and events
- Making the permit process easier to navigate,
- Street revitalisation, and
- Increasing awareness of local businesses.

Proposed 'high-impact' projects included developing an enhanced, 'real time' business directory, business networking events, advocating for live music and events, linking businesses with underutilised council spaces, improving local procurement policies and implementing a compost management system for businesses.

There has been a noticeable shift in priorities between the initial summits and roundtables conducted by Council to the June Workshop convened by SGS, with an increasing focus on the pressures and costs faced by businesses. Initially, discussions centred around innovation, collaboration, and community engagement. However, the Workshop highlighted rising operational costs, such as property prices, energy, and wages, as well as regulatory challenges, as key issues requiring attention.

## 6. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the Darebin economy

The analysis and engagement findings point to a local economy that could be characterised by the following themes:

- **Small business economy** – noting the preponderance of small businesses in numerous contexts including in industrial precincts, operating from home and in retail and commercial centres, and sustaining a large share of local employment opportunities.
- **Retail centres and destinations**– these are the places that give the local Darebin economy its visible identity, for locals and visitors alike, and host diverse multi-cultural, night-time and creative economy activities
- **Education and health** – dominated by the place based Bundoora cluster of Latrobe University and Latrobe private hospital, but growing throughout the local economy in local centres including Melbourne Polytechnic at Preston, and in distributed health and social care activities caring for older and disadvantaged Darebin residents.
- **Enterprise clusters** – principally in the large industrial precincts of East Preston and Reservoir, but also in smaller precincts elsewhere, providing a home to evolving and high value manufacturing and creative enterprise activities.

The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis included below summarises some key findings of the profiling and engagement activities under these theme headings. These, integrated with a Community Wealth Building perspective, will inform the directions and key priorities of the EDF being developed by Council.

<p><b>Strengths: What do we do well?</b></p> <p><i>Small business economy</i></p> <p>A strong small business sector.</p> <p>A professionally oriented workforce.</p> <p>A diverse, multicultural community.</p> <p>Sustainability values including the Net-Zero Business Program and Climate Emergency Plan.</p> <p><i>Retail centres and destinations</i></p> <p>A network of distinct retail and commercial centres and strips.</p> <p>Places and destinations for visitors such as High Street, Northcote.</p> <p>Preston market.</p> <p>Northland as key retail hub for inner north-west.</p> <p><i>Education and health</i></p> <p>A growing health and education sector.</p> <p>Designated National Employment and Innovation Cluster in Bundoora.</p> <p>A skilled population and workforce.</p> <p>A range of key anchor institutions (Latrobe University, Latrobe Hospital, Melbourne Polytechnic).</p> <p><i>Enterprise clusters</i></p> <p>A strong and resilient manufacturing sector.</p> <p>Large areas of industrial land.</p> <p>High value manufacturing activities.</p> <p>A creative local workforce.</p>	<p><b>Weaknesses: What do we lack? What needs improving?</b></p> <p><i>Small business economy</i></p> <p>Lack of strong formal business networks.</p> <p>Lack of clear guidance on permit processes for businesses.</p> <p>Accessing skilled staff.</p> <p>Comparatively high unemployment rates.</p> <p>High percentage of microbusinesses that are vulnerable to economic shocks.</p> <p>Businesses (particularly small businesses) may lack resources in terms of time, expertise, and finance, to make changes towards greater sustainability.</p> <p>Small businesses often lack the resources that are available to larger companies and require additional focus.</p> <p><i>Retail centres and destinations</i> Lack of place-vision or strategy to guide collaborative revitalisation of activity centre.</p> <p>Vacant shops detracting from vibrant streets.</p> <p>Scope for improved connections between future residential development and retail opportunities.</p> <p><i>Education and health</i></p> <p>Further effort required on governance and development strategy for Bundoora NISP.</p> <p>Allied clusters and localised supply chains undercapitalised on.</p> <p><i>Enterprise clusters</i></p> <p>Scope for additional focus on value-adding and strategic development.</p> <p>Increasing land values within industrial areas.</p>
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**Opportunities: *Where can development be supported? What are the future industries?***

*Small business economy*

Supporting local leadership and developing business networks.  
 Growing the professional services sector.  
 Progressive procurement policies.  
 Sustainable business growth through electrification, education and circular economy initiatives.

*Retail centres and destinations*

Being home to more events and festivals.  
 Improving the vibrancy of local centres.  
 Preston precinct redevelopment as a transformational catalyst project.  
 Local activity centres hold potential to absorb investment and take on a higher-order role.

*Education and health*

An ageing population that is dependent upon health services at a variety of scales.  
 Bundoora NEIC as foundation for further development / value adding.

*Enterprise clusters*

Made in Australia manufacturing policies of the federal government.  
 Capitalising on the creative workforce for value adding in manufacturing.  
 Circular economy and Industry 4.0 innovations.  
 Last mile distribution.  
 Creative industry and circular economy industry attraction in the East Preston and Thornbury industrial precincts  
 Better networking to enable businesses and landowners to participate in economic partnerships in East Preston and Thornbury industrial precincts

**Threats: *What are the outside factors we need to manage?***

*Small business economy*

Acute worker shortages.  
 Interest rate rises and cost of living pressures.  
 A high percentage of the workforce leaves Darebin each day for work.

*Retail centres and destinations*

Shifts to online retail  
 Low consumer confidence index.  
 Creative professionals are being impacted by high residential and commercial rents causing them to seek residence and conduct business elsewhere.

*Education and health*

Changes to student enrolment policies at the national level.  
 Acute worker shortages.

*Enterprise clusters*

Challenging trading context for Australian manufacturing.  
 Pressure for conversion of industrial land to residential.

How do the five pillars of Community Wealth Building relate to the four themes of the Darebin economy?

		Pillars of CWB				
		Progressive procurement of goods and services	Fair employment and just labour markets	Socially productive use of land and property	Making financial power work for local places	Plural ownership of the economy
Themes of the Darebin economy	Small business economy	Anchors to work with small business to expand opportunities	Anchors can commit to fair employment charter	Anchor assets, where available, used to incubate / support start ups	Anchor assets orienting reserves and capital to local financing	Anchors to promote and work with coop sector to expand opportunities, 'spin off' coops
	Retail centres and destinations	As centres redevelop investment can leverage in local businesses	As centres redevelop local training and employment for fair employment	Council and anchors utilise land (e.g. car parks) to activate centres	Anchors actively investing in retail centres and destination renewal – local ownership stake	As centres redevelop investment can leverage in coops, employee owned businesses
	Education and health	Health and education anchors can become part of a progressive procurement network	Health and education anchors can commit to fair employment practices	Council and anchors utilise land (e.g. car parks) to capture and grow health / education investment	Anchors and ancillary businesses establish vehicles for local investors	Health and education anchors could 'spin-off' business units as coops, employee owned businesses
	Enterprise clusters	Anchors can procure from cluster businesses to foster specialisations	Less public anchors but opportunity for creative and niche enterprises to employ more 'locals'	Anchor assets, where available, used to incubate / support start ups	Existing or emerging businesses establish vehicles for or seek local investors	Transition to employee ownership, coop is promoted to existing and emerging businesses

	Strong alignment
	Moderate alignment

## 7. How are others addressing the issues and themes?

This section sets out case studies that provide real-world examples of economic policies and strategies in action, offering valuable insights into what has worked or failed in similar contexts to Darebin’s.

The table below lists the summarised case studies and the emerging elements and themes to which they are most relevant.

Case study	Economic Development Framework or Strategy	CWB	Small Business	Retail centres and destinations	Health and Education	Enterprise clusters
Melbourne North Investment Attraction Strategy	✓			✓	✓	✓
Dundee, Scotland		✓	✓			✓
Salford, UK	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Renew Newcastle, NSW			✓	✓		
Westmead Health Precinct	✓				✓	✓
The Bayswater Business Precinct Transformation Strategy	✓		✓			✓
Stonnington Business Support Program			✓	✓		
East Gippsland Economic Development Strategy (2022-23)	✓					
North Ayrshire Council Community Wealth Building Strategy (2024-2027), Scotland	✓	✓				

**Melbourne North Investment Attraction Strategy<sup>2</sup>**

The Northern Metropolitan Partnership (which includes Banyule, Hume, Darebin, Mitchell, Moreland, Nillumbik and Whittlesea) commissioned *Melbourne’s North Investment Attraction Strategy*. This provides guidance on where, and how investment attraction should be focused in Melbourne’s North. Though no strategies apply to Darebin specifically, it provides a thorough background report into the existing economic context of the northern municipalities. The region is divided up into economic precincts where the existing and emerging industries are identified.

The strategy presents a three-tier investment hierarchy that starts with understanding the location’s competitive advantages, the industries that align with them, and the precincts that can best support them. It also outlines the elements that investment decisions should consider, shown in Table 1 below.



**Table 1: Investment considerations**

Considerations for the private sector	Considerations for the public sector
Are there similar/like-minded businesses in proximity?	Does investment support existing industries within the region?
Is there a strong anchor institution supporting the precinct?	Does investment respond to climate change and support environmental sustainability in the region?
Does the precinct provide sufficient transport networks, supply chains and labour force?	Is investment expected to have a positive social impact? Does it improve community wellbeing?

<sup>2</sup> Urban Enterprise (2023), Melbourne’s North Investment Attraction Strategy, NORTH Link,

Is there suitable land and infrastructure available?	Will investment yield positive economic outcomes including fair and equitable distribution of economic benefits?
Does the precinct have a local and sufficiently skilled workforce to draw on?	Will investment improve the brand and positioning of the region/precinct?
Does the precinct have a clear vision and supportive Government policy going forward?	Does investment align to current political intention?

Source: Urban Enterprise (2023)

Guiding investment principles include social prosperity (investments that benefit the local community), economic development potential (to integrate with existing local businesses and infrastructure), and environmental responsibility. The strategic framework is built around the themes of *governance, public investment and strategic planning, targeted industry investment, and visitor economy investment.*

Relating to Darebin more specifically, parts of Darebin are located in the western and northern part of the La Trobe National Employment & Innovation Cluster, which is home to the Northland Employment precinct and Latrobe University. Opportunities leveraging economic development include the redevelopment of Latrobe University including the City of the Future, Sports Park, Healthscope, and more, and redevelopment of Northland. Needs include supporting a 20-minute neighbourhood transport strategy and investment in social and key worker housing.

The other precinct is the Inner North, which includes the diverse clusters of Northcote, Thornbury, Ivanhoe, and Preston. Opportunities here relate to the strong presence of business incubators and entrepreneurship, a strong social enterprise sector, good transportation links, a strong visitor economy and creative industry, and close proximity to other key precincts. Needs are diverse and include the provision of sufficient housing, sustainable power infrastructure, commercial office and creative spaces, and overcoming the challenges of a dense and diverse urban environment that include the cost of land and rent, amenity in the public realm, and the limited amount of industrial land.

*Lessons for this project*

Darebin should focus on and leverage its unique competitive advantages to attract investment. This includes highlighting strong anchor institutions such as La Trobe University. Investment should also support existing industries that align with Darebin’s economic strengths such as its creative industry and strong social enterprise sector. The creative sector can also be leveraged to help boost an already strong visitor economy sector.

Projects that address climate change and support community development should be prioritised and investments should contribute positively to social wellbeing and environmental sustainability.

Clear visions for precincts help to ensure alignment with policy, and a strong governance structure can help to drive this. A governance structure can also foster collaboration between public and private sectors to maximise benefits from investment.

### Dundee, Scotland - Inclusive Growth and a Transitioning Economy

Traditionally a town with a strong industrial past, Dundee, Scotland has gone through a significant transition to an economy with a strong creative industry base. The 'City of Design' was established through opportunities and investment in education, tourism and the arts, alongside a strong policy of community engagement.<sup>3</sup> This has been a transition in the works since the 1980s, but one which was accelerated in the 1990s when the Timex factory closed its doors. A partnership between the Dundee District Council, Tayside Regional Council, the Scottish Development Agency and members of the local business community led efforts to "transform Dundee into a leading location in Scotland for investment and development of industries and to explore the development of Dundee's potential as a tourism destination" by leveraging its industrial heritage as a 'City of Discovery'.<sup>4</sup> This was underwritten by an initial investment in their high streets to support local shops and the visitor economy, before shifting focus to the tertiary sector which brought in jobs, residents and businesses, and followed by housing investment that brought more people into the increasingly pedestrian-focused city centre. The economy was becoming more diversified than its manufacturing past, and this was further aided by efforts to create a more vibrant image. This set the foundation for both the tourist economy, which was leveraged for greater cultural and creative investment and activity, and the education economy, which was leveraged to generate opportunities for 'high tech' industries and research and teaching facilities,<sup>5</sup> with the Dundee City Council adopting a smart city policy, "making the city a real-world test bed for smart technology."<sup>6</sup>

The focus on partnerships was sustained, allowing for the establishment of the V&A Dundee in 2018 through a collaboration between the City Council, two universities, and Scottish Enterprise, which brought in nearly 700 FTE jobs and over 830,000 visitors in its first year.

Inclusive growth is structured around three main goals for the region:

- Empower and promote inclusion - by ensuring that local people have the skills they need to succeed in the modern workplace and that growth is inclusive.

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<sup>3</sup> Dent, T., Gross, J., Burlina, C., Comunian, R., Crociata, A., Denti, D., Faggian, A., Heinonen, J., Hytti, U., Hytönen, K., Kim, S., Kravcenko, D., Lemmetyinen, A., Nieminen, L., Pica, V., Popova, D., Pukkinen, T., Sauka, A., Sihvonen, L., Stenholm, P., and Wilson, N. (2022) Regional case study report: Dundee, Scotland, the United Kingdom. DISCE Publications. Published online: <https://disce.eu/publications/>

<sup>4</sup> Di Domenico, C, Di Domenico, M (2007), 'Heritage and urban renewal in Dundee: Learning from the past when planning for the future of a post-industrial city', *Journal of Retail and Leisure Property*, 6, 327 – 339. doi: 10.1057/palgrave.rlp.5100074

<sup>5</sup> Di Domenico, C, Di Domenico, M (2007), 'Heritage and urban renewal in Dundee: Learning from the past when planning for the future of a post-industrial city', *Journal of Retail and Leisure Property*, 6, 327 – 339. doi: 10.1057/palgrave.rlp.5100074

<sup>6</sup> Dent, T, et al. (2022)

- Innovate and internationalize - by developing globally recognized clusters of academic and business excellence; and
- Connect - by improving physical and digital infrastructure<sup>7</sup>

The creative industry that feeds tourism is a cornerstone of economic development in Dundee, and has a broad base of assets to draw from across the various educational and cultural institutions. Local facilitators and connectors are important to the success of the industry, with local network, Creative Dundee, a “particularly interesting asset for the development of creative economy in the city, deliberately supporting wider communication and relationship-building within Dundee’s creative industries, and between the creative industries and other parts of the overall cultural ecosystem”.<sup>8</sup>

A challenge that persists in Dundee is the concentration of the benefits of the creative economy within the immediate area and to certain cohorts within the city. COVID-19 also had significant impacts on tourism, which has had a ripple effect on the wider economy and workforce.

The current City Centre Strategic Investment Plan<sup>9</sup> is still focused on many of the same elements that started the transformation of Dundee decades ago, built around the themes of *living, working, visiting, connectivity*, and the *public realm*.

#### *Lessons for this project*

Fostering partnerships with stakeholders such as businesses, educational institutions, and development agencies is crucial for driving economic change. Diversifying the economy beyond traditional industries, with a focus on sectors like education, technology, and creative industries, helps build resilience. Strategic investments in infrastructure, both physical and digital, are essential to support growth and attract high-tech industries. Promoting inclusivity helps improve the wellbeing of the wider population. Supporting creative industries through policies, investments, and networks can further enhance innovation and collaboration, driving sustainable and inclusive economic development.

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<sup>7</sup> Dent, T, et al. (2022)

<sup>8</sup> Dent, T, et al. (2022), p.49

<sup>9</sup> Dundee City Council (ND), Our Future City Centre – Dundee Strategic Investment Plan 2050, <https://www.dundee.gov.uk/service-area/city-development/planning-and-economic-development/our-future-city-centre-strategic-investment-plan-2050#:~:text=As%20the%20plan%20has%20progressed,economy%20pilot%2C%20lighting%20of%20key>

**Salford, UK – Applying a Community Wealth Building Lens**

Located within Greater Manchester in the UK, Salford City Council adopted *The Salford Way* to focus its journey of economic transition.<sup>10</sup> This strategy is comprised of three parts: Tackling Poverty, Inclusive and Green Economy, and Equalities and Inclusion. The priorities of Inclusive and Green Economy is shaped by:

1. Building local community wealth. This has included more local spending from Council and working with suppliers who are accredited as Living Wage employers, investment in capturing data and reporting on the social value of third-party suppliers, set up of the Salford Local Anchors Network to increase the impact of the collective local spend, purchase of a shopping centre to bring the town centre more into the hands of council and the local community, and creation of more training programs and paid placements and training opportunities for young people.
2. Growing the social economy. This has included securing funding to explore “grassroots community wealth building’ by working with local young people to create new socially owned businesses that meet future demand in chosen priority areas”, crowdfunding of over £500,000 to fund local projects, continuation of an extensive program of holiday activities, requiring major developers to develop a social value strategy, and securing funding from the Innovation accelerator Pilot Programme to support innovation and development.
3. Transitioning to a green local economy. This has included the opening of a new research facility to accelerate the transition to low-carbon and net zero housing, approved plans for Salford RISE, an elevated pedestrian park that is part of what will be one of the biggest urban regeneration schemes in Europe, continuation of investment in sustainable travel, and reductions in Council energy usage.
4. Strengthening public services. This has included investment in office schemes to grow professional services employment, rapidly administering the national Energy Rebate Scheme to households, and committing to investing in children’s facilities. In 2014 Salford also introduced the ‘Salford Third Sector Grants Fund’, providing voluntary organisations, community groups, social enterprises and primary



<sup>10</sup> Salford City Council (2022), Tackling Inequalities: The Salford Way, <https://www.salford.gov.uk/your-council/the-salford-way/>



schools across all parts of the city with a small investment, to help them address some of the key health priorities in district. To date, it has been calculated that for every £1 invested by the CCG a social return of £14.94 has been delivered.<sup>11</sup>

#### *Lessons for this project*

Applying a Community Wealth Building lens to economic development can offer a variety of local benefits including boosting local spending, forming a network of local anchors, improving returns from Council and community owned assets and increasing workforce participation. Adopting a strategy that tackles various aspects of economic and social issues can lead to more holistic and sustainable development. Major developers should be encouraged to contribute to social value and ensure that development benefits the broader community. It is also important to establish metrics to measure the social and economic impact of initiatives. Communicating success and social returns helps to maintain support and collaboration.

#### **Renew Newcastle, NSW – Place-led Revitalisation Approaches to Economic Development**

Renew Newcastle was a project initiated in 2008 aimed to address the issue of vacant retail and commercial buildings in Newcastle's downtown area which had been affected by declining industry, an earthquake that caused widespread damage and the rise of big-box retailing. The project ran for over 10 years until 2019 and in that time catalysed significant urban change and achieved transformative outcomes.

The project was a combination of "hardware" (physical infrastructure) and "software" (an innovative licensing system and management). This approach allowed for flexible and dynamic use of spaces. The innovative property use agreement involved 30-day rolling license agreements between property owners and creative occupants helped to minimise risk for property owners while providing affordable spaces for artists and entrepreneurs. The organisation also provided blanket public liability insurance reducing risks for both property owners and occupants.



<sup>11</sup> Centre for Local Economic Strategies, 'Community Wealth Building – Salford Third Sector Grants Fund'.

Over its lifespan, Renew Newcastle facilitated more than 200 projects, with over 30 participants eventually signing commercial leases in the buildings where they started. An independent economic by the Centre of Full Employment and Equity (University of Newcastle) found that that every \$1 invested in Renew Newcastle returned \$14.40 and added \$3 million to the economy.<sup>12</sup>The Renew Newcastle initiative has grown significantly since its inception in Newcastle with similar projects being implemented in Melbourne, Adelaide, Geelong and many other local high streets and centres.

#### *Lessons for this project*

Main streets are the physical, economic, social and cultural hearts of their communities and are important places for economic activity, playing a crucial role in community connection and neighbourhood character. A place-led approach to revitalisation is about doing some things quickly to make a difference, experiencing, and evaluating what works, before investing in long-term change. It is dependent on the involvement of people who live work and play in these places for the project to be successful. Place-led revitalisation approaches need to be unique to the needs of the local centre and community and cookie cutter approaches should be avoided.

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<sup>12</sup> Architecture, Au, 'Urban change/Renew Newcastle', (<https://architectureau.com/articles/urban-change/>).

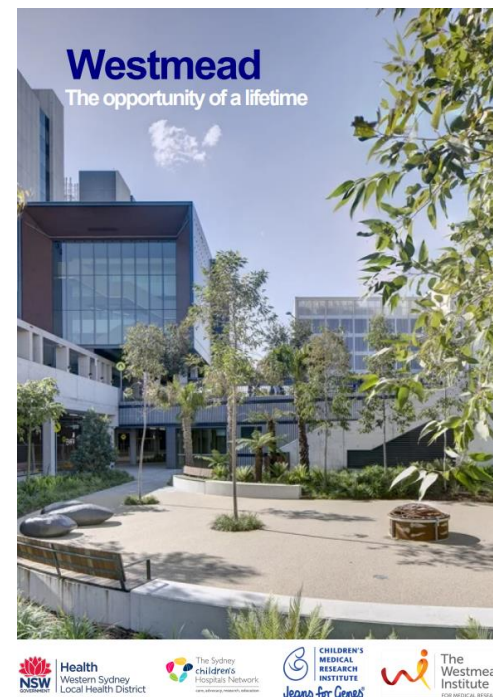
**Westmead Health Precinct – Creating the environment to grow the health and education economy**

The Westmead Health Precinct is Australia’s largest health and biomedical research precinct that includes four hospitals, two universities, two medical research institutes, NSW’s largest pathology service and many allied health centres. The precinct supported 16,000 jobs in 2016 which is expected to grow to 50,000 jobs by 2036.<sup>13</sup> The NSW Government has identified Westmead as one of five Lighthouse precincts that will generate jobs, become a sought-after place to live and work, act as a magnet for investment in health, research and education, help NSW be more globally connected, and continue to develop NSW’s highly skilled workforce for the future.

The growth and success of the Westmead Health Precinct has been driven by the Westmead Health Precinct Partners. The Partners include Western Sydney Local Health District, the NSW Government and a number of key players in the health care and education sectors in the area. The alliance carefully manages Westmead’s growth and help to realise the vision for Westmead to become a world-class innovation precinct in health and education. The Precinct Partners have developed a Precinct Charter which reflects an agreement to foster collaboration between the partners to collaboratively advance the overall vision and mission.<sup>14</sup>

*Lessons for this project*

A collaborative governance structure ensures diverse stakeholders from government, healthcare, research, community, and private sectors are represented and actively involved in decision-making. Collaborative governance helps align different stakeholders around a common purpose and shared objectives for a precinct. It allows for pooling of ideas, expertise and resources from its various partners. Governance structures and partnerships can strategically align their objectives with government priorities and policy goals, making them more attractive for funding and investment.



<sup>13</sup> Westmead Health Precinct Industry Prospectus, 2022.

<sup>14</sup> Westmead Health Precinct Partner Charter, 2022.

**The Bayswater Business Precinct Transformation Strategy – Growing Enterprise and Manufacturing Hubs**

The Bayswater Business Precinct (BBP) is located in the eastern region of Melbourne and is a key manufacturing and commercial hub. A transformative initiative was launched in 2021 to build on the already significant economic outputs of the area. Regional Development Australia partnered with the municipalities of Yarra Ranges, Maroondah, and Knox to commission a team of planning and economic development consultants. This collaboration developed a comprehensive transformation strategy addressing critical areas such as transportation and access, place-making, built form, and open space. The resulting strategy provides a detailed roadmap for both public and private investment, ensuring the Bayswater Business Precinct's continued growth and vitality. The Strategy identifies the need for the BBP to clearly articulate its future role and function within the new economy, adopt transformative industry 4.0 processes and infrastructure and address some of its current shortfalls that hinder its growth potential.



*Lessons for this project*

In order to develop and grow enterprise clusters and business precincts it is important to have a strong governance arrangement between relevant local councils, state government, and government agencies. This collaborative approach allows for coordinated efforts and shared resources across municipal boundaries. A long term vision is needed to transform and grow enterprise clusters and manufacturing hubs to help align stakeholders around common goals and ensure the continuity of efforts. The Strategy also identifies precinct success factors that are essential to attract investment and businesses which include factors such as connectivity, amenity, and infrastructure. Facilitating networking and collaboration through a well-connected business ecosystem with local supply chains is also important to success.

**Bayswater Business Precinct Transformation Strategy**

Prepared for RDA Melbourne, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR), Knox, Maroondah, and Yarra Ranges Councils  
December 2021



### Stonnington Business Support Program – Enabling local business support

The Stonnington Business Support Program report was prepared for Stonnington City Council to help understand how local businesses can be best supported by Council, exploring a range of different precinct models which could be applied across activity centres.

Business support models can be categorised on the level of service, funding and engagement they involve. SGS identified four types of models including 'Core services', 'Enhanced core services', 'Enhanced core services and co-investment', and 'Enterprise'. If business support models are implemented well, the research contends that a range of outcomes can be achieved including:

- Improved amenity and place quality
- Improved business vitality
- Community cohesion and sense of community
- Enhanced business capability and community wealth building
- Increased local supply chains and improved environmental outcomes
- Increased business resilience
- Increased civic engagement.

All models of business support have the potential to provide valuable business support and further local economic development objectives. Determining which model is most appropriate for an area requires an assessment of the readiness and maturity of local businesses (skills, knowledge, and level of engagement) and Council resources to deliver the services.

#### *Lessons for this project*

While Darebin already delivers a Business Improvement District program through special rates schemes, the level of business support that can be offered can vary greatly through these kinds of programs. When there is buy-in from mature businesses and associations the level of support and outcomes that can be achieved can improve significantly. At the 'Enterprise' end of these models, businesses are the lead and Council becomes a partner. Council's role as a key partner is to provide input through supporting the development of the strategic vision, funding (via grants), and delivery of some of the actions to reach the vision. The additional services within this model are largely focused on local investment, attraction, and local supply chains.

## 8. Measuring impact

It is important to measure the impact of an economic development framework and strategy and the actions they include. Without clear and specific measurables, strategies can drift and become ineffective. It is also important to demonstrate the importance of the work that the strategy and actions are achieving. This section sets out how to ensure measurable impact.

Economic development frameworks and strategies can be made measurable through a variety of approaches. How the strategy is designed and prepared also has an impact on how measurable the impact will be. It is also important that measures of impacts in the economy goes beyond traditional growth measures such as GDP and the number of jobs. Economic development must include a just distribution of wealth and opportunity, be environmentally sustainable and pursue climate action. Economic prosperity is closely linked to liveability. Actions and measures should also be reflective of this.

### **Developing clear objectives and goals**

The 'SMART' approach to developing objectives is integral to successful delivery of a strategy. This sets out that objectives and actions should be specific, measurable, relevant, achievable and time bound.

### **Key performance indicators (KPIs)**

Key performance indicators can be useful when the indicator is directly linked to the outcome of what is being measured. For KPI measurements to be meaningful there should be accurate baseline data to compare future data against, clear targets specific for each KPI and regular review cycles to monitor progress, adapt to changes, create accountability and identify and mitigate risks. Regular reviews also ensure that the strategy remains aligned with broader strategic plans and objectives.

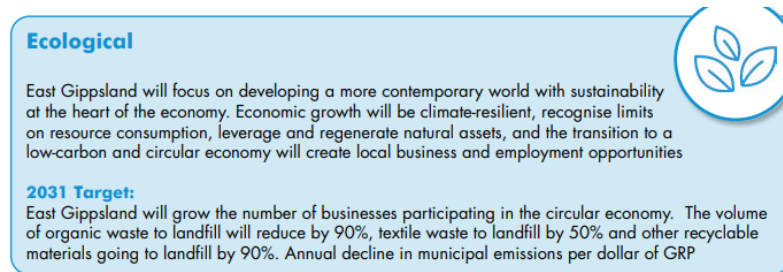
### **How others are measuring their impact**

Two examples of different approaches to measuring performance and impact are included below.

*East Gippsland Economic Development Strategy (2022-23), Victoria*

Many Councils seek to reconcile their economic development goals and objectives with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The *East Gippsland Economic Development Strategy* aligns the Strategy outcomes to a number of relevant United Nations Sustainability Goals and sets ‘SMART’ targets as measurements for success. An example of this is provided in the figure below.

**Figure 10: UNSDG aligned goal and measure**



*North Ayrshire Council Community Wealth Building Strategy (2024-2027), Scotland*

North Ayrshire Council developed a Community Wealth Building Strategy which commits to monitoring progress on each of the 53 actions detailed within the Strategy. The Council has developed an ‘Inclusive Economic Dashboard’ to track progress on delivering a wellbeing economy. Based on the Doughnut Economics model, the Inclusive Economy Dashboard recognises that an inclusive and wellbeing economy must be based upon an acceptable social foundation and operate within safe and sustainable environmental limits. The dashboard uses metrics aligned with local objectives cut across social, economic and environmental measures. This captures trends in data, provides comparisons to Scottish averages and links metrics to local priorities. When deciding on indicators, Ayrshire Council sets out it was important to ensure they:

- Align with North Ayrshire Council and CPP strategies;
- Allow for comparisons with Scotland averages and over time;
- Are regularly updated and easy to access;
- Provide insight on the North Ayrshire people, place and economy;
- Are considered to be accurate and robust measures;
- Indicate socio-economic and environmental outcomes.

# Appendix A: Economic profile

## The local workforce and skills

### Recent employment change

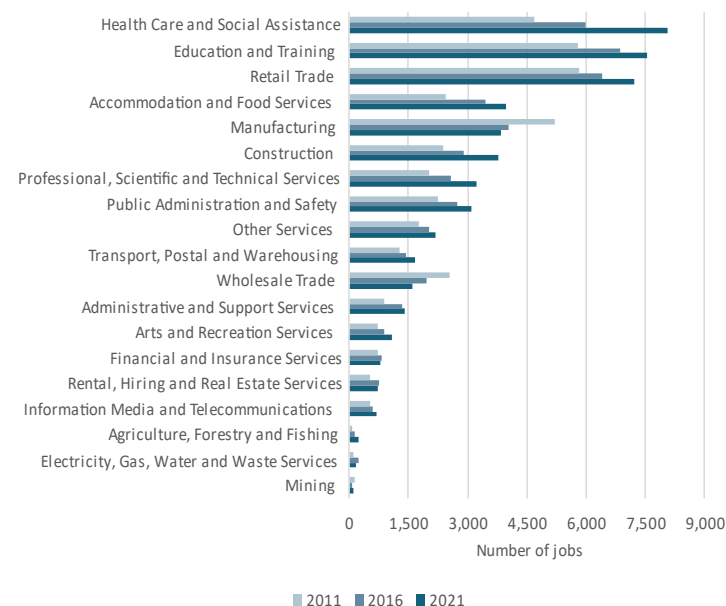
The share of jobs in health care and social assistance, education and training, and retail trade remain the highest in Darebin. The municipality has witnessed a substantial growth in the health care and social assistance industry over the past decade. The health and education sectors are expected to see further growth in the municipality with the recent reopening of the La Trobe Private Hospital near the La Trobe University campus.

Over time there has also been an increase in professional, scientific and technical services, accommodation and food services, and information, media and telecommunications. These indicate a maturing and evolving economy, with this growth in knowledge-based sector employment also possibly reflecting the increased levels of working from home during the pandemic (the census was in August 2021).

The manufacturing industry has declined from being one of the larger employment industries in 2011 to less than 4,000 jobs as of 2021, with a decline also seen in wholesale trade. However, manufacturing remains an important sector of Darebin’s economy, still employing a large number of people and contributing substantially to the LGA’s economic output.

It is notable that there was relative stability in the number of jobs in manufacturing between 2016 and 2021.

Figure 11: Employment by industry of Darebin, 2011-2021



Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024) using data from ABS Census 2021 – Place of work



**Workforce skills (strengths and gaps)**

The stock of knowledge, experience and skills in the economy is critical to economic performance. This is often referred to as ‘human capital’. Without a stock of knowledgeable and skilled people, businesses cannot function. An undersupply of skilled labour will impede economic growth and development.

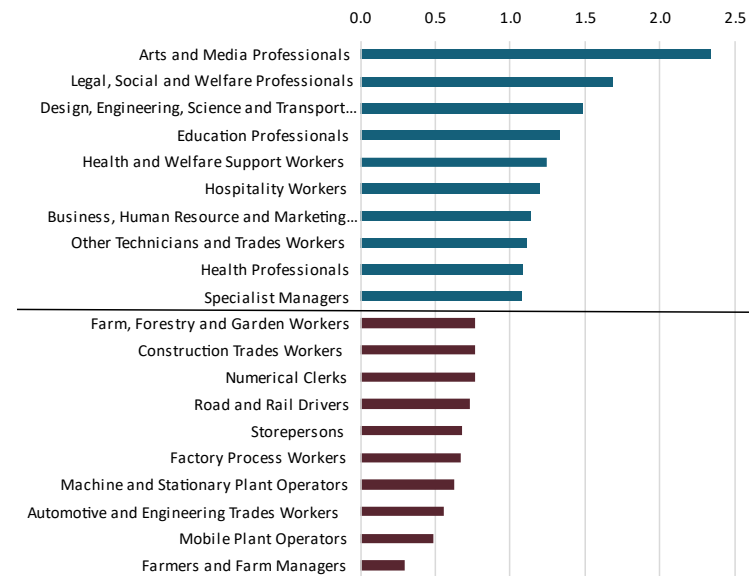
Using location quotient analysis, Figure 12 considers which occupation (and therefore skills) are most highly represented in Darebin compared to Greater Melbourne. The blue bars show the occupations that are considered the most ‘overrepresented’ in Darebin, whereas the red bars show the most ‘underrepresented’ occupations.

‘White collar’ workers now dominate the resident labour force. Some overrepresented occupations in Darebin include arts and media professionals, legal, social and welfare professionals, educational professionals and hospitality workers, presenting an accessible skills base. On the other hand, Darebin is underrepresented in occupations that would largely be expected in a metropolitan context. Despite the industrial nature of some areas in Darebin, there is still an underrepresentation of mobile plant operators, automotive and engineering trades workers, and factory process workers. This suggests that these occupations are either not needed by local industries or are filled by workers commuting from outside the area. The latest Skills Shortage Quarterly Report released in March 2024 by the Jobs and Skills Australia indicates that there are likely to be more acute shortage pressures in the

Technician and Trade Workers and Labourers occupation group in the future.

The strong presence of arts and media professionals is representative of the strong cultural and creative economies present in Darebin. The *Economic Value and Social Benefit of the Arts & Creative Sector in the City of Darebin report (2020)* found the sectors total contribution to GRP exceeded \$436 million, or 7.5 per cent of the GRP. The report also highlights that this sector provides a range of economic benefits that cannot be monetised.

**Figure 12: Workforce skills\* - Strengths and gaps (compared to Greater Melbourne), 2021**



Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024) using data from ABS Census 2021 – Place of usual residence. \*Note: Only top 10 and bottom 10 occupations are shown.

**Education and training**

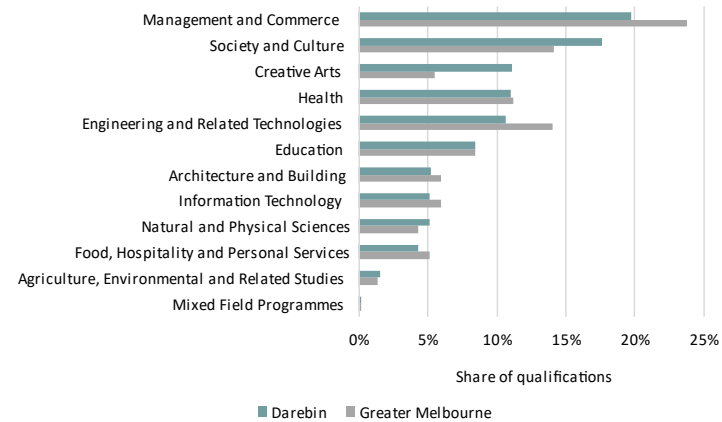
Education and training prepares local job seekers for current and future employment opportunities. The municipality boasts both La Trobe University and Melbourne Polytechnic, providing a diverse array of tertiary and vocational education opportunities.

Nearly a quarter of those in Darebin with a post-school qualification hold a degree in management and commerce, followed by society and culture, creative arts, health and engineering and related technologies. Fields of study where Darebin has a higher share compared to Greater Melbourne are society and culture, creative arts, natural and physical sciences, and agriculture, environmental and related studies.

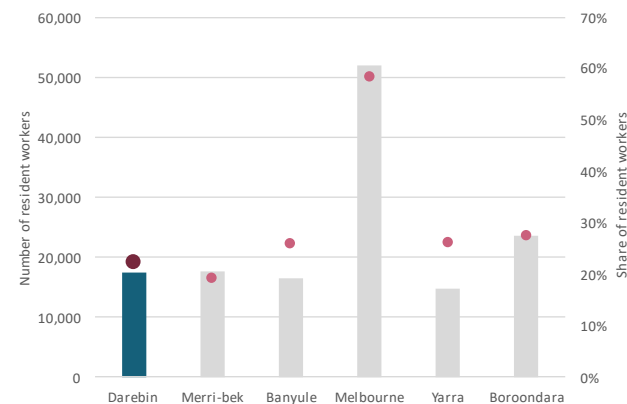
**Employment self-containment**

Employment self-containment is defined as the percentage of employed residents who are employed within the boundaries of the local government area. Only about 22 per cent of Darebin’s residents are employed locally, highlighting its integration into the metropolitan economy but also that its predominately professional labour force finds work elsewhere (mostly inner Melbourne and CBD). The employment self-containment rate of Darebin is low compared to most benchmarked LGAs and only higher than that of Merri-bek.

**Figure 13: Field of study of Darebin residents compared to Greater Melbourne residents, 2021**



**Figure 14: Number and share of resident workforce in Darebin, 2021**



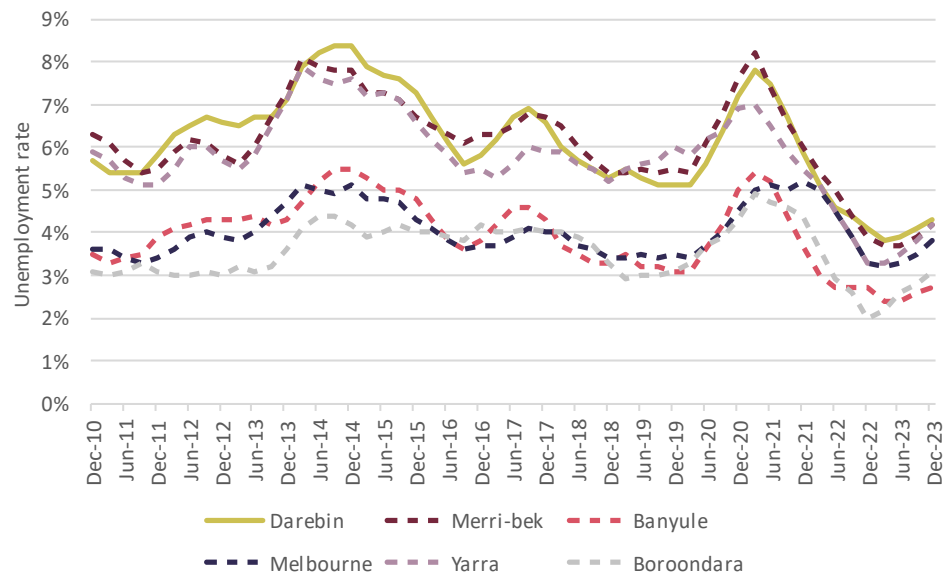
Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024) using data from ABS Census 2021 – Place of work and Place of residence

**Unemployment**

The unemployment rate in Darebin has been slightly higher than those of neighbouring LGAs during the past 14 years (2010-2023). As of December 2023, 4.3 per cent of Darebin’s labour force was unemployed, higher than all the benchmarked LGAs in Figure 15.

Unemployment in Darebin reached its peak at 8.4 percent between September and December 2014. However, this seems to have been in line with the national trend during that period. Unemployment peaked again during the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and initial lockdowns experienced across Greater Melbourne. Unemployment rates have remained low indicating a tight labour market and in turn, increased staffing challenges for local business. However, there has been a more recent uptick, indicating a slackening labour market.

**Figure 15: Unemployment rate of Darebin and neighbouring LGAs, December 2010 to December 2023**



Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024) using data from Small Area Labour Markets (December quarter 2023)

**Female and youth workforce**

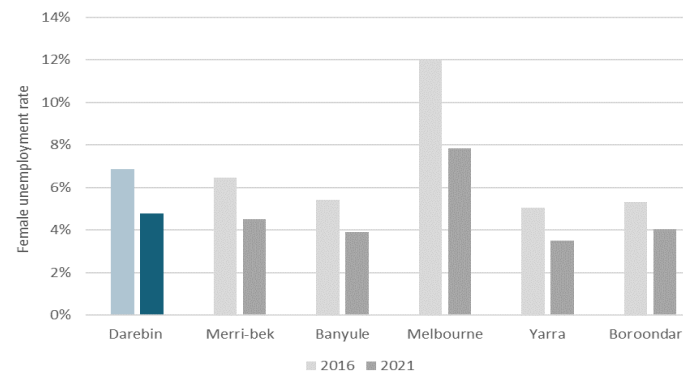
Increasing women’s workforce participation is an economic priority for Australia. At the individual level, the benefits include additional financial security for women and their families and increased savings for retirement. Encouraging more women to participate in the workforce, and breaking down gender gaps, also has clear economic benefits for businesses, allowing organisations to attract and retain high-performing staff through access to a broader and more diverse talent pool.

Female unemployment in Darebin was 4.8 percent in 2021, marking a significant decrease from 6.9 percent in 2016. For both periods, Darebin’s female unemployment rates were generally higher than those of most benchmarked LGAs as shown in Figure 16.

Young people are also disadvantaged in the labour market, particularly during economic downturns. This is due to their limited work experience, while businesses face higher costs of investment and lower costs of termination when employing them.

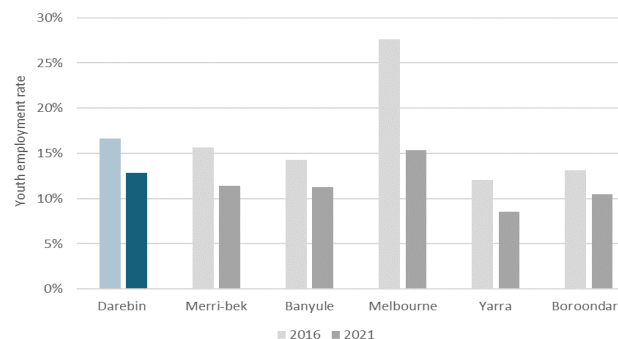
In Darebin, the unemployment rate among young people (aged 15-19 and 20-24) has decreased since 2016, dropping from 16.7 percent to 12.8 percent in 2021. However, similar to the female unemployment rate, the youth unemployment rates in Darebin remain higher than those of most benchmarked LGAs as shown in Figure 17.

**Figure 16: Female unemployment rate of Darebin compared to neighbouring LGAs, 2016 and 2021**



Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024) using data from ABS Census 2021 – Place of usual residence data

**Figure 17: Youth unemployment rate of Darebin compared to neighbouring LGAs, 2016 and 2021**



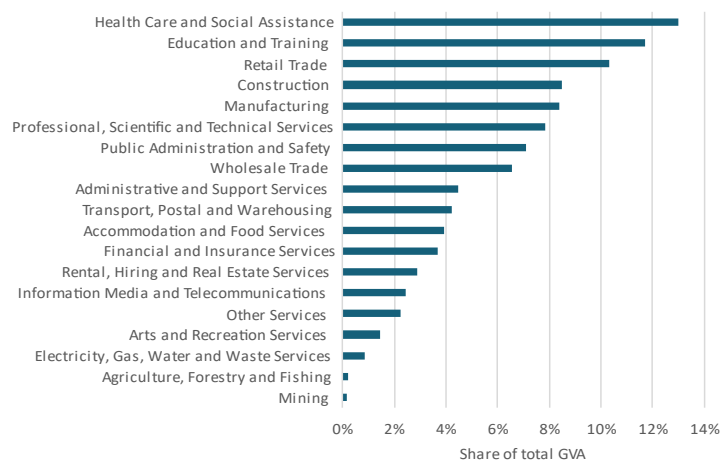
Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024) using data from ABS Census 2021 – Place of usual residence data

### Darebin’s industries and competitive advantage

#### Share of gross-value added by industry and area within Darebin

In Darebin, health care, education, retail trade, construction and manufacturing make the largest contributions to local gross-valued added (GVA). Knowledge-intensive industries, such as professional services and public administration and safety, also make significant contributions to the local economy.

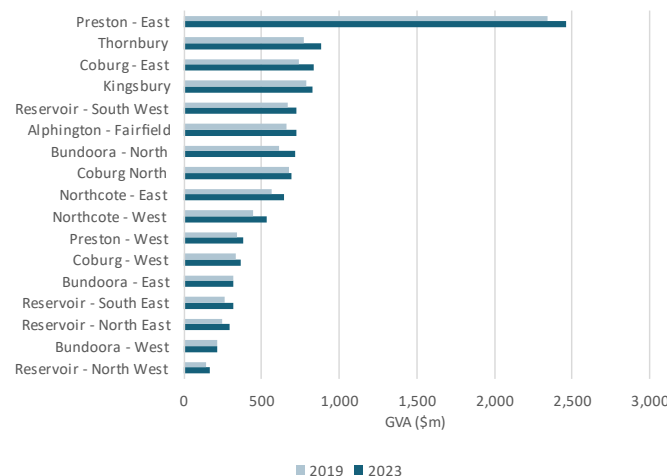
Figure 18: Share of gross value added of Darebin by industry, 2023



Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024) using data from the Cities and Regions Wellbeing Index 2024

Within Darebin, Preston-East had the largest GVA in both 2019 and 2023, at \$2.463 billion and \$2.345 billion, respectively. It is followed by Thornbury, Coburg-East, and Kingsbury. By contrast, Reservoir-North West, Bundoora-West, and Reservoir-North East were among the areas with the lowest GVA in Darebin for both 2019 and 2023, ranging from \$145.7 million to \$297.2 million.

Figure 19: Gross valued added of Darebin by SA2, 2019 and 2023



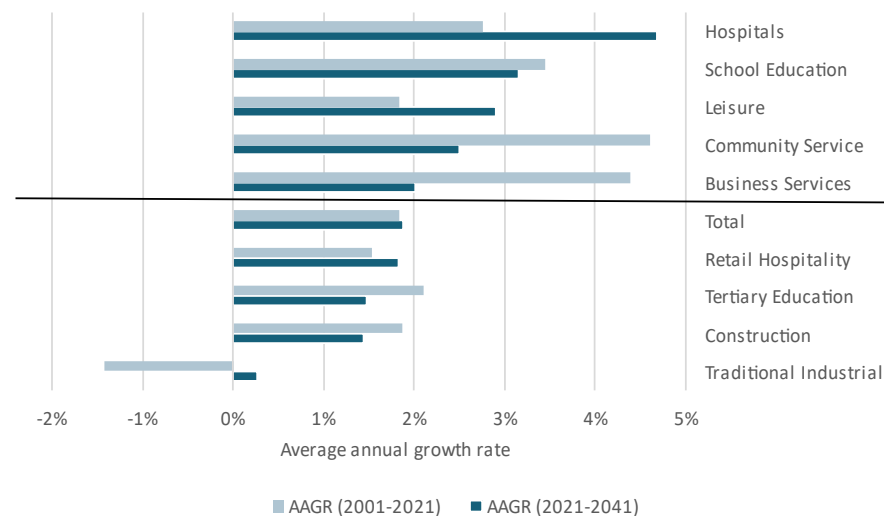
Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024) using data from the Cities and Regions Wellbeing Index 2024

**Employment projections**

SGS produces a Small Area Model (SAM23) employment forecast data which shows that the healthcare and school education sector is expected to experience the highest growth in Darebin between 2021 and 2041 with an average annual growth rate of 4 per cent and 3 per cent respectively. For healthcare, this nearly doubles its average annual growth rate between 2001 and 2021. Other industries that are projected to grow faster in the next two decades in Darebin than the growth rate of all industries overall include leisure, community service and business services industries.

Notably, the tertiary education sector is projected to grow 1.5 per cent annually for the next 20 years, a slight decrease from its average annual growth rate during the past two decades (2.1%). The recent legislation by the Federal government, sets a maximum number of new international student enrolments that education providers can offer, will further hamper the sector’s growth. This will have some implications for the local economy given Latrobe University’s role as an anchor institution in Darebin.

**Figure 20: Historic and projected annual growth rate of key industries in Darebin, 2001-2041**



Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024) using data from the internal SAM23 model

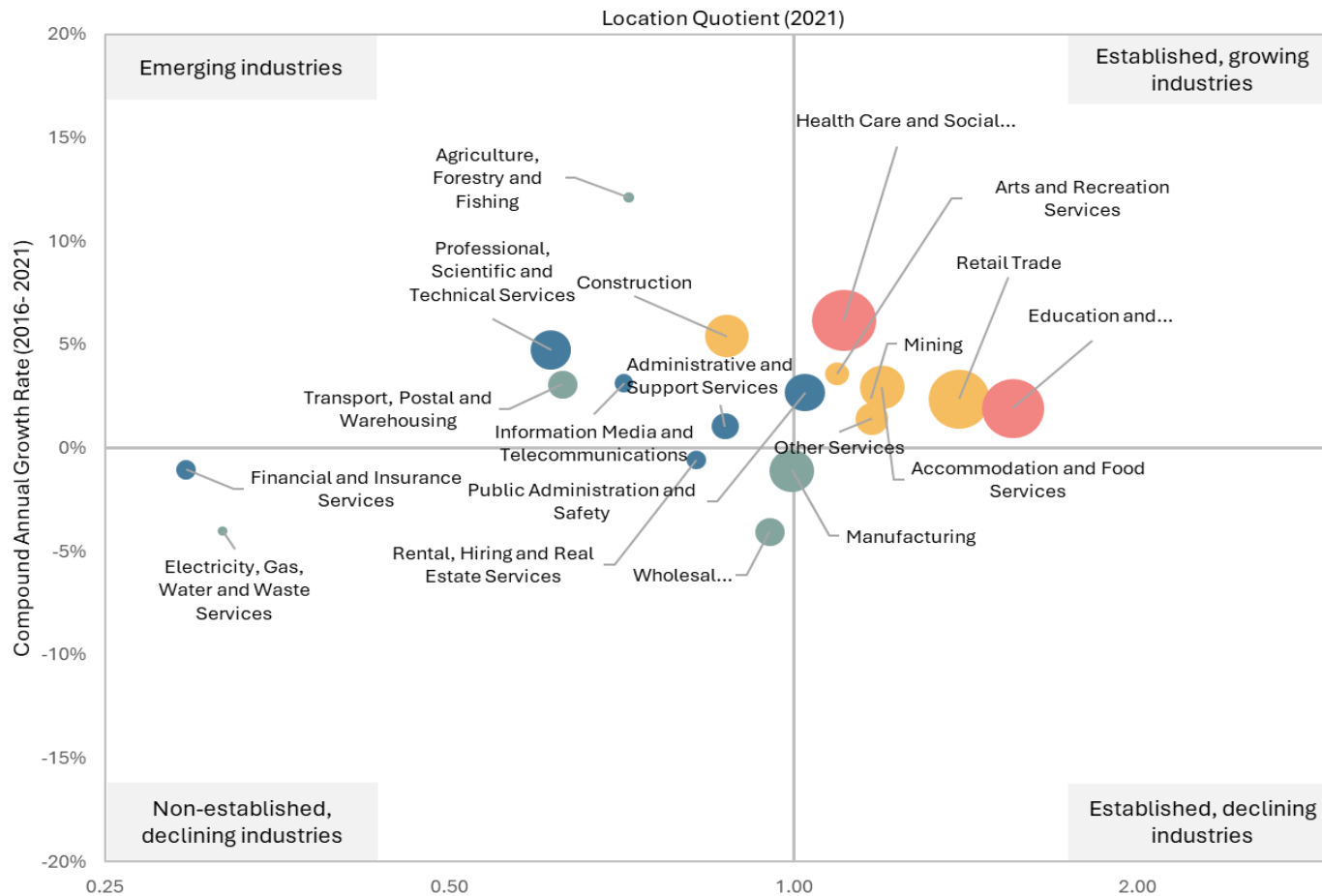
### Comparative advantage

Figure 21 below shows the location quotient (LQ) analysis of Darebin's economy. While the vertical axis indicates the LQ score, the horizontal axis shows the growth rate in employment in Darebin. Growth indicates a growing advantage. The quadrants formed in the chart by lines calibrated to an LQ of 1 and an industry growth rate of 0 per cent per annum (in employment terms) create a lens for judging the strategic value of sectors. The size of the bubbles corresponds with the employment size of each sector. The top right-hand quadrant shows both strongly growing sectors and where the region has a specialisation or implied competitive advantage. On the face of things, these sectors reflect the region's strengths and best prospects. The top left shows emerging sectors growing in advantage but have yet to reach a comparative advantage in Darebin. The top right shows industries with a long-standing local strength with generally strong employment growth. The bottom left quadrant shows industries with no advantage and declining employment.

Taking all the parameters into account, findings from the LQ for Darebin are:

- **Expanding sectors with a traditional strength:** Health Care and Social Assistance; Education and Training; Retail Trade; Arts and Recreation Services
- **Emerging sectors:** Construction; Professional, Scientific and Technical Services; Transport, Postal and Warehousing; Administrative and Support Services; Information Media and Telecommunications
- **Industries with a traditional strength but declining in prominence:** Manufacturing
- **Industries without comparative advantage and declining:** Wholesale Trade; Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services; Financial and Insurance Services; Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services

Figure 21: Location quotient analysis of the Darebin economy



Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024) using data from ABS Census 2016 and 2021 – Place of work data



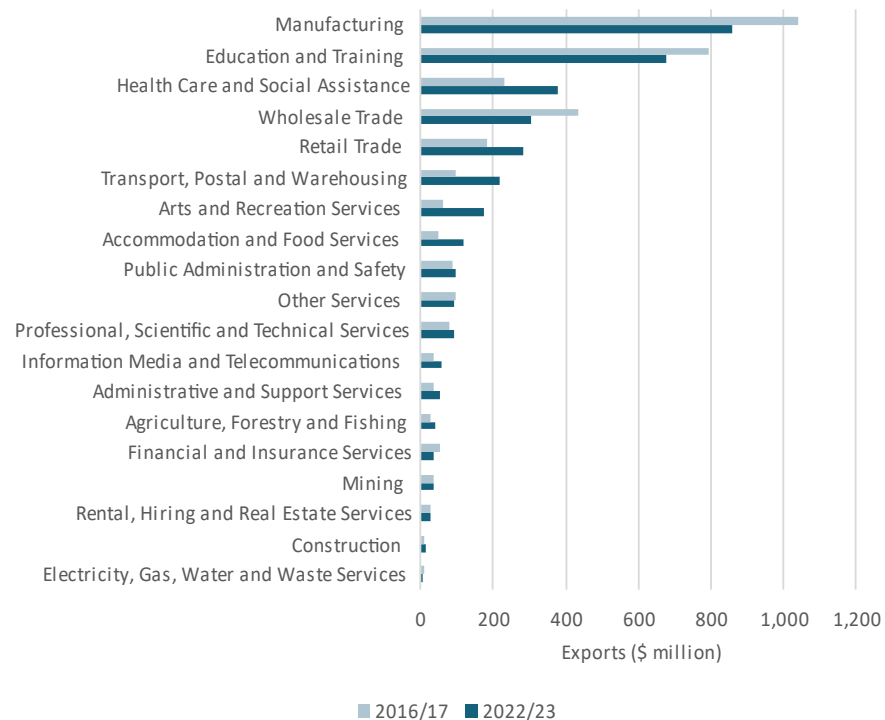
**Local economic drivers**

**Injections of income (exports)**

Exports are a major player in economic performance and prosperity. Income injected into the local economy creates a multiplier effect as exporting firms draw on local suppliers and workers to meet the demand from external customers.

The data indicates that manufacturing is Darebin’s primary export industry, closely followed by the educational and training sectors. La Trobe University, currently enrolling over 8,000 international students, significantly contributes to the education sector's share of the local economy's total exports. However, Darebin's two largest export industries are among the few that experienced a decline in export value between 2016/17 and 2022/23.

Figure 22: Total exports by industry of Darebin, 2016/17 and 2022/23



Source: Economy id, 2024

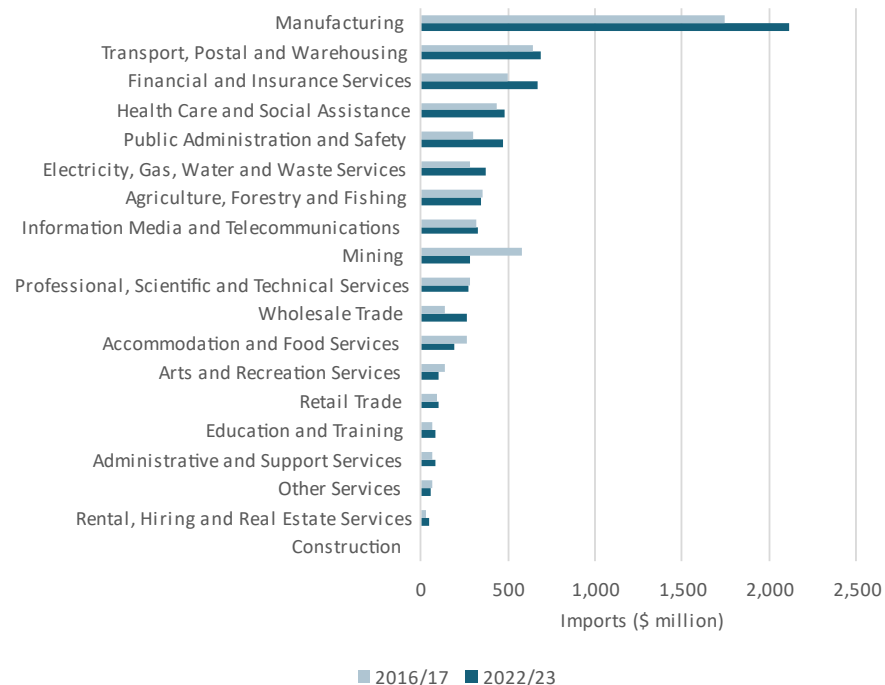
**Leakages of income (imports)**

Imports are sales of goods and services from industries located outside Darebin’s boundaries to resident households, businesses and other organisations within the area. Economic performance can be reduced if income leaks out of the region as local firms import inputs to production. Similarly, consumers also import goods and services, like buying clothing or products in nearby areas or online, or residents (not always by choice) choose to work or pursue leisure outside the local area. These leakages dilute the multiplier effect from export sales and other injections of income.

While imports are required to fill local capabilities and resource gaps in some cases, it is important to consider what imports can be encouraged to be provided locally, a process known as import substitution.

Overall, Darebin’s total value of imports is higher than its value of exports, indicating a relatively low level of local self-containment. Manufacturing has the highest value of imports and experienced a substantial increase between 2016-17 and 2022-23.

**Figure 23: Total imports by industry of Darebin, 2016/17 and 2022/23**

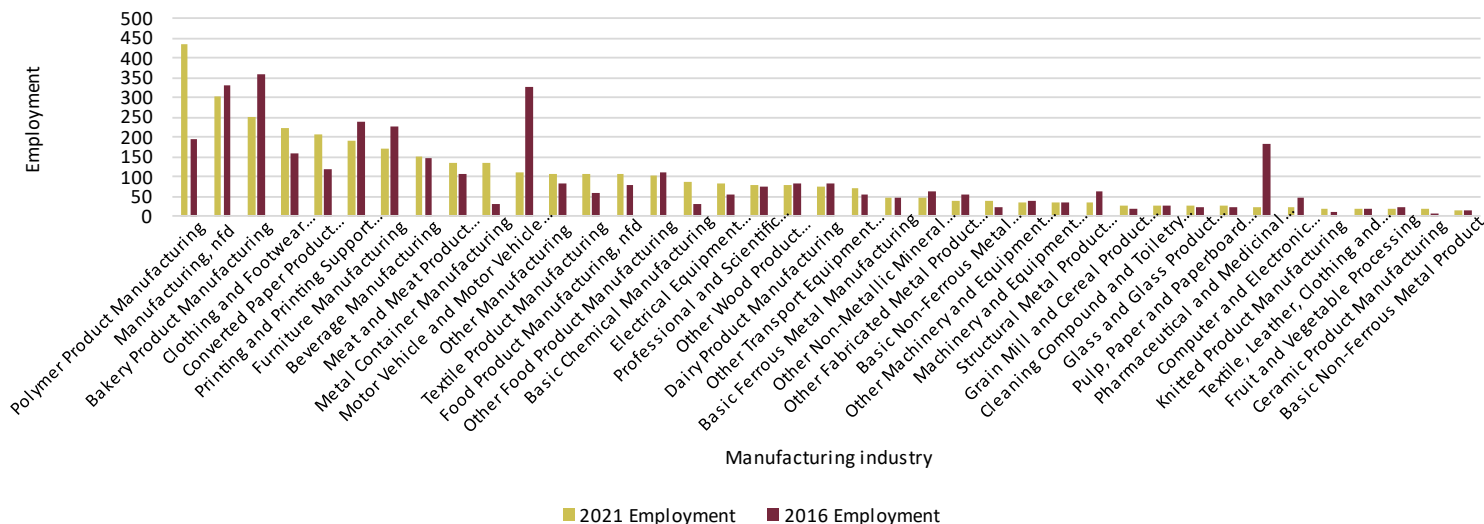


Source: Economy id, 2024

**The unique case of manufacturing in Darebin**

While the LQ analysis shows manufacturing as a declining industry of employment within Darebin, it still plays a vital role in the Darebin economy. Manufacturing is Darebin’s largest export earner and remains a key industry of employment. While employment declined significantly in manufacturing between 2011-2016, it largely plateaued by 2021. Figure 24 shows a finer level of detail of how employment has been trending across manufacturing sub-industries. While polymer product manufacturing saw more than a doubling of employment size, there are a number of other creative manufacturing sectors that have benefitted from modest growth in recent times. These includes sectors such as furniture manufacturing, beverage manufacturing, and clothing and footwear manufacturing. These are manufacturing industries that often operate on a small scale and are dependent on a local, creative workforce.

**Figure 24: Manufacturing employment change, 2016 and 2021**

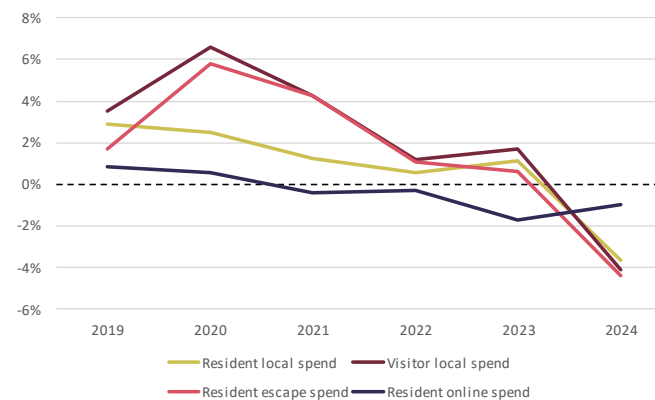


**Local expenditure vs escape expenditure**

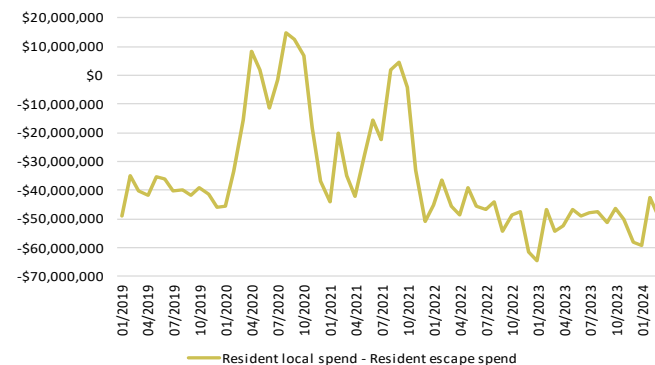
During the Covid-19 period, spending by Darebin residents (both locally and elsewhere, offline and online) and by visitors grew slowly. Although it slightly increased between 2022 and 2023 after restrictions were lifted, spending has declined since 2023. As of April 2024, spending by both residents and visitors in Darebin is significantly lower than in previous years, with an average decline of 4%, likely due to rising living costs in Australia. The only exception is resident online expenditure, which has increased since 2023.

In terms of the spending habits of local residents, Darebin residents usually spend more outside of the LGA than within the LGA. However, during the Covid-19 period, resident spending increased significantly due to lockdown restrictions that limited travel outside the municipality. Since January 2022, the split between Darebin’s local resident spending and resident escape spending has returned to pre-pandemic levels. While resident escape spending in Darebin tends to be higher than local spending, it is noteworthy that local spending has fallen at a slower rate than escape spending since mid-2022. This may indicate locals prioritising essential spending in their immediate area—such as groceries and basic consumables—over discretionary spending further afield.

**Figure 25: Average change in resident local, visitor local and resident escape spend in Darebin, 2019-2024**



**Figure 26: Darebin’s change in resident local spend relative to resident escape spend**



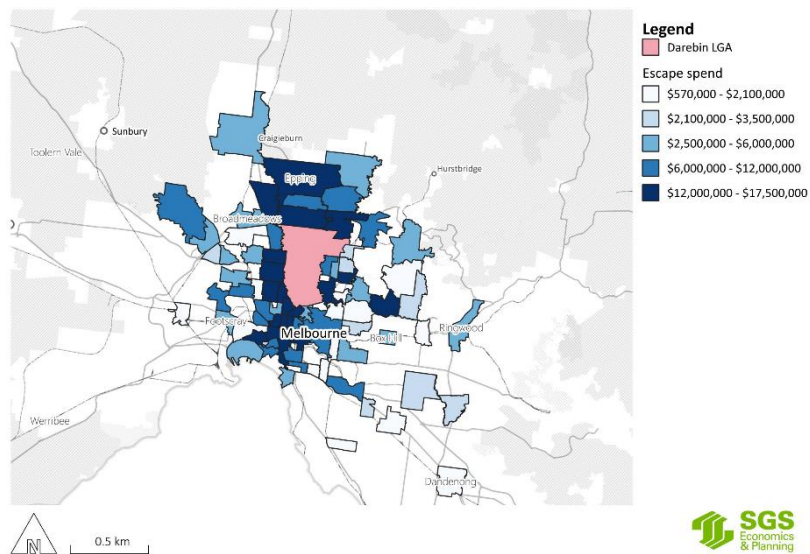
Source: Spendmapp data by Geografia

**Escape expenditure and external visitor expenditure by suburb**

Darebin’s residents spend most in northern suburbs of Melbourne such as Epping and Broadmeadows, followed by Melbourne CBD and inner-city suburbs. This is not surprising given Darebin’s close proximity to the CBD.

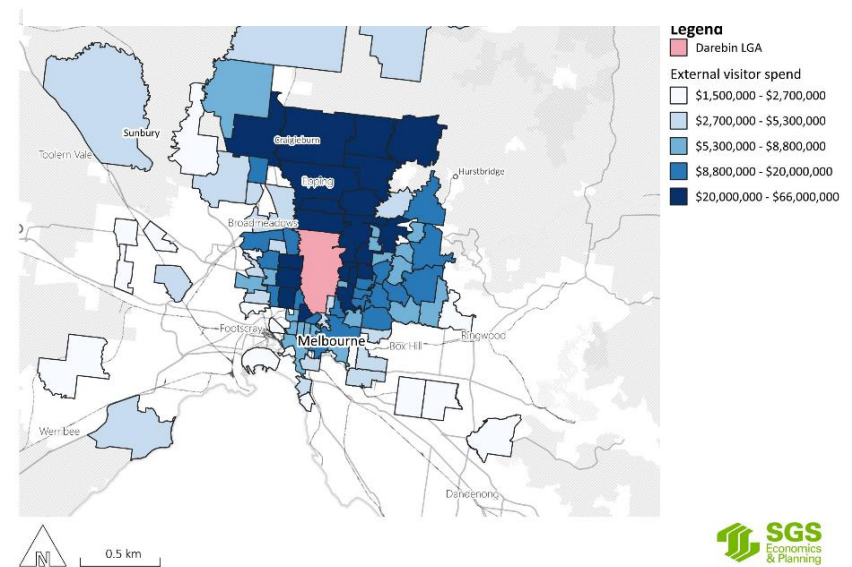
Darebin has attracted the most spending from visitors in the northern and eastern suburbs of Melbourne, as well as from the Melbourne CBD. There is also a moderate amount of spending from residents of western suburbs such as Sunbury and Point Cook.

**Figure 28: Top escape spend by suburb of Darebin, 2019-2024**



Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024) using Spendmapp data by Geografia

**Figure 27: Top external visitor spend by suburb of Darebin, 2019-2024**

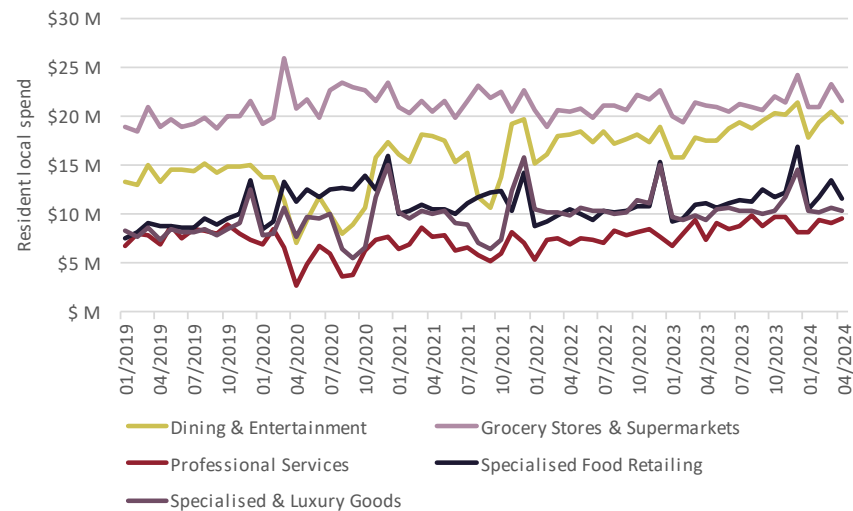


Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024) using Spendmapp data by Geografia

**Local expenditure by category**

The top five spending of local residents in Darebin include Dining & Entertainment, Grocery Stores & Supermarkets, Specialised Food Retailing, Specialised & Luxury Goods and Professional Services. Overall, all categories have seen many fluctuations in spending between 2019 and 2023 due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, spending on Grocery Stores and Supermarkets increased significantly in April 2020 when there was a panic buying as threat of lockdown loomed over Victoria at the time. Spending on Dining & Entertainment, on the other hand, peaked in late 2021 when most of the restrictions were lifted across the state, allowing people to dine in at restaurants and attending entertainment activities in public.

**Figure 29: Resident local spend by category in Darebin, 2019-2024**

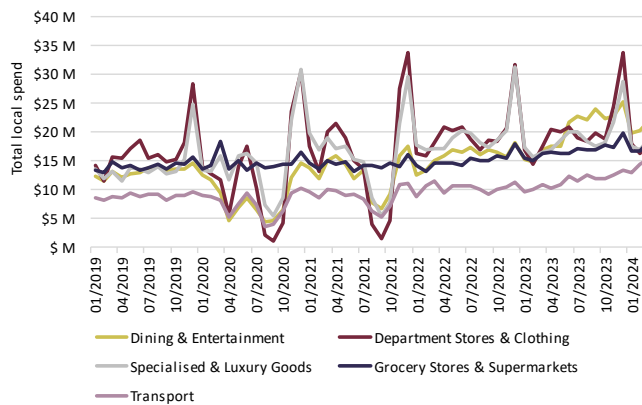


Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024) using Spendmapp data by Geografia. Note: Only top 5 spending categories are included.

**Local expenditure by category of major economic hubs**

Preston and Northcote are two economic hubs of Darebin, each with distinct spending habits among their residents. In Preston, the top two significant expenditures are in Department Stores & Clothing and Specialised & Luxury goods. This trend is likely due to the presence of the Northland Shopping Centre where Myer is an anchor store. Other key retailers of the Northland Shopping Centre include H&M, Uniqlo and Sephora.

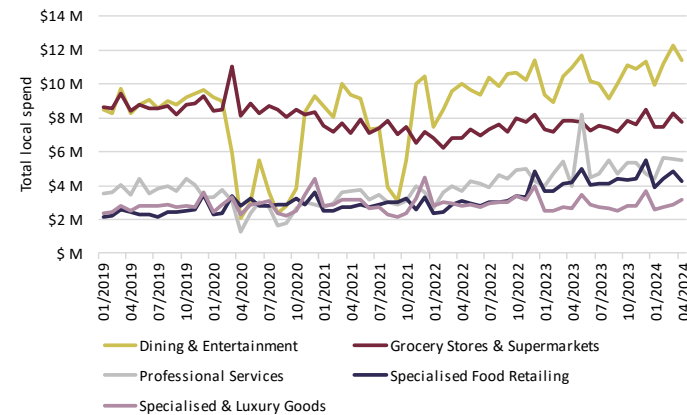
**Figure 30: Preston – top 5 categories for local expenditure, 2019-2024**



Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024) using Spendmapp data by Geografia.  
Note: Only top 5 spending categories are included.

For Northcote residents, the largest expenditures are in Dining & Entertainment and Grocery Stores & Supermarkets. Unlike the Northland Shopping Centre in Preston, the Northcote Plaza Shopping Centre has fewer department stores and luxury goods providers. As a result, residents may spend more on groceries and supermarkets when visiting their local shopping centre. Additionally, High Street in Northcote is renowned for its vibrant mix of culture, dining, and nightlife, offering ample opportunities for residents to spend on Dining & Entertainment.

**Figure 31: Northcote – top 5 categories for local expenditure, 2019-2024**



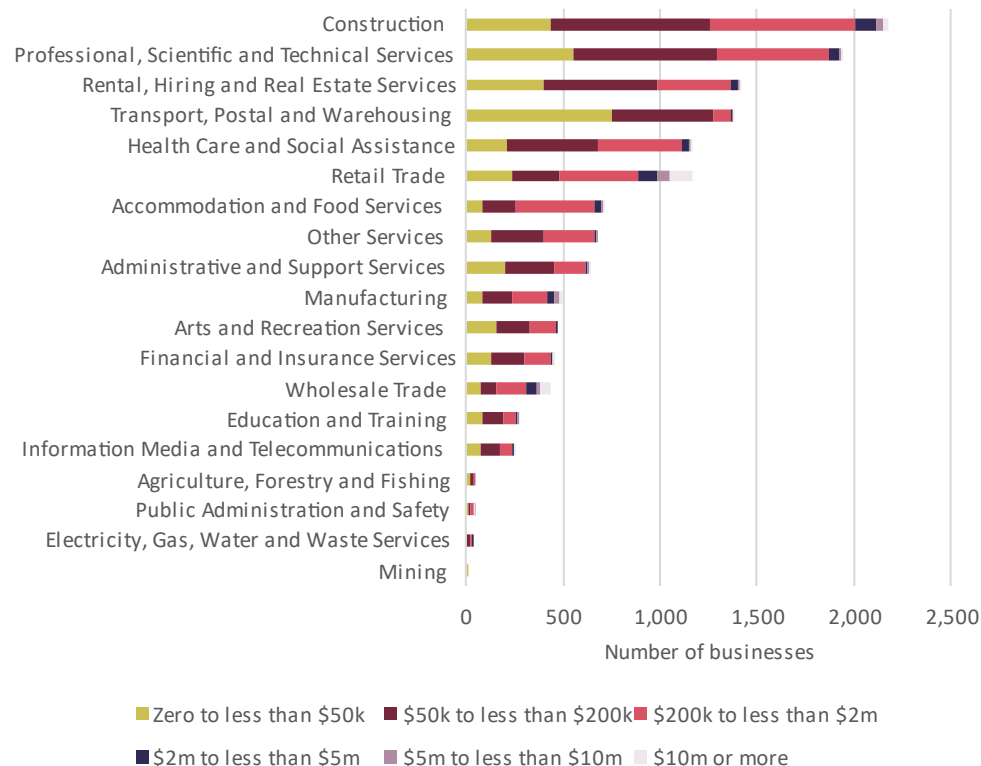
Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024) using Spendmapp data by Geografia. Note: Only top 5 spending categories are included.

**The business community**

As of June 2023, Darebin had 13,773 locally registered businesses. Most of these (98.1 per cent) are small businesses with a turnover under \$10 million. There are 250 businesses registered in Darebin with over \$10 million turnover, which are vital economic anchors, key employers and export earners.

The largest industry sector by business count of turnover size is construction (likely due to large number of tradesman operating as sole traders or small businesses within the Darebin LGA), followed by professional, scientific and technical services and rental, hiring and real estate (likely to be landlords and ‘mum and dad’ property investors residing within Darebin). Such industries also provide the majority of employment in the municipality.

**Figure 32: Number of businesses by turnover size in Darebin, June 2023**



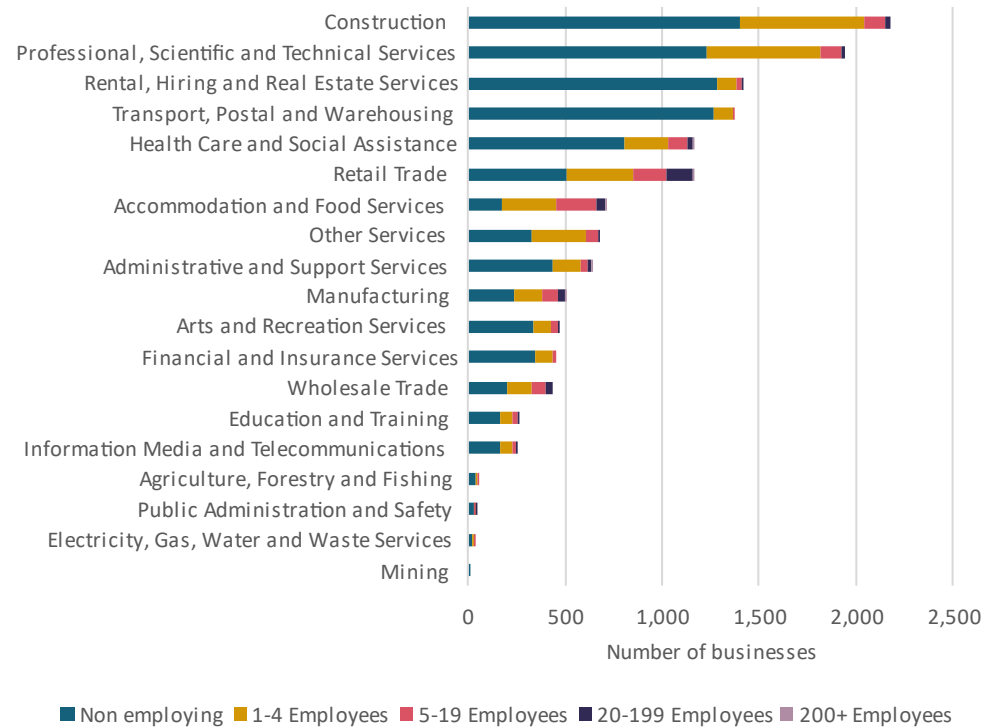
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics Business Register (2023) and SGS Economics and Planning (2024). The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Business Register is derived from the GST register held by the Australian Tax Office (ATO). Businesses are included if they are registered with the ATO, with an ABN used within the previous two financial years.



In terms of employment size, most of businesses in Darebin are relatively small (employing 4 people or fewer). There are very few large companies with over 200 employees registered within Darebin, with only 17 in total.

Small businesses play an essential role in any economy, including Darebin's. Their presence reflects a level of entrepreneurship and experience which will stand the local economy in good stead as it adjusts to a new trading environment. 65 per cent of business in Darebin are 'non-employing- businesses. These consist of sole traders and micro businesses registered within Darebin.

Figure 33: Number of businesses by employment size in Darebin, June 2023



Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024) using data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Business Register (2023). The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Business Register is derived from the GST register held by the Australian Tax Office (ATO). Businesses are included if they are registered with the ATO, with an ABN used within the previous two financial years.

## Appendix B: Engagement Report

### Engagement purpose

Development of the EDF is a collaborative effort between Council and the local business community. To this end, stakeholder engagement gives community and businesses a sense of ownership, buy-in and ongoing engagement with the project and its overall success. Engagement also helps Council to build and strengthen relationships within the community.

Overall, Council's stakeholder engagement program aims to:

1. Introduce the EDF and raise awareness of the project.
2. Understand what the current and future opportunities in the economy (social, environmental and economic) might be from the perspective of economic change makers and the business community
3. Understand the enablers that need to be put in place for the opportunities to be capitalised on (policy, infrastructure, skills etc.)
4. Hear about problems and issues in the economy that need to be monitored or overcome (social, environmental and economic)
5. Understand what needs to occur so opportunity and wealth is captured locally, and that development can be socially and environmentally regenerative.

## Engagement methods

### Business summit and roundtables (convened by Council)

*Aim:* To hear from local industries on current dynamics given Darebin's rapidly changing economy, environment and culture, and to seek inputs to shape the upcoming Darebin Economic Framework and Strategy. These in-person engagement events were one part of a larger program of consultation and engagement being delivered by Darebin City Council.

### Business survey (conducted by SGS)

*Aim:* The survey aimed to collect information about the health of businesses as a 'pulse check'. The survey was distributed in a format that allows it to become a recurring survey, forming the basis of an annual check on business conditions. The survey aimed to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of the local economy and in the local business community. The survey was also used to introduce the project to the wider community and call for future engagement in workshops.

### Business workshop

*Aim:* The Workshop was aimed to engage a broad and representative group of individuals and businesses through a deeper dive into strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats of the economy and local business community. The workshop set out to better understand what's affecting businesses and the local economy, understand and confirm community issues, values and priorities, identify possible high impact projects and test key findings of the research to that point in the EDF program.

### **Key findings of business summits and roundtables**

The industry roundtables were held for six industry groups which covered the broad spectrum of business interests in Darebin. This included social enterprises, not for profit and community sectors; manufacturing and large industry sectors; retail hospitality and service industries; health and education; creative industries and micro businesses; and real estate and construction.

Several key themes were common across the different industry summits. It became clear that the business community in Darebin is active, which includes both an awareness and a willingness to respond to a changing business environment through innovation, learning, and collaboration across the business sector and with the community. This extends to the social and environmental landscape, where businesses want to see positive outcomes for the community in safe workplaces and streets with support for social enterprises. Businesses in Darebin are proud and protective of their diversity and are keen to showcase Darebin to the world.

The top three discussion themes included:

- Business and community
- Jobs and employment
- Innovation and growth

There were also specific ideas that were popular with participants at the roundtables. These include:

- Using targeted procurement practices to support Indigenous businesses, social enterprises, and a circular economy
- Developing the Reservoir industrial precinct into a hub for specialist wholesale food and beverage
- Supporting artists and creatives with dedicated space in underutilised or vacant Council facilities
- Addressing staff shortages in the care economy through access to worker accommodation
- Further supporting businesses to attract entry level positions within Darebin

The one day summit, attracting approximately 80 people, comprised of keynote speakers and panel discussions. Discussion covered the current and future demographics of Darebin and linking this to local business’ customer bases, the value of localism, flexibility, and the importance of work-life balance.

The top responses from the roundtable sessions are shown in Table 2 below. Where there are ties between top responses all are shown.

**Table 2: Roundtable summary – top responses**

Cohort	Top 2 themes	What does it mean to be a part of the Darebin Business community?	How can Council help your business to innovate for efficiency and growth?	How does your business and industry contribute to the circular economy? What support can Council provide?	What are your challenges in recruiting and retaining staff?	What emerging industries, clusters and developments would you like to see being attracted to Darebin and to the wider region?	What digital, transport and infrastructure initiatives could improve your business and industry?	Are you interested in participating in a Darebin Chamber of Commerce? If so, how?
<b>Social Enterprise, Not for Profit and Community Sector</b>	Innovation and growth  Business and community	Darebin is vibrant and diverse	Capability building – basics like how to register an ABN  Linking different partners  Education on what social enterprise/ community groups do and are based locally	Influencing corporates to take a circular economy approach and keeping subcontractors accountable through tracking and using indigenous businesses and social enterprises and delivering on circular economy  Support a social enterprise to build this arm of the business, sponsored by corporates	Quality, skilled and experienced staff are difficult to find, labour market is tight and competitive from an employer point of view. Making roles more attractive to job seekers can be challenging.	Pre-fab affordable housing e.g. granny flat most simple and affordable way.	We’re losing a lot of the big workspaces e.g. warehouses to restaurants, breweries, apartments or they’re vacant for no apparent reason e.g. waiting on planning approval).	Chamber/business network would represent smaller businesses – our size means we are under-represented.  Chamber/business network could connect not-for-profits with businesses.  Business focused, community sector may not be that interested, title could put off younger entrepreneurs as the language could be seen as old fashioned.

Cohort	Top 2 themes	What does it mean to be a part of the Darebin Business community?	How can Council help your business to innovate for efficiency and growth?	How does your business and industry contribute to the circular economy? What support can Council provide?	What are your challenges in recruiting and retaining staff?	What emerging industries, clusters and developments would you like to see being attracted to Darebin and to the wider region?	What digital, transport and infrastructure initiatives could improve your business and industry?	Are you interested in participating in a Darebin Chamber of Commerce? If so, how?
<b>Manufacturing and Large Industry</b>	<p>Chamber of Commerce/business network</p> <p>Climate emergency and circular economy</p>	<p>Want Council to continue to support businesses into the future, including zoning changes when needing to grow</p>	<p>Help with investment towards machinery, processes, research and development and building upgrades</p>	<p>Support with info on funding, legislation, education and information, and work better and more closely with State Government on topics including employment programs and legislation</p>	<p>Local 'Employment Hub' would be beneficial for local jobseekers</p>	<p>Survey types of business currently in Darebin to understand where the gaps are and understand audience/main business sectors</p>	<p>Street parking network</p>	<p>Connections and collaborations to achieve collective/group buying power</p> <p>How does a Chamber effectively advocate for a huge and diverse industry?</p> <p>Darebin Business Association a better name (Chamber is old fashioned)</p>
<b>Retail, Activity Centres and Hospitality</b>	<p>Innovation and growth</p> <p>Business and community</p>	<p>Dealing with graffiti and beautifying the streetscape</p>	<p>Streamlining, cashflow, advertising, social media, advertising – old methods don't work support – council could provide support booking experts</p>	<p>Push the concept more from Council</p>	<p>Changing mentality around work ethics/commitment – e.g. not wanting to do anything to impact pension income or younger people not giving the time required</p>	<p>Main Street Festivals to attract people from outside the suburb &amp; neighbouring LGA – e.g. 86 fest, St Kilda Fest, Station St Fest, Hume winter light Fest</p>	<p>Improved public transport in Reservoir /bus network</p>	<p>Advocacy role a Chamber could champion on issues, challenges etc.</p>

Cohort	Top 2 themes	What does it mean to be a part of the Darebin Business community?	How can Council help your business to innovate for efficiency and growth?	How does your business and industry contribute to the circular economy? What support can Council provide?	What are your challenges in recruiting and retaining staff?	What emerging industries, clusters and developments would you like to see being attracted to Darebin and to the wider region?	What digital, transport and infrastructure initiatives could improve your business and industry?	Are you interested in participating in a Darebin Chamber of Commerce? If so, how?
<b>Health and Education</b>	Jobs and employment  Climate emergency and circular economy	Social impact – Support for creating change in the community	More networking events for cross collaboration and working with Council to solve local issues	Education is important to influence families via their children and the next generation  How can Council foster innovation in the Circular Economy? What is our role?	Partnerships with Council to provide work experience, opportunities and support initiatives for capacity building for businesses to support jobseekers	Care economy – emerging industry – how can we attract more investment – for example virtual opportunity and matching different accommodation needs	Improve public and sustainable transport networks and connectivity between modes, make it logistically smarter, seamless and faster with more frequent services between key destinations.	Attracting business that offer entry level opportunities
<b>Creative Industries and Micro Business</b>	Infrastructure and transport  Chamber of Commerce	No top theme (live in Darebin, accessible, community, supportive, but also restrictive, poor urban form, etc.)	Monthly innovation workshops/hackathons	Where are the elders in this conversation? How can we be First Nations led?  Council being a connection point and communications stream for sharing resources  Support new works that communicate and raise awareness so the arts community can help to shift perceptions, raise awareness and process	Upskill employers to not fear employing underrepresented people  Cost of childcare – Darebin leases reducing in length  Actually meeting real people and learning about them	Build a sense of community around you – artists and families	Artist housing to keep creatives local – ensure zero emissions/high performing buildings to showcase infrastructure best practice	Chamber/business network can provide business support service on setting up and improving businesses: management, legal, accounting, operations, structure, marketing, recruiting, IP law, grants, case studies & mentoring

Cohort	Top 2 themes	What does it mean to be a part of the Darebin Business community?	How can Council help your business to innovate for efficiency and growth?	How does your business and industry contribute to the circular economy? What support can Council provide?	What are your challenges in recruiting and retaining staff?	What emerging industries, clusters and developments would you like to see being attracted to Darebin and to the wider region?	What digital, transport and infrastructure initiatives could improve your business and industry?	Are you interested in participating in a Darebin Chamber of Commerce? If so, how?
				feelings and emotions raised by the areas				
<b>Real Estate and Construction</b>	Chamber of Commerce Business & community / Innovation and growth	Many questions on the status of Preston Market	Anchor destinations in areas that need more activity if a supermarket opened in Broadway	Make solar insulation, electrification, energy efficiency affordable	Training criteria increased in some areas	Reservoir industrial precinct could become a hub for wholesale food. Great central location. Hospitality etc. Especially in Preston and Reservoir	Business directory to highlight micro businesses	An opportunity connect with other businesses in the community

**Table 3: Key concerns**

Cohort	Challenges and concerns
<b>Social Enterprise, Not for Profit and Community Sector</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Housing for lower income people</li> <li>▪ Lack of understanding around actioning a circular economy</li> <li>▪ Finding quality, skilled and experienced staff and volunteers</li> <li>▪ Connecting job seekers to employers; Loss of large workspaces</li> <li>▪ Adequate and sustainable public transport and safe and pleasant public spaces</li> </ul>



Cohort	Challenges and concerns
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Feeling that the Chamber of Commerce needs rebranding and refocused to support a wider range of business interests.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Manufacturing and Large Industry</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Barriers for new business include zoning, rates, communications of traffic management plans, car parking and liquor licenses requirements</li> <li>▪ Cost of manufacturing, setting up a space expensive</li> <li>▪ Simplifying and speed up planning and building processes</li> <li>▪ Linking businesses who produce similar waste streams to combine product to connect with businesses that can utilise it</li> <li>▪ Generally connecting sources of waste resources with users</li> <li>▪ Too many single use products still being manufactured and sold</li> <li>▪ Finding and retaining quality, skilled and experienced staff</li> <li>▪ Make regulatory approvals faster and more efficient</li> <li>▪ Parking and traffic management.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Retail, Activity Centres and Hospitality</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Poor condition of public realm, lack of greening, not inviting for people to spend time in it, poor walkability</li> <li>▪ Poor NBN connection</li> <li>▪ Energy concerns including cost, disruptions and sustainability</li> <li>▪ Empty shops and lack of pop-up opportunities</li> <li>▪ More support for businesses to take part in the circular economy (e.g., knowledge around what and how to recycle products)</li> <li>▪ Hospitality not seen as a long-term career</li> <li>▪ Staffing issues: attracting, retaining, issues around wage and hours expectations from workforce; a big perception that post-COVID workforce are much less realistic about wages, hours and working conditions</li> <li>▪ Lack of transport options, particularly for young people, and better end of trip facilities</li> <li>▪ Slower speeds for traffic on shopping strips</li> <li>▪ More housing close to jobs</li> <li>▪ Chamber of Commerce name old fashioned, needs a new name</li> <li>▪ Better relationship and collaboration between Chamber and Traders Associations and Council (Eco-Development team), potential redundant functions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Health and Education</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Darebin doesn't provide enough information regarding networking and connection for businesses</li> <li>▪ More capacity building and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be involved in decision making and the local economy</li> <li>▪ Connecting job seekers to employers through various means</li> <li>▪ More information/education around circular economy opportunities</li> <li>▪ Supporting young people to transition into employment</li> <li>▪ Sufficient childcare provision and pay for workers</li> <li>▪ A lack of adequate and safe sustainable active and public transport</li> <li>▪ More parking and fewer restricted zones (for key services)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ More opportunities for entry-level positions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Creative Industries and Micro Business</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strict rules for opening business are unappealing</li> <li>▪ A lack of main street access with low visibility of businesses</li> <li>▪ Derelict buildings</li> <li>▪ Lack of accessible tram stops</li> <li>▪ Need more partnerships between businesses, arts organisations, and placemaking</li> <li>▪ Investment in anti-racist practices and in community led advocacy</li> <li>▪ Lack of visibility and involvement of First Nations community in circular economy transition and placemaking, with creative industry helping</li> <li>▪ A need for more education and support with circular economy initiatives</li> <li>▪ Employers reticence to employ underrepresented people</li> <li>▪ Cost of childcare</li> <li>▪ Affordable spaces for creative activities</li> <li>▪ An easier tender process with Council</li> <li>▪ Affordable housing</li> <li>▪ Lack of a nightlife precinct</li> </ul>
<p><b>Real Estate and Construction</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Questions around the future of the Preston Market</li> <li>▪ Improvement of poor and degrading quality of the public realm to bring people into high street</li> <li>▪ Affordability, both housing and business, rent and rates</li> <li>▪ North of Bell St not inviting for investment</li> <li>▪ Need for more anchor institutions</li> <li>▪ More conversation between schools/universities to connect to work experience and jobs</li> </ul>

- More support with sustainability initiatives such as energy efficiency, solar, and circular economy, including incentives and education
- Increasing training criteria and wage expectations
- Ensuring positive workplace cultures and environments
- More accessibility ramps – grants for businesses to provide
- Need more infrastructure to encourage active and sustainable transport
- Better integration of government services into a single online hub/app
- Earlier notification of construction work

## Key findings of the business survey

### Overview

The survey was open between Monday 17<sup>th</sup> May to Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2024. It was hosted on the 'Your Say Darebin' website and promoted through existing networks of Council and using the Australian Business Register.

### Who responded

In total, there were **109 respondents** to the survey, around 60 per cent of which lived in Darebin, while 40 per cent reside outside Darebin but either operate a business or work within the Darebin LGA. There was an even distribution of male and female respondents (48 per cent and 49 per cent respectively). There was diversity amongst the respondents, representing a wide cross section of the Darebin local and business community.

Figure 34: Age of respondents (%)

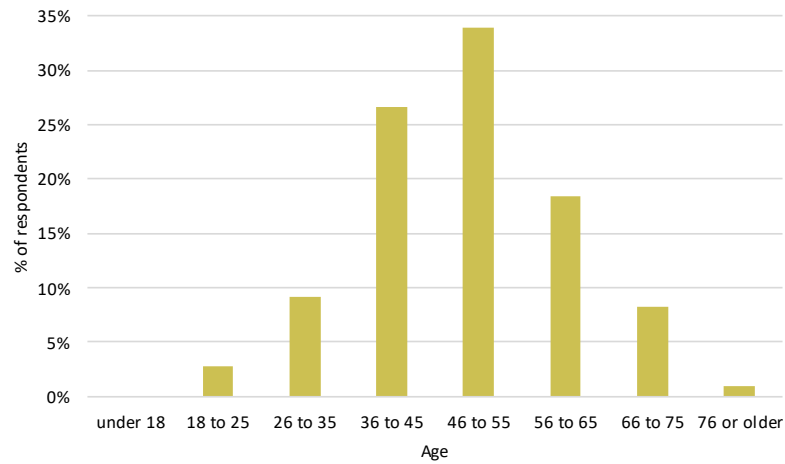


Figure 35: Diversity of respondents

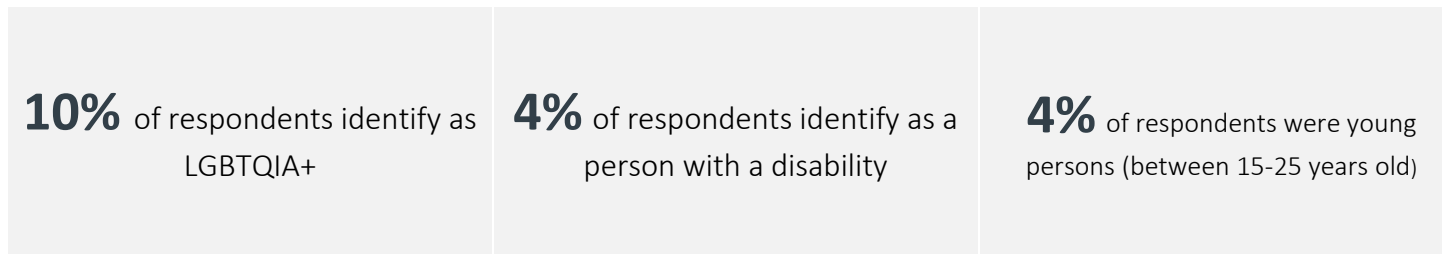


Figure 36: Location of respondent's business by suburb

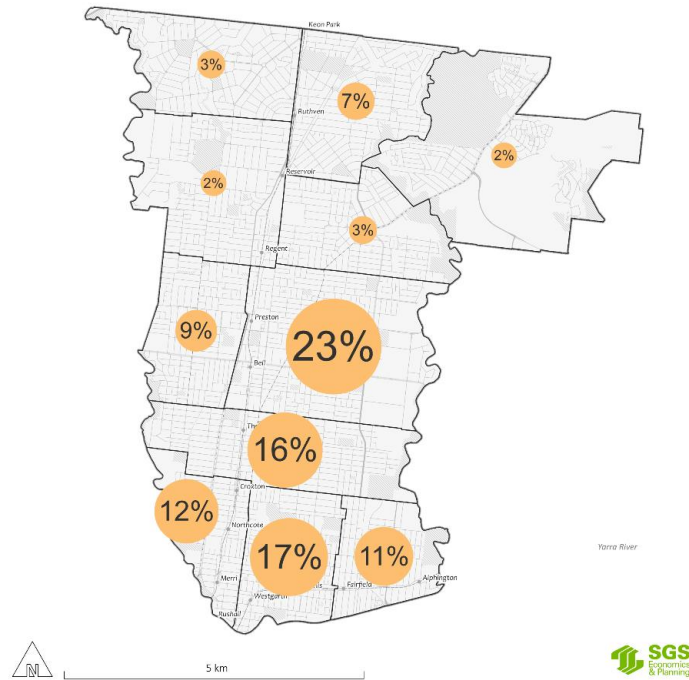


Figure 37: Role of respondents



Figure 38: Respondents' primary industry of operation

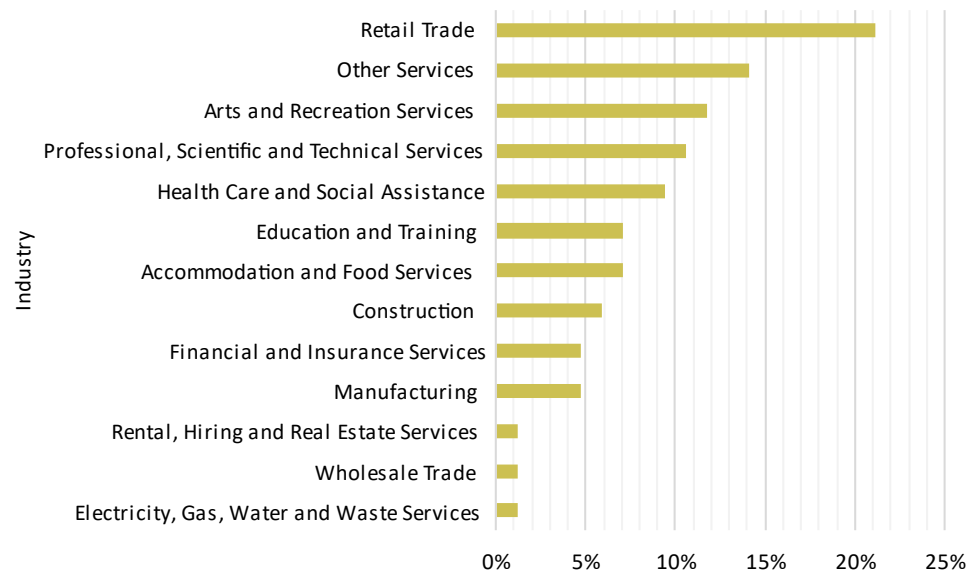
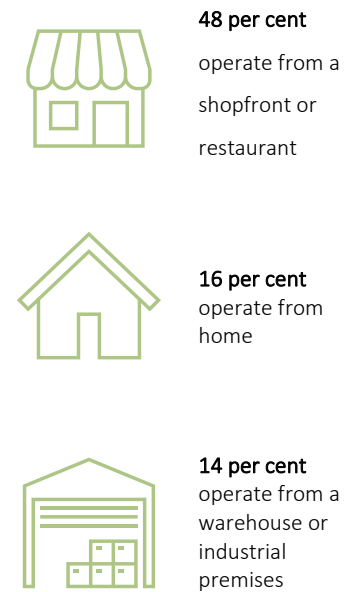


Figure 39: Respondents' primary location of business



### Business Insights

*Business performance:* 50 per cent of businesses reported the same performance as last year while only 24 per cent have seen improvement. These results indicate a stagnation in growth. This could suggest that businesses are struggling to adapt or innovate in a challenging economic environment.

*Community Connection:* The fact that 63 per cent of businesses feel connected to the local community is positive, as community support can be crucial for business resilience. The 37 per cent that feel disconnected is concerning.

*Staffing numbers:* Over the past year, 67 per cent of businesses have maintained their staff levels, indicating job market stability. Additionally, 21 per cent have increased staffing, reflecting some growth, while only 11 per cent have reduced staff, showing limited contraction.

### Factors impacting businesses

#### *Top 3 staffing challenges:*

1. Attracting skilled staff and experienced job seekers
2. My/our business is not experiencing staffing challenges
3. Accommodating flexible work arrangements

The survey results show that businesses are split on staffing issues, with many stating they have not faced staffing challenges at all. Those that are may be suffering from a skills gap that could stifle business growth and innovation in the area. Accommodating flexible work arrangements is crucial in the current labour market, but it also presents challenges in maintaining productivity and collaboration and requires businesses to balance employee expectations.

#### *Top 3 factors making it harder for business growth and profitability:*

1. Increasing cost of supplies, energy and wages



2. Increasing property, rental prices and interest rates
3. Government regulations and taxes

The survey results indicate that increasing costs of supplies, energy, and wages are eroding profit margins and making it difficult for businesses to invest in growth. High property and rental prices, along with rising interest rates are adding to additional financial strain. The burden of government regulations and taxes further complicates business operations by increasing compliance costs and limiting operational flexibility.

#### **Business opportunities**

##### *Top 3 barriers to business' innovation:*

4. Finding the time and focus
5. Lack of financial resources
6. Fear and risks of investing in change

The difficulty in finding the time and focus for innovation indicates that many businesses are preoccupied with day-to-day operations, leaving little room for strategic development of their business. A lack of financial resources is another major barrier suggesting that businesses might need to seek alternative funding options, such as grants or partnerships in order to invest in new technologies and processes. The fear and risks associated with investing in change can inhibit innovation.

##### *Top 3 options that would make doing business easier in Darebin:*

7. Council promoting local industry and business achievements
8. Awareness of available grants
9. Increased business networking and collaboration opportunities

Businesses identified that promoting local industry and business achievements by Council as the number one idea to make doing business easier in Darebin. Promoting local industry and business achievements can increase visibility, attract customers and investors, and inspire other businesses in the community. Respondents also identified awareness of available grants as a key option. Raising awareness about available grants can provide critical financial support for growth and innovation, enabling businesses to undertake projects that might otherwise be unaffordable. Increased opportunities for business networking and collaboration can lead to knowledge sharing, partnerships, and new business ventures, strengthening the local economy and fostering a more collaborative business environment.

### **Key findings of the business workshop**

#### **Overview**

There were 15 participants in the workshop, 12 of which were owner/operators, 2 were managers and 1 was an employee within Darebin. Participants were introduced to the project, presented with some key findings emerging from the background research and asked to identify opportunities and issues related to four themes of economic development: 'Place and precinct', 'Local business sustainability', 'Investment attraction and facilitation', and, 'Creativity, culture and diversity'.

After explaining the four themes further, including relevant feedback received during the business summits and roundtables, and the online survey, participants were asked to identify their top 3 priority areas, identify Council's role, and identify some possible high impact projects. Finally, participants voted on what they considered to be the most important priority areas or ideas across all the themes.

Key opportunities and challenges identified

Table 4: Opportunities identified by theme of economic development

Place and precinct	Local business sustainability	Investment attraction and facilitation	Creativity, culture and diversity
Safe and accessible precincts across Darebin such as the new path under the railway that presents opportunity for more annual events	Reignite a functional chamber of commerce to leverage business relationships, shared comms and marketing.	Creating an online business directory for business-to-business networking	More multicultural events and festivals
Excitement about the new proposed tram stops on High St.	Partnering with universities to top into labour pools.	Encouraging shopping locally	Street dining
Preston markets due to its centralised location, amount of car parking and good branding.	Local awareness of businesses.	Local precinct activation	Capitalising on the good vibe of High St (including 86 festival).
Revitalise empty shops between the Junction and Bell St on Plenty Rd.	Advocacy for battery storage and use.	Opportunities for business growth and enterprise	Diversity of residence and culture is a strength of the area.
Council advocacy for revitalising main streets.	Council assisting businesses with local employment and training.	Cross marketing between businesses	-
Using Preston Centra to help make Preston the multicultural capitol of Melbourne.	Manufacturing support.	Communicating directly to businesses rather than through landlords	-

Place and precinct	Local business sustainability	Investment attraction and facilitation	Creativity, culture and diversity
Business networking and events	Encouraging green businesses.	Developing prospectus for precincts to highlight the differences across Darebin.	-
-	Support from Council navigating permit processes.	-	-
-	Support for women in business.	-	-

**Table 5: Issues identified by theme of economic development**

Place and precinct	Local business sustainability	Investment attraction and facilitation	Creativity, culture and diversity
Cost of removing damage to exterior signage	Awareness of local businesses among the local community	Reducing red tape for small businesses including permits and starting businesses	Language and cultural barriers for small businesses (communication)
Poor amenity due to sound	Technical advice and support	Interstate visitors have plateaued in numbers	Cost of living
Strict laws about making noise and street activity	Shortage of trade support	International visitors are down in numbers, local visitors are down in numbers	-

Place and precinct	Local business sustainability	Investment attraction and facilitation	Creativity, culture and diversity
Tax incentives for commercial buildings owners where it is more beneficial to leave buildings vacant rather than renting.	Lack of training and experience	Ability to promote businesses and offerings.	-
Planning pressures to put housing in commercial areas, meaning areas of activity centres are being lost forever.	Continued rental increases.	-	-
Minimum car parking requirements	Cost of doing business (eg. rates, insurance, work cover, cyber security, human resources, attracting and keeping staff).	-	-
Graffiti and street amenity (rubbish dumping, e-scooters and bikes on footpaths)	Gender gap in Darebin.	-	-
Construction problems with new High St tram stops.	Lack of local professional staff.	-	-
Shop vacancies	-	-	-
Safety	-	-	-
Lack of local community hubs.	-	-	-

Place and precinct	Local business sustainability	Investment attraction and facilitation	Creativity, culture and diversity
Making spaces more attractive at Preston Central			

**Priority areas**

Participants chose which theme of economic development they wished to explore further and the group split across two key themes of 'Place and precinct' and 'Local business sustainability'.

*Place and precinct***Top 3 priority areas and Council's role:**

1. Business networking and events

*Council's identified role: Facilitator and provider.*

2. Ease of activation and events

*Council's identified role: Regulator and advocate.*

3. Street and activity centre revitalisation

Council's identified role: Facilitator, regulator, partner and advocate.

**Top 3 high impact projects identified:**

1. Developing a business directory and live communications platform.
2. Advocating for live music and events.
3. Linking businesses and groups with Council spaces.

*Local business sustainability***Top 3 priority areas and Council's role:**

1. Awareness of local businesses

*Council's identified role: Facilitator and provider and advocate.*

2. Costs of doing business

*Council's identified role: Facilitator, provider and advocate*

3. Environmental

*Council's identified role: Facilitator and provider and advocate.*

**Top 3 high impact projects identified:**

1. Facilitation of business networking.
2. Improving local procurement policies.
3. Implementing a compost provision for businesses.

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**9.4 FAMILIES, YOUTH AND CHILDREN STRATEGY - REPORT  
BACK FROM STAGE 2 ENGAGEMENT AND PROPOSED  
FINAL STRATEGY**

**Author:** Planning and Project Officer

**Reviewed By:** General Manager Community

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report presents feedback from the stage 2 community engagement on the Families, Youth and Children Strategy, and the proposed final draft of the Strategy for consideration and adoption.

The development of a Families, Youth and Children Strategy is an action in the 2021-2025 Council Plan. A draft Strategy was endorsed by Council in May to go to Stage 2 engagement, and feedback from the community and stakeholders has been incorporated into an updated draft (**provided at Appendix A**).

The proposed Families, Youth and Children Strategy has been developed with input from more than 1000 community members and stakeholders through an extensive, two-stage community engagement process. Feedback during Stage 2 engagement was generally very positive, but also included many constructive suggestions which have been incorporated into an updated draft.

The proposed Strategy is intended to present a high-level framework for action by Council and partners on a set of strategic aims across five action areas, underpinned by four guiding principles.

Following adoption of the Strategy, Council and partners will continue to collaborate on the development of an initial Council and Partner Action Plan.

<b>Officer Recommendation</b>
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**That Council:**

- (1) Endorses the proposed final Families, Youth and Children Strategy at **Appendix A** and delegates to the CEO the ability to make minor editorial amendments that do not materially alter the Strategy to finalise its publication.
- (2) Notes the Families, Youth and Children Strategy Stage 2 community engagement summary report at **Appendix B** and thanks the community and stakeholders for providing valuable feedback during Stage 2 community engagement.
- (3) Thanks, the Families, Youth and Children Strategy Reference Group and the Young Citizen's Jury for their invaluable guidance and contribution at each stage of the development of this project.
- (4) Notes that following adoption of the Families, Youth and Children Strategy, public facing versions of the document will be developed for dissemination across the community, including a child-friendly version of the document.
- (5) Notes that following adoption of the Families, Youth and Children Strategy, Council and partners will continue their ongoing collaborative work to develop the first Council and Partner Collective Action Plan to implement the Strategy. This Action Plan will be brought back to Council for consideration and approval in due course.

## BACKGROUND / KEY INFORMATION

The development of an integrated Families Youth and Children Strategy is a strategic action in the 2021-25 Council Plan (action number 2-11). The Strategy will replace the previous Early Years Strategy 2011-21 and the Youth Services Strategy 2019-21 with the aim of supporting Council and partners to adopt an integrated, long-term, and strategic approach to improving outcomes for children and young people from 0-25 years and their families.

The Strategy is intended to be a partnership document that is jointly owned by Council and partners. Throughout the development of the Strategy, Council has articulated a strong commitment to strengthening collaboration, which has been well received by partners who have shown significant enthusiasm for working together on the priorities outlined in the Strategy. The Strategy is subtitled 'A Framework for Collective Action' to emphasize that its purpose is to support a collective response to the needs of children, young people and families in Darebin.

Council received a report on the Families, Youth and Children Strategy on 27 May 2024 and approved the plan for Stage 2 community engagement on the draft Strategy. As previously reported to Council, the first draft of the Strategy was the product of an extensive Stage 1 community engagement process that included engagement with over 650 community members including children and young people, and more than 100 stakeholders from approximately 50 different organisations.

From 29 May to 23 June 2024, Council invited the community and stakeholders to provide feedback on the draft strategy. Overall, the feedback on the draft Strategy was highly positive, with high levels of support for the themes, focus areas and aims from the community and stakeholders. Constructive feedback provided through the process has led to a number of changes being made in the revised strategy, which are discussed below.

### Previous Council Resolution

At its meeting held on 27 May 2024, Council resolved:

*'That Council*

- (1) Endorses community engagement on the draft Families, Youth and Children Strategy – A Framework for Action at Appendix A.*
- (2) Approves release of the Stage 1 Community Engagement Summary at Appendix B.*
- (3) Thanks the community and stakeholders for providing valuable feedback during Stage 1 community engagement.*
- (4) Notes the Young Citizens Jury's "Our Vision" at Appendix C and thanks the Young Citizens Jury for preparing this report.'*

### ALIGNMENT TO 2041 DAREBIN COMMUNITY VISION

Strategic Direction 2: Prosperous, Liveable and Flourishing

### ALIGNMENT TO 2021-25 COUNCIL PLAN

Strategic Direction 2: Prosperous, Liveable and Flourishing

### ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

2.1 We will deliver equitable and accessible infrastructure to provide opportunities for our community to live well

The development of an integrated Families Youth and Children Strategy is a strategic action in the 2021-25 Council Plan sitting under Strategic Objective 2.1.

**DISCUSSION**

Feedback received during Stage 2 engagement on the Families, Youth and Children has led to a number of changes throughout the document, that seek to improve the accessibility and coherence of the document as well as to strengthen the focus on certain areas.

The most significant change is a structural change with the introduction of a set of *‘guiding principles’* to sit alongside the *‘action areas’* of the strategy. The initial draft strategy included seven *‘themes’*. All of these themes have been retained in the revised draft, with five of the themes being renamed as action areas, and two becoming guiding principles alongside a further two additional guiding principles. The guiding principles represent critical underpinnings of the work that need to be embedded into action across each of the five action areas. To avoid overlap in terminology, the term *‘priorities’* has been adopted to replace the term *‘focus areas’* within each of the action areas.

Initial Draft	Revised Draft
Themes 1. Essentials for life 2. Inclusion & belonging 3. Health & wellbeing 4. Safety & independence 5. Learning 6. Community leadership 7. Systems of support	Guiding Principles 1. Community leadership 2. A collaborative and responsive support system 3. Cultural safety 4. Equity  Action Areas 1. Essentials for life 2. Inclusion & belonging 3. Health & wellbeing 4. Safety & independence 5. Learning

These changes were made in response to community and stakeholder feedback including the following key points that:

- Cultural safety was an important consideration across all of the themes, not just the ‘Safety & independence’ theme where it was previously located.
- Equity was a critical consideration across all themes.
- The ‘community leadership’ and ‘systems of support’ themes were cross-cutting themes with relevance across each of the other five themes.

The *Principles for Collaboration and Action* that were included in the initial draft have been retained in the draft, with some amendments made in response to stakeholder feedback. These sit as guidelines for collaboration, in line with the guiding principle of ‘a collaborative and responsive support system’.

With these changes, the updated version of the strategy now includes a one-page snapshot of the key elements of the Strategy (on page 7 of the draft), which is reproduced below.

Guiding Principles				
<p><b>Community Leadership</b></p> <p>Supporting youth and community leadership.</p> <p>Valuing lived experience and centering the voices of children, young people and families.</p> <p>Authentic and meaningful community engagement.</p>	<p><b>A collaborative and responsive support system</b></p> <p>Accessible and engaging services.</p> <p>Connected and responsive services.</p> <p>Collaboration across the system.</p> <p>Collaborative advocacy for broader systems and policy change.</p>	<p><b>Cultural safety</b></p> <p>Establishing cultural safety and security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, and families across all services and settings.</p>	<p><b>Equity</b></p> <p>Reducing discrimination, disadvantage and the inequitable distribution of resources to improve outcomes for all children, young people and families.</p> <p>Ensuring equitable access to services, supports and resources.</p> <p>Understanding, respecting and responding to diverse needs through an intersectional approach.</p>	
Action Areas				
<p><b>Essentials for life</b></p> <p>Supporting all children, young people and families to have their basic needs met, particularly those experiencing poverty and facing cost of living pressures.</p> <p>Supporting young people to access secure and rewarding employment and career pathways.</p>	<p><b>Inclusion &amp; belonging</b></p> <p>Making Darebin a community where everyone feels included, valued and connected.</p> <p>Welcoming and inclusive places and services for all.</p> <p>Opportunities to participate and connect.</p>	<p><b>Health &amp; wellbeing</b></p> <p>Supporting physical activity for health, wellbeing and connection.</p> <p>Improving mental health and wellbeing and strengthening mental health supports.</p> <p>Connection to nature and access to thriving natural environments that support wellbeing.</p> <p>Affordable and accessible health services and supports.</p>	<p><b>Safety &amp; independence</b></p> <p>Physical, cultural, emotional and psychological safety in all settings and services.</p> <p>Safe streets and public spaces for all children, young people and families.</p> <p>Preventing family violence and keeping children safe from abuse and harm.</p> <p>Respecting and supporting young people's independence, self-determination and right to make choices</p>	<p><b>Learning</b></p> <p>Ensuring access to inclusive, safe, supportive and high-quality learning opportunities for all.</p> <p>Increasing participation and engagement in learning across the lifespan.</p> <p>Supporting children and young people through their education journeys including through critical transition points.</p> <p>Preparing children and young people for the future.</p>

			and take risks in order to learn, grow and build resilience.	
Principles for Collaboration and Action				
Listening and learning, relationships, trust.	Sharing power and resources.	Aligning our efforts, staying adaptable.	Taking action, being courageous.	

In addition to the introduction of four guiding principles to guide work across all action areas, other changes have been made in response to Stage 2 engagement feedback within the ‘priorities’ and ‘aims’ sections of the action areas. Most of these changes involved tightening of the language, clarifying the focus or combining points that were overlapping to create a more succinct and impactful set of priorities and aims. Some of the more substantial changes across the action areas are summarised in the table below:

Action area	Changes
Essentials for life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial literacy and life skills moved from this action area to the ‘Learning’ action area.</li> <li>New aim related to affordable housing: ‘Darebin has strong partnerships and advocacy to improve access to affordable housing for young people and families in our community’.</li> </ul>
Inclusion & belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No significant changes</li> </ul>
Health & wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active transport separated from physical activity and moved to ‘Safety &amp; independence’ action area.</li> <li>New priority added: ‘Affordable and accessible health services and supports’.</li> <li>Stronger focus on promotion of mental health and wellbeing.</li> </ul>
Safety & independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explicit inclusion of ‘preventing violence against women and keeping children safe from abuse and harm’ as a priority.</li> <li>Addition of a priority and aims focused on respecting and supporting young people’s independence and self-determination in response to strong feedback from young people on this topic.</li> </ul>
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stronger focus on learning across the lifespan.</li> <li>Supporting children and young people through their education journeys and transitions added as a priority.</li> </ul>

## CONSIDERATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (2020) PRINCIPLES

### Financial Management

There are no specific actions or commitments or direct financial implications from this strategy at this stage.

Our expectation is that many of the actions that Council would contribute to would be delivered within existing budget allocations (e.g. through the focusing of youth services programs budget on relevant programs that respond to the focus areas). Any actions that require allocation of additional Council resources would be referred to the 2025-26 budget cycle for consideration as part of Council’s budget process.

## Community Engagement

More than 800 community members and stakeholders participated in the Stage 1 community engagement processes that were reported to Council on 26 May 2024.

Stage 2 community engagement on the draft strategy ran from 29 May to 23 June 2024. Community and stakeholders were invited to provide feedback on the themes, focus areas and aims in the draft strategy, as well as the principles for collaboration and action (stakeholders only).

Over 300 people engaged through the Stage 2 process including through the following activities:

- Online survey on the draft themes, focus areas and aims of the strategy. Promoted through Council communications and tailored invitations to special interest groups.
- Workshops with over 200 children and young people at 5 primary and 2 secondary schools.
- In-person with 45 parents and grandparents at community events and services.
- A second Youth Roundtable with 10 youth leaders
- A second Stakeholder Summit with 55 partners and stakeholders.
- A workshop with the Best Start Aboriginal Reference Group.

A detailed report on the Stage 2 engagement process is attached at **Appendix B**.

## Other Principles for consideration

### Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles

- (d) the municipal community is to be engaged in strategic planning and strategic decision making;

As discussed above the local community has been extensively engaged in the development of this Strategy, in line with this principle.

### Strategic Planning Principles

- (b) strategic planning must address the Community Vision;

The draft Strategy aligns with and has been informed by the Darebin 2041 Community Vision.

## COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

### Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)

Whilst not being a major focus within the Families, Youth and Children Strategy, the Climate Emergency and other sustainability considerations are important contextual factors impacting on the lives of children, young people and families. Environmental considerations are most explicitly addressed within the 'Health & Wellbeing' action area which includes a focus on 'Connection to nature and access to thriving natural environments that support wellbeing'.

**Equity, Inclusion, Wellbeing and Human Rights Considerations:**

Equity, inclusion, wellbeing and human rights are fundamental considerations in the Families, Youth and Children Strategy. This is reflected in the guiding principles of Equity and Cultural Safety which had been added to the strategy following the most recent stage of community engagement. These guiding principles embed equity, inclusion and cultural safety across all action areas of the strategy. These considerations are also reflected strongly in the Action Areas, in particular Essentials for Life, Inclusion & Belonging and Health & Wellbeing.

An Equity Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed to inform the development of the Community Engagement Plan and overall project plan. The EIA informed the engagement approach, questions, language, and methods, which were designed to ensure that the engagement was inclusive, accessible, and relevant across Darebin's diverse community.

Many internal and external stakeholders provided feedback on Equity, Inclusion, Wellbeing and Human Rights considerations through the Stage 2 engagement process including members of the Equity and Wellbeing team and the Best Start Aboriginal Reference Group. The Equity and Diversity Team provided feedback on the updated draft strategy.

**Economic Development and Cultural Considerations**

Employment and career opportunities are a particular concern for young people, which is reflected in the Strategy's 'Essentials for Life' action area which includes a focus on 'Supporting young people to access secure and rewarding employment and career pathways'. The opportunity to link this to Council's Economic Development Strategy will be explored in the development of the Action Plan.

**Operational Impacts**

There are no operational impacts at this stage.

**Legal and Risk Implications**

No legal or risk implications have been identified at this stage.

**IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS**

Following adoption, work will continue with stakeholders to develop the first Council and Partner Collective Action Plan.

**Communication**

A detailed communications plan will be developed to communicate the Strategy to the community and stakeholders once the Strategy is adopted by Council. Two key elements of the communication of the Strategy will be:

- Design of an engaging public facing version of the Strategy that is attractive and user friendly for the community and stakeholders, including young people.
- Development of a child-friendly version of the Strategy to enable communication of the Strategy to children, particularly primary school children who contributed significantly to the development of the Strategy in both Stage 1 and Stage 2 community engagement.



**Timeline**

- Development of public facing versions of the Strategy – September to November 2024
- Development of Council and Partner Action Plan – September to December 2024

**RELATED DOCUMENTS**

The Strategy is informed by and intersects with many existing Council strategy and policy documents which are listed in the policy context section of the draft strategy.

**Attachments**

- FYC Strategy - Final Draft for Adoption.pdf (**Appendix A**) [↓](#) 
- FYC Strategy Stage 2 Community Engagement Report.pdf (**Appendix B**) [↓](#) 

**DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST**

Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires members of Council staff and persons engaged under contract to provide advice to Council to disclose any conflicts of interest in a matter to which the advice relates.

The Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.





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# Darebin Families, Youth and Children Strategy: A Framework for Collective Action

**FINAL DRAFT FOR ADOPTION**

**August 2024**

Darebin Families, Youth and Children Strategy – Final Draft for Adoption August 2024

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## Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in Darebin

Darebin City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land we now call Darebin and pays respect to their Elders, past, present, and emerging.

We pay respect to all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Darebin.

We recognise, and pay tribute to, the diverse culture, resilience, and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We acknowledge the leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and support their right to self-determination.

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## Thankyous

This strategy was developed with the support of many people.

Council would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the development of this strategy including:

- The 850+ children, young people and adults who participated in stage 1 and stage 2 community engagement.
- The Strategy Reference group representatives from Your Community Health, Merri Outreach Support Service, Darebin Information, Volunteer & Resource Service (DIVRS), Anglicare, the Inner North Local Learning & Employment Network and the Darebin Young Citizens Jury.
- The Darebin Young Citizens Jury for their input at multiple stages of the strategy process including Raf, Max and Thomas for writing the Jury's foreword to the Strategy.
- All the young people who participated in the Youth Roundtables and Jury members Max, Hunter and Sakshi for co-designing and co-hosting the Roundtables.
- The 50+ partner organisations who participated in the Stakeholder summits and other stakeholder discussions.
- 'Sensemaking Team' members from Bridge Darebin, Victoria Police, Westgarth Primary School OSHC and Anglicare.
- Geoff Brown from Tangent Consulting and Chelsey Cooper from Hatrick & Co for designing and facilitating the Stakeholder Summits and Youth Roundtables, and support with sensemaking.
- Dr Robyn Cochrane from Cochrane Research Solutions for background research.

## Forewords

### Foreword from the Mayor

The Families, Youth and Children Strategy is a vitally important strategy for Council and our partners. The Strategy provides the foundations and directions for powerful and effective collaboration between Council, our partners and the community to improve outcomes for all children, young people and their families in Darebin.

I was delighted to have the opportunity to participate in the process of developing this strategy alongside inspirational young people and dedicated professionals who are working hard every day to deliver great outcomes for children, young people and families in Darebin. It was a privilege to see the passion that everyone who works in this area has for this vital work.

This Strategy seeks to build on that passion and dedication, by providing a framework and platform for transformation and continuous improvement in how we work together and how we respond to the needs of our community.

We know that many children, young people and families in Darebin are facing challenges. We also know that the Darebin community has fantastic strengths and tremendous resilience.

In developing this Strategy, we heard from more than 1000 children, young people, parents, guardians, grandparents, other family members and stakeholders. We heard about what makes life hard for children, young people and families in Darebin, what's working well and where people need support.

The Guiding Principles and Action Areas in this Strategy respond directly to what we have heard from the community and stakeholders, outlining a plan to:

- Ensure children, young people and families have their basic needs met,
- Make Darebin a place where everyone belongs and can find their people,
- Support good mental health and wellbeing,
- Create safe environments for children, young people and families that also support young people's independence,
- Support learning and growth through formal and informal education.

Action in all these areas will be underpinned by the guiding principles of community leadership, cultural safety, equity and a collaborative and responsive support system.

This is an aspirational strategy, underpinned by a belief that by working together we can deliver transformational change for children, young people and families in Darebin.

**Cr. Susanne Newton**  
**Mayor**

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### Foreword from the Young Citizens Jury

The youth jury is a group of young people who meet to advise council on community issues from a youth perspective. We have been closely engaged in every stage of strategy development, by co-designing and facilitating youth engagement, collaborating with council officers, and reviewing and providing feedback on drafts.

We believe that youth voice was crucial for the development of the strategy, and we felt that our voices and the voices of other young people engaged in the process were listened to and valued. Throughout the youth engagement process we appreciated the diversity and range of voices that we encountered, and that we hope are reflected in the final strategy document. This is an incredibly difficult time for young people, and we feel that the strategy reflects youth concerns around cost of living, lack of access to mental health supports, employment and housing struggles.

We believe in this strategy and look forward to seeing the impact it will have for young people in the Darebin community. We call on Council and related organisations to continue engaging young people in decision making processes, valuing youth voice and creating meaningful action for Darebin's young people.

*“With the foundation of this strategy and continued youth engagement, outcomes for Darebin’s young people will be better.” – Raf*

*“I feel that I can see my fingerprints and the input of my peers in this document. We shaped this strategy, now it’s up to you to action it!” – Max*

*“I believe the work that the youth jury has done on the strategy has been vitally important and I hope that young people who read the plan or experience its impacts can see how powerful youth voices can be. Through this, I want young people to feel empowered to have input on issues that affect them and their communities”. – Thomas*

### Foreword from the Families, Youth & Children Strategy Reference Group

The Families, Youth and Children Strategy Reference Group formed in early 2024 to support the development of this partnership Strategy. We represent a sample of the hundreds of organisations from a diverse range of sectors that support children, young people and families in Darebin.

The stakeholder engagement process for this Strategy brought together representatives from many of these sectors including schools, early childhood education and care, health, employment, welfare, homelessness, Neighbourhood Houses, police, philanthropy, community groups, family services, youth services, drug and alcohol, mental health, family violence and many more. Importantly, young people were also represented on the Reference Group and in the stakeholder discussions.

Throughout this process we saw the power of people with diverse perspectives coming together in good faith to share ideas, listen to each other and collaborate to develop solutions to complex problems. We are pleased to see the perspectives of many different partners represented in the Strategy.

Collaboration is a strength of Darebin’s Families, Youth and Children sector, and, now more than ever, collaboration is essential to address the issues that impact the lives of children, young people and families in Darebin. We believe that this Strategy will further strengthen our ability to collaborate on the most important issues for children, young people and their families. We are looking forward to continuing this journey as we move into the next phase of action planning and delivery.

Snapshot of this strategy

<b>Guiding Principles</b>				
<p><b>Community Leadership</b> Supporting youth and community leadership.</p> <p>Valuing lived experience and centering the voices of children, young people and families.</p> <p>Authentic and meaningful community engagement.</p>	<p><b>A collaborative and responsive support system</b> Accessible and engaging services.</p> <p>Connected and responsive services.</p> <p>Collaboration across the system.</p> <p>Collaborative advocacy for broader systems and policy change.</p>	<p><b>Cultural safety</b> Establishing cultural safety and security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, and families across all services and settings.</p>	<p><b>Equity</b> Reducing discrimination, disadvantage and the inequitable distribution of resources to improve outcomes for all children, young people and families.</p> <p>Ensuring equitable access to services, supports and resources.</p> <p>Understanding, respecting and responding to diverse needs through an intersectional approach.</p>	
<b>Action Areas</b>				
<p><b>Essentials for life</b> Supporting all children, young people and families to have their basic needs met, particularly those experiencing poverty and facing cost of living pressures.</p> <p>Supporting young people to access secure and rewarding employment and career pathways.</p>	<p><b>Inclusion &amp; belonging</b> Making Darebin a community where everyone feels included, valued and connected.</p> <p>Welcoming and inclusive places and services for all.</p> <p>Opportunities to participate and connect.</p>	<p><b>Health &amp; wellbeing</b> Supporting physical activity for health, wellbeing and connection.</p> <p>Improving mental health and wellbeing, and strengthening mental health supports.</p> <p>Connection to nature and access to thriving natural environments that support wellbeing.</p> <p>Affordable and accessible health services and supports.</p>	<p><b>Safety &amp; independence</b> Physical, cultural, emotional and psychological safety in all settings and services.</p> <p>Safe streets and public spaces for all children, young people and families.</p> <p>Preventing family violence and keeping children safe from abuse and harm.</p> <p>Respecting and supporting young people’s independence, self-determination</p>	<p><b>Learning</b> Ensuring access to inclusive, safe, supportive and high-quality learning opportunities for all.</p> <p>Increasing active participation and engagement in learning across the lifespan.</p> <p>Supporting children and young people through their education journeys including through critical transition points.</p> <p>Preparing children and</p>

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			and right to make choices and take risks in order to learn, grow and build resilience.	young people for the future.
<b>Principles for Collaboration and Action</b>				
Listening and learning, relationships, trust.	Sharing power and resources.	Aligning our efforts, staying adaptable.	Taking action, being courageous.	



## Introduction

This Families, Youth & Children Strategy aims to enable Council and partners to take an integrated, long-term, and strategic approach to improving outcomes for children and young people aged 0-25 and their families.

Nearly 30% of Darebin residents are aged between 0 to 25 (an estimated 44,099 people in 2024), and the number of children and young people is forecast to increase over the next twenty years as the Darebin population grows.

Supporting the health, wellbeing, care and education of children and young people in Darebin is a vital priority for Council and our community. Childhood and youth are critical times in life. The experiences that people have from birth through to 25 have profound and lasting effects on their health, wellbeing and life chances. By creating the social and environmental conditions for children and young people in Darebin to thrive, we can give all children and young people the best chance of health and wellbeing throughout life. This includes tackling systemic and structural inequalities and barriers. If we fail to do this, we put children and young people at risk of serious negative consequences over the course of their lives.

Council's aim is that this strategy will provide a platform for powerful and effective collaboration to improve outcomes for all children, young people and their families in Darebin. The strategy has been developed through engagement and collaboration processes that have involved more than 1000 children, young people and adults from across the Darebin community, including representatives from more than 50 organisations who all have a stake in improving outcomes for children, young people and families. We hope that the strategy will provide a framework for action that supports Council, community and a wide range of partners to work together to leverage the strengths in our community and address the challenges that impact the lives of children, young people and families.

This strategy focuses on the 0-25 age group, in recognition of the fact that many of the factors that children and young people need to thrive are consistent throughout childhood and into young adulthood. Whilst children, young people and families have specific needs at various stages of development from conception through infancy, early childhood, the middle years, the teenage years and young adulthood, many of the fundamentals are consistent, such as the need to be loved and safe, material basics such as housing and food, being healthy, learning, participating, and having a positive sense of identity and culture. By developing a strategy that cuts across the age cohorts from 0-25 we aim to ensure that no age cohort is neglected, and to facilitate greater collaboration and integration across organisations and groups that work with specific age cohorts so that everyone receives the support they need throughout their first 25 years of life.

## The Strategy in Practice

This Strategy is a starting point for action improve outcomes for Darebin’s children, young people and families. It is intended to guide Council and our partners as we develop collaborative responses to the action areas and priorities.

This Strategy is a snapshot of the issues and priorities that community and stakeholders have identified as being most important for children, young people and families at a particular moment in time. We recognise that these issues and priorities will change over time, and our responses will need to change as this happens.

The Guiding Principles outline essential considerations that need to be addressed across all of the Action Areas of the Strategy. Our Principles for Collaboration and Action outline how Council and partners will work together flexibly and responsively, underpinned by a commitment to listening, learning, sharing and holding each other accountable.

This Strategy is a reference and a tool which we will use in our collaboration going forward to:

- Align action towards the issues that are most significant for children, young people and families,
- Develop Action Plans to guide the actions that Council and partners will take to deliver on the aims outlined in this strategy,
- Hold ourselves collectively account to deliver on the priorities that the community has identified,
- Advocate for action by others where they are in a position to influence change,
- Extend and strengthen our collaboration, bringing in new partners who can help us address the action areas and priorities.

## Next Steps: from Strategy to Action

An initial two-year Action Plan will be developed to accompany this Strategy. This first Action Plan will outline the key actions that Council and partners will take to work towards the aims outlined for each action area in this Strategy.

The Action Plan will be developed collaboratively with the partners and stakeholders who have helped develop this Strategy, including young people and community members. It will include actions, measures of progress, timeframes and responsibilities for leadership and contribution to each action. The Principles of Collaboration and Action outlined in this Strategy will guide the development and delivery of the Action Plan as a shared responsibility amongst Council and partners.

In line with the principles of holding ourselves accountable to get things done and valuing learning, monitoring and evaluation of progress will be critical to ensure that we stay focused on the issues that are important to children, young people and families in Darebin and track progress on our aims. The monitoring and evaluation of progress will be an ongoing process, with progress reported annually to Council and the community.

### Guiding Principles

Four guiding principles have been identified as critical underpinnings of our work to improve outcomes for children and young people from 0 to 25 and their families. These guiding principles emerged from the engagement discussions with community and stakeholders as key areas of focus across each of the five themes in the strategy. They will be used as a guiding reference point for all the actions that flow from this strategy.

<b>Community leadership</b>	<b>A collaborative and responsive support system</b>	<b>Cultural safety</b>	<b>Equity</b>
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Community Leadership	
Core focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting youth and community leadership.</li> <li>Valuing lived experience and centering the voices of children, young people and families.</li> <li>Authentic and meaningful community engagement.</li> </ul>
Why is this important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaging authentically and meaningfully with the community, and placing a high value on the voices of lived experience, are essential to delivering on all aspects of this strategy.</li> <li>Authentic engagement builds trust, improves the strategic responses to the community's needs, creates belonging and ownership, and improves accountability.</li> <li>For children and young people, having a voice, being listened to, and taken seriously within their community is crucial to feeling that they are full and valued members of the community.</li> <li>Young people have made it clear that they want to have influence over the decisions that impact their lives and they want the chance to lead.</li> </ul>
What we've heard from community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people want to have a say over the issues impacting them, they want to be involved in all stages of strategy development and decision making and they want the chance to lead.</li> <li>Many adults also put significant effort into facilitating opportunities for children to participate in the development of this strategy, suggesting that many adults recognise the importance of children having a say.</li> </ul>
What this looks like in practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children and young people are empowered and supported to lead and to take action on the issues that are important to them.</li> <li>The voices of children, young people and families are embedded and influential in decision-making and co-design processes in Council and other organisations.</li> <li>Children, young people and families who engage with Council and other organisations feel respected, listened to, valued and taken seriously.</li> <li>Peer support models, peer leadership and lived experience advocacy are strengthened.</li> </ul>

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A collaborative and responsive support system	
Core focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible and engaging services.</li> <li>• Connected and responsive services.</li> <li>• Collaboration across the system.</li> <li>• Collaborative advocacy for broader systems and policy change.</li> </ul>
Why is this important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many of the priorities across this strategy require a service response to ensure that children, young people and families get the support they need when they need it, regardless of socioeconomic status, disability, cultural or religious background, gender, sexuality, neurodiversity or other factors.</li> <li>• To meet the needs of children, young people and families, services need to be high quality, accessible, affordable, available when needed, safe, welcoming, and inclusive.</li> <li>• Collaboration is essential to improving outcomes for children, young people from 0 to 25 and their families. Stakeholders have identified that services need to be more connected and operate collaboratively as a system to ensure that children, young people and families are supported to navigate the system and find the supports they need.</li> <li>• Responsive service systems that intervene early can help address challenges for children, young people and families at an earlier stage to reduce harm and promote better outcomes over the long-term.</li> <li>• Research on the key aspects of service systems for supporting children and families shows that children and families benefit when access to key services is simplified by integrating services and supports across different sectors.</li> </ul>
What we've heard from community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The community wants accessible and affordable services to be available to all children, young people and families across Darebin.</li> <li>• Services want to collaborate to improve their ability to meet the needs of the community.</li> </ul>
What this looks like in practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A more connected and integrated service system in which there is no wrong door – wherever someone goes they'll get the help they need. A system that provides timely support when people need it.</li> <li>• Better communication so the community and services know what help is available and how to access it.</li> <li>• A more responsive system that is aware of the community's needs and intervenes early to improve outcomes. A system that proactively works to reach out and engage children, young people and families at risk of poor outcomes.</li> <li>• Stakeholders and community work in partnership to advocate for changes in social and political systems that are beyond our direct influence.</li> <li>• Integrated 'wrap-around' services are available to those who need them.</li> <li>• All services for children, young people and families achieve high standards for quality and clinical governance.</li> <li>• Collaboration is prioritised, resourced and guided by our <a href="#">shared principles for collaboration and action</a>.</li> </ul>

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Cultural Safety	
Core focus	Establishing cultural safety and security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, and families across all services and settings.
Why is this important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a positive sense of identity and culture is central to the wellbeing of all children, young people and families. This is important for all, regardless of background, but in Australia, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.</li> <li>• SNAICC describes cultural safety as ‘the positive recognition and celebration of cultures. It is more than just the absence of racism or discrimination and more than ‘cultural awareness’ and ‘cultural sensitivity’. It empowers people and enables them to contribute and feel safe to be themselves’.</li> <li>• SNAICC defines cultural safety for Aboriginal children as ‘the child being provided with a safe, nurturing and positive environment where they are comfortable with being themselves, expressing their culture... their spiritual and belief systems, and they are supported by the carer... (who) respects their Aboriginality and therefore encourages their sense of self and identity.</li> <li>• Organisations and services need to give sustained attention to ensuring that cultural safety is created and consistently applied across all settings. This is essential to address the racism and discrimination that still exists across service systems.</li> </ul>
What we’ve heard from community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholders have been clear that cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families is an essential underpinning for all themes within this strategy.</li> <li>• Stakeholders raised concerns that cultural awareness and cultural safety is not widespread and embedded in mainstream organisations.</li> <li>• Stakeholders told us that cultural safety needs to be meaningful and authentic. It is important to recognise that cultural safety cannot be a tick-box exercise or a one-off effort.</li> </ul>
What does this look like in practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All services in Darebin work towards achieving the highest level of cultural safety and security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, and families.</li> <li>• Cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, and families is embedded as a core priority across each of the themes of this strategy.</li> <li>• Awareness, support and capacity for cultural safety is raised across the Darebin community.</li> </ul>

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Equity	
Core focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reducing discrimination, disadvantage and the inequitable distribution of resources to improve outcomes for all children, young people and families.</li> <li>Ensuring equitable access to services, supports and resources.</li> <li>Understanding, respecting and responding to diverse needs through an intersectional approach.</li> </ul>
Why is this important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children and young people’s experiences and life chances are impacted by a wide range of factors including socioeconomic status, cultural background/identity, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, family structure, disability, neurodiversity, experiences of trauma and many other factors.</li> <li>Disadvantage, discrimination, marginalisation and inequitable access to resources and opportunities have a negative impact on the wellbeing, education and life chances of many children, young people and families in Darebin.</li> <li>An intersectional approach to understanding and responding to the needs of children, young people and families recognises that people’s lives and experiences are shaped and influenced by diversity – resulting in power and privilege in some cases and discrimination and oppression in others. People experience disadvantage and exclusion because their identity is made up of belonging to more than one group that experiences systemic and structural discrimination. While some people may have added layers of power and privilege, others experience compounding layers of discrimination.</li> <li>Council, our partners and our community have all expressed a belief that the inequalities experienced by children, young people and families across our community are unfair and should be reduced where it is possible to do so.</li> </ul>
What we’ve heard from community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerns about issues of equity and inclusion were a strong theme in community engagement and discussions with stakeholders. Issues raised include support for children and young people with additional needs due to disability, neurodivergence and experiences of trauma, addressing place-based disadvantage and inequalities across Darebin, and adopting inclusive approaches and language for all children, young people and families.</li> </ul>
What does this look like in practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Services and organisations that work with children, young people and families prioritise being welcoming, safe, inclusive, accessible and responsive for everyone including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culturally diverse communities, people with disabilities, neurodivergent people, LGBTQIA+ people, people who have experienced trauma and anyone else who may be marginalised or excluded.</li> <li>Services and organisations in Darebin proactively seek to reduce discrimination, disadvantage and the inequitable distribution of resources to improve outcomes for all children, young people and families.</li> <li>Services and organisations in Darebin understand and measure their impact on equity, discrimination and disadvantage across the community.</li> </ul>

## Principles for Collaboration and Action

Collaboration is essential to improving outcomes for children, young people from 0 to 25 and their families. Hundreds of organisations and groups from dozens of diverse sectors of society play a critical role in providing the services, supports and community infrastructure that enables children and young people to thrive. Collaboration that is grounded in relationships, networks and partnerships is now more important than ever.

A wide range of organisations from many sectors helped develop this strategy, including early childhood education and care, primary, secondary and tertiary education, health, employment, welfare, homelessness, Neighbourhood Houses, police, philanthropy, volunteer groups, family services, youth services, drug and alcohol, mental health, family violence and many more areas. Together we developed these principles to guide how we work together, how we communicate and the approaches to change that we will follow to deliver outcomes for families, youth and children across Darebin.

### **Listening and learning, relationships, trust**

1. We take action in partnership with our community, based on our commitment to listening, responding and championing community leadership.
2. We value learning, and work to create safe spaces to learn from each other and our community.
3. We value relationships, and work to build trust across our partnerships and with community.

### **Sharing power and resources**

4. We share information, resources and power across our partnerships and with our community to achieve our goals.

### **Aligning our efforts, staying adaptable**

5. We are flexible, dynamic and adaptable as the needs of our community change.
6. We work cohesively and holistically towards a shared vision and clear goals.

### **Taking action, being courageous**

7. We hold ourselves accountable to get things done, and report transparently to our community on our progress.
8. We have the courage to take risks, innovate and try different approaches across our partnership.

### Council’s Role

As the initiator of this strategy and convenor of the collaboration that brought this Strategy into being, Council has a key role to play in the Strategy’s delivery and in supporting children, young people and families across the work that Council does.

The five key roles of local government in supporting children and their families outlined by the Municipal Association of Victoria in their Municipal Early Years Planning Guide provide a useful framework for thinking about the roles that Council can play in supporting children, young people and families. These five roles align closely with the roles partners have said they want Council to play in progressing the focus areas of this strategy.

Five key roles outlined by the Municipal Association of Victoria	Roles partners have asked Council to play
<p><b>Planning and coordination</b> – acting as a key coordination point and community planner for services and activities that support children, young people, and their families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide platforms for collaboration and community action.</li> <li>• Facilitate connections and information sharing between services to improve service coordination and access.</li> <li>• Provide coordination and support to facilitate collaboration and action.</li> <li>• Data collection and analysis.</li> <li>• Provide funding to services, groups and programs for Families, Youth &amp; Children.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Service provision</b> – delivering a range of programs, activities, and initiatives for children, young people, and families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the ideas put forward by community and stakeholders</li> </ul>
<p><b>Facility planning</b> – planning, providing, and maintaining a range of infrastructure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain and improve buildings, facilities and parks.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Advocacy</b> – lobbying and advocating to state and federal governments and other key stakeholders on behalf of children, young people and their families, and the services that support them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for funding and support from other levels of government.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strengthening community capacity</b> – facilitating community connections and community participation in decision-making, including supporting children and young people’s role as active citizens.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genuine and meaningful engagement, listen to the community and stakeholders.</li> <li>• Provide platforms for collaboration and community action.</li> </ul>



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## Partners' Roles

Partner organisations who participated in the Stakeholder Summit in February 2024, articulated a set of key roles that they can play in improving outcomes for children young people and families in collaboration with Council and each other.

- Continued engagement in strategy development: raising issues and sharing information
- Holding Council and other partners to account.
- Supporting or providing inclusive services and spaces for all children and families.
- Building connections, sharing information and collaborating across sectors.
- Listening to young people, creating more space for their voices to be heard.
- Advocating for the needs of children, young people and families.
- Implementing agreed actions.

## A snapshot of children, young people and families in Darebin

**Source: 2021 census data**

**Children, young people and families comprise a significant proportion of the Darebin community and the numbers of children and young people are forecast to increase.**

- Around 26% of Darebin residents are children and young people aged from 0 to 24.
  - 5.3% (or 7,896) are aged 0 to 4 years (early years)
  - 6.9% (or 10,231) are aged 5 to 11 years (middle years)
  - 5.5% (or 8,229) are aged 12 to 17 years (teenagers)
  - 8.2% (or 12,160) are aged 18 to 24 years (young adults)
- In addition, 19.2% (or 28,587) of people in Darebin are aged 25 to 34 years and 23.0% (or 34,168) are aged 35 to 49 years, the age groups within which people are most likely to have children.
- Households with children comprise 35.2% of all households in Darebin. Of these, couples with children comprise 26.1% of households and single parents with children comprise 9.1% of all households. In 80.1% of single parent households the single parent is female.
- 577 people aged 0-24 in Darebin are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, which is around 40% of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Darebin.
- 11.4% of people aged 0-24 were born overseas. The 5 most common birthplaces outside of Australia for people aged 0-24 were: India (1.9% of people aged 0-24), China (1.3%), Nepal (0.9%), England (0.8%) and Vietnam (0.8%).
- 34.5% of people aged 0-24 had a mother who was born overseas. The five most common maternal birthplaces (excluding Australia) for persons aged 0 to 24 years in Darebin were China (3.9%), India (3.5%), Vietnam (3.2%), England (2.6%) and New Zealand (2.0%).
- 70.0% of Darebin residents aged 0-24 use only English at home. Of those residents aged 0-24 who use another language at home, the 5 most commonly used languages were: Greek (3.4%), Mandarin (3.2%), Arabic (2.8%), Vietnamese (2.2%), Italian (1.4%).
- 76.6% of persons aged 15 to 24 years were fully engaged with employment and education and 6.9% were disengaged, consistent with Greater Melbourne.
- 812 children and young people aged 0-19 needed assistance in their day-to-day lives due to disability.
- The number of children and young people in Darebin is forecast to grow over the next ten years at around the same rate as the growth of the total Darebin population. By 2031, forecasts suggest there will be 6,731 more 0-24 year olds than in 2021. 0-24 year olds are expected to make up 27% of the Darebin population in 2031 compared to 26% in 2021. (Population forecasts prepared by .id (informed decisions), June 2024).

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## How this Strategy was developed

### Stage 1 Community Engagement

We heard from over 650 children, young people and adults what's important to them and where they need support.

From 9 October to 26 November 2023, we asked the Darebin community four questions to help us understand what's important to children, young people and families.

1. **What are the most important things that children, young people and families need to have a good life?** What do you or your family need to be healthy, happy and to live a good life?
2. **What is working well for children, young people and families in Darebin right now?** What helps you or your family to be healthy, happy and reach your potential?
3. **What makes life hard for children, young people and families in Darebin right now?** What makes it hard for you or your family to be healthy, happy and reach your potential?
4. **What should Council and our partners focus on to help children, young people, and their families across our diverse community?** What are the things you would most like Council and our partners to do something about for you or your family?

For children, we adapted the questions and created an activity sheet that asked:

1. What makes you happy and healthy?
2. What do you like best about the area where you live?
3. What would you change to help all children in Darebin to be happy and healthy?

We also asked people to post on our engagement website their vision or big idea for what would make Darebin a great place for all children, young people and their families.

### Engagement activities

- Online & hard copy surveys for young people and adults.
- Engagement sessions with children and young people at six kindergarten & childcare services, six primary schools, three secondary schools and several community settings.
- Engagement through Council services including Youth Services, libraries, immunisation sessions, Toy Library.
- Engagement at shopping centres, markets, train stations & community events.
- Stakeholder meetings.

### Who did we hear from?

**262 young people and adults completed an online or hard copy survey** (71% online, 29% hard copy)

- Age: 30% 10-19, 4% 20-29, 29% 30-39, 24% 40-49, 5% 50-59, 2% 60+.
- Postcode: 26% Reservoir, 23% Preston, 17% Northcote, 10% Thornbury, 16% others.
- Connection to Darebin: 77% live, 18% work, 18% study, 10% visit.
- Gender: 65% woman, 27% man, 3% non-binary/gender diverse.
- 30% spoke a language other than English at home.
- 2% were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders.
- 8% reported having a disability.

### 387 children completed an activity sheet

- The children's ages ranged from 2 to 13 years old. 18% were aged 2-5 years, 38% were aged 6-9, 31% were aged 10-13, 13% of children did not give their age.

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## Stakeholder engagement

**Stakeholder meetings**

- Young Citizens Jury, Youth Workers Network, Darebin Education Network, Best Start Aboriginal Reference Group, Darebin Information, Volunteer & Resource Service, Dardi Munwurro, Aboriginal Housing Victoria, Melbourne Polytechnic Koorie Services Unit.

**Stakeholder Summit**

- 96 people from 46 organisations participated in a full-day Families, Youth & Children Stakeholder Summit in February 2024. This included representation from organisations that work across the child, youth and family spectrum including early years, middle years, teenagers, young adults and families. The summit was designed collaboratively with stakeholders through the Families, Youth & Children Reference Group. We invited participation from all levels within organisations - from strategic decision makers to frontline service delivery workers, as well as community members including young people.
- At the Summit stakeholders reviewed the feedback received from the community in the stage 1 community engagement, identified principles for collaboration, explored Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results to inform the Strategy and then developed proposed Strategic Focus Areas for the Strategy.

**Youth Roundtable**

- 14 young people participated in a half-day Youth Roundtable workshop in March 2024. The Roundtable was co-designed and co-hosted by members of the Young Citizens Jury.
- At the Roundtable young people developed a vision of a 'Future Perfect' Darebin that met all the needs of young people, mapped out the assets that currently support young people in Darebin, the things that are missing and identified their priority actions to improve Darebin for young people. They also reviewed the Strategic Focus Areas that stakeholders had identified at the Stakeholder Summit.

**Sensemaking Workshop**

- 13 people including representatives from six partners organisations, Darebin Young Citizens Jury members and Council officers participated in a facilitated sensemaking workshop to review outputs from the Stakeholder Summit and Youth Roundtable to synthesise the key principles and focus areas/themes for the Strategy.

**Young Citizens Jury: Our Vision**

- The Young Citizens Jury independently developed a document entitled 'Our Vision' which outlined their proposals for action on key priority areas identified at the Youth Roundtable.

## Stage 2 Community Engagement

From 29 May to 23 June 2024 we invited the community and stakeholders to provide feedback on a draft strategy and help us finalise this Strategy. This included the following activities:

- Online survey on the draft themes, focus areas and aims of the strategy. Promoted through Council communications and tailored invitations to special interest groups.
- Workshops with over 200 children and young people at 5 primary and 2 secondary schools.
- In-person with 45 parents and grandparents at community events and services.
- A second Youth Roundtable with 10 youth leaders
- A second Stakeholder Summit with 55 partners and stakeholders.
- A workshop with the Best Start Aboriginal Reference Group.

Action Areas

Essentials for life	Inclusion & belonging	Health & wellbeing	Safety & independence	Learning
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<p>Essentials for life</p> <p><b>Priorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting all children, young people and families to have their basic needs met, particularly those experiencing poverty and facing cost of living pressures.</li> <li>Supporting young people to access secure and rewarding employment and career pathways.</li> </ul> <p><b>Why is this important</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All children, young people and families need the material basics of life. This includes suitable, secure, stable housing, appropriate clothing, nutritious food, access to education, access to transport and services, enough money for all of life’s necessities and to be an active member of society.</li> <li>Many families and young people in Darebin are experiencing significant cost of living pressures, which can place significant stress on families and individuals. The number of people seeking material and financial support services is on the rise.</li> <li>Many other issues have an impact on a person or family’s ability to access the essentials for life, including physical or mental health issues, disability, experiences of trauma or violence. Family violence is a significant cause of homelessness.</li> </ul> <p><b>What we’ve heard from community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cost of living was an area of significant concern in community responses to our engagement survey. Community members noted that it puts pressure on families, and many described it as a crisis. This theme was particularly strong in the responses from young people and adults, but it was clear that many children are also aware of cost of living pressures.</li> <li>Housing was the most commonly mentioned cost of living pressure, but many other things were also mentioned including food, childcare (early years and out of school), petrol, rates, utilities and children’s activities.</li> <li>Employment opportunities, career prospects and rights at work are key issues for young people.</li> </ul> <p><b>Key data</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>76.6% of persons aged 15 to 24 years are fully engaged with employment and education. 12.8% of persons aged 15 to 24 were unemployed (1,232 people in total). (2021 census data)</li> <li>28.8% of households living in rented accommodation in Darebin (6,547 households in total) pay more than 30% of their income on rent, a commonly accepted indicator of rental stress. 14.2% of households with a mortgage (2,499 households in total) pay more than 30% of their income on their mortgage. (2021 census data). These figures are likely to have been impacted by interest rate rises since 2022.</li> </ul> <p><b>Aims</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supports with basic needs including child care, education, housing supports, food relief and financial supports are available and accessible when needed, including wrap-around supports for those who need them.</li> <li>Darebin has strong partnerships and advocacy to improve access to affordable housing for young people and families in our community.</li> <li>The causes of youth homelessness are addressed so that no young person ends up homeless.</li> <li>Young people understand their rights as workers and those rights are respected by employers.</li> </ul>
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- Young people are supported to identify and achieve their employment and career aspirations.
- Young people and families know what benefits and supports they are entitled to and are supported to access them.

<p><a href="#">Inclusion &amp; belonging</a></p>
<p><b>Priorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making Darebin a community where everyone feels included, valued and connected.</li> <li>• Welcoming and inclusive places and services for all.</li> <li>• Opportunities to participate and connect.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Why is this important</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connection and belonging are fundamental human needs. Having loving, trusting relationships with family and friends, and feeling valued and cared for by teachers and other adults in their life is one of the core needs for children and young people.</li> <li>• For all people, feeling like you belong to a community is vital for mental health and positive identity. It is particularly important for children and young people to feel this sense of belonging and connection in their lives as they develop their identity and transition through key life stages.</li> <li>• Feeling lonely, isolated or excluded is damaging to mental and physical health.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What we’ve heard from community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responses from children, young people and adults all suggest a strong recognition of the importance of relationships and community for supporting children, young people and families. Friendship and family were amongst the strongest themes from children’s responses to the question “what makes you healthy and happy?”.</li> <li>• Adults want children to feel supported and loved, and they want their children and themselves to feel part of a supported and connected community.</li> <li>• The community wants more opportunities for children, young people, parents and families to connect including through activities, events, support networks/groups, and spaces to connect.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key data</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2020, 17.5% of adults surveyed in Darebin said they talked to friends a few times a month or less often, compared to 18.3% across Victoria (Victorian Population Health Survey).</li> <li>• In 2020, 16.9% of adults surveyed in Darebin said that most people could be trusted ‘never’ or ‘not often’, compared to 14.2% across Victoria (Victorian Population Health Survey).</li> <li>• Across Australia 24% of young people aged 15-19 surveyed by Mission Australia in 2023 identified relationship challenges with family, friends or significant others as their biggest personal challenge (Mission Australia Youth Survey 2023).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Aims</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing places, spaces and activities that support connection for children, young people and families.</li> <li>• Working together to activate our places, spaces and services to create more opportunities for connection and belonging.</li> <li>• Making Darebin a community where everyone can find a group or community where they feel they belong, whatever their interests.</li> <li>• Places, spaces, activities and services that are safe, welcoming and inclusive for all children, young people and families, including neurodivergent people, LGBTQIA+ people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culturally diverse communities, people with disabilities and anyone else who may be marginalised or excluded.</li> <li>• Increased connection across generations and cultures – weaving the community together.</li> </ul>

<p><a href="#">Health &amp; wellbeing</a></p>
<p><b>Priorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting physical activity for health, wellbeing and connection.</li> <li>• Improving mental health and wellbeing and strengthening mental health supports.</li> <li>• Connection to nature and access to thriving natural environments that support wellbeing.</li> <li>• Affordable and accessible health services and supports.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Why is this important</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The mental health of children and young people is a major concern for young people and the community more broadly.</li> <li>• Mental health problems that emerge in childhood can have impacts across the life-course: it is estimated that about half of adult mental problems begin before the age of 14.</li> <li>• Suicide is the leading cause of death among Australians aged 15–24. Young people also have the highest rates of hospitalisation for intentional self-harm.</li> <li>• A wide range of issues can impact mental health including the pressures of navigating significant life transitions, social isolation, discrimination and social exclusion.</li> <li>• Protective factors include access to mental health care when required, social connection and connection with nature, community and land.</li> <li>• Access to high quality open space is also essential to support physical activity and wellbeing.</li> <li>• Health and wellbeing outcomes are unequal across different groups in our community. For example, there is evidence to indicate that people with autism have a life expectancy 20–36 years shorter than the general population (Australian Parliament Select Committee on Autism Report).</li> </ul>
<p><b>What we’ve heard from community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parks, playgrounds and open spaces were probably the single biggest theme across community engagement responses from children, young people and adults. All groups identified parks, playgrounds and open space as being important for health and happiness, and identified access to these spaces as a current strength or a feature that they like about their local area. However, many children also identified parks and playgrounds as an area for improvement, both in terms of the level of provision across all parts of Darebin and improvements they would like to see such as more shade. Other themes in relation to the environment include concerns about cleanliness and litter, support for walkable and cyclable environments (as reflected in the safety theme), and support for enhancing Darebin’s natural environments and biodiversity.</li> <li>• A significant number of responses from children, young people and adults emphasised the important of opportunities to be physically active for children’s wellbeing. Darebin’s sports clubs and sport and recreation facilities were seen as a strength, but the cost of accessing sports and recreation opportunities was reported as a challenge that many in the community face.</li> <li>• Young people have identified access to mental health support as a key priority.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key data</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2021, 16.1% of children in Darebin were developmentally at risk or vulnerable at the time of starting school in the physical health and wellbeing domain, compared to 19.1% across Victoria. 20.8% of children were developmentally at risk or vulnerable in the emotional maturity domain, compared to 21.5% across Victoria (Australian Early Development Census).</li> <li>• Mental health conditions are the most commonly diagnosed long-term health conditions amongst people aged 15-24 in Darebin, with 13.7% of people in this age group reporting that they had been diagnosed with a mental health condition in 2021. (2021 census data). Across Australia 24% of young people aged 15-19 surveyed by Mission Australia in 2023 identified mental health challenges such as stress, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, diagnosed</li> </ul>



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disorders or self-harm as their biggest personal challenge (Mission Australia Youth Survey 2023). 32% of young people were personally extremely or very concerned about mental health.

- 7.4% of households in Darebin don't have access to a public open space within 500 metres of their house. The areas with the highest proportion of households that don't have this access are Preston West (25.4%), Reservoir South (17.1%) and Kingsbury (15.3%) (Breathing Space: Darebin Open Space Strategy 2019).

**Aims**

- Mental health support is available when and where children, young people and families need it.
- Children, young people and families have equitable access to a wide range of affordable physical activity opportunities to match their interests.
- Children, young people and families have access to thriving natural environments that support wellbeing.
- Children, young people and families have access to the health services they need.
- Services and organisations across Darebin work together to promote social and emotional wellbeing and mental health for children, young people and families.

<p><b>Safety and independence</b></p>
<p><b>Priorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical, cultural, emotional and psychological safety in all settings and services.</li> <li>Safe streets and public spaces for all children, young people and families.</li> <li>Preventing family violence and keeping children safe from abuse and harm.</li> <li>Respecting and supporting young people’s independence, self-determination and right to make choices and take risks in order to learn, grow and build resilience.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Why is this important</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Everyone has the right to feel safe at home, in the community and in all settings, at every age.</li> <li>For children and young people feeling safe and secure is vital for their emotional and psychological development.</li> <li>Feeling safe is foundational for mental health and wellbeing, inclusion and participation in community and for people to be able to embrace who they are regardless of their cultural or religious identify, gender, sexual identity or any other factors.</li> <li>For young people feeling safe and being safe in public spaces and in all forms of transport is essential for their independence and autonomy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What we’ve heard from community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Road safety, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists, was a strong theme that came through in responses from children as well as adults.</li> <li>Being and feeling safe in public spaces also came through, particularly in responses from adults and stakeholders.</li> <li>Stakeholders identified cultural safety as key priority for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.</li> <li>Children’s safety online is another important priority flagged by stakeholders.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key data</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2023 the family-related incident rate for Darebin was 1,100 per 100,000 population, compared with the Victorian rate of 1,385.</li> <li>The rate of family violence incidents against females in Darebin in 2022-23 was more than three times higher than the rate against males.</li> <li>In 2017 there were 18.3 fatalities or injuries from road accidents per 10,000 residents in Darebin, compared to 19.3 per 10,000 people across Victoria as a whole.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Aims</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Darebin is a place where everyone feels physically, culturally, emotionally and psychologically safe, at home and in the community.</li> <li>Prevention of family violence and all forms of violence against women, gender diverse people and children.</li> <li>Children are safe and protected from harm online.</li> <li>Public spaces and places are safe and welcoming for all children and young people.</li> <li>All services are culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.</li> <li>Child Safe Standards are a high priority for all Darebin services.</li> <li>Accessible and safe active and public transport supporting independence and wellbeing.</li> <li>Children, young people and families are more aware of the supports available to assist them to be safe in their community.</li> <li>Reduce unnecessary barriers and restrictions on children and young people’s independence and autonomy to enable them to access the services and supports they need.</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Learning</b></p>
<p><b>Priorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring access to inclusive, safe, supportive and high-quality learning opportunities for all.</li> <li>• Increasing active participation and engagement in learning across the lifespan.</li> <li>• Supporting children and young people through their education journeys including through critical transition points.</li> <li>• Preparing children and young people for the future.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Why is this important</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From birth to adulthood, learning is essential to enable people to realise their potential. Learning starts at home during the first years of life and continues through Early Childhood Education and Care, and then at school, and also in wide variety of settings beyond formal education.</li> <li>• For children and young people’s learning to be supported, the formal and informal education services and settings they encounter from the early years right through to their young adulthood need to be high quality, inclusive and safe. This includes childcare services, kindergarten, primary, secondary and specialist schools, vocational education and training (VET) providers including TAFEs and registered training organisations (RTOs), university and non-university higher education providers, and informal learning settings such as libraries.</li> <li>• Many community organisations provide important learning opportunities for children, young people and families, including for example cultural and religious groups and Scouts Victoria groups.</li> <li>• Disengagement from education or difficulties attending school (often referred to as ‘school refusal’) have been seen to be on the rise in recent years, in a trend that has been attributed to the disruptive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.</li> <li>• Learning is not just about academic skills and knowledge. Children and young people also need to acquire essential life skills in areas such as financial literacy, emotional intelligence and regulation, cooking and driving, as well as useful work experience opportunities, to support their transition to adulthood.</li> <li>• For many children and young people socioeconomic barriers can affect their ability to access to the technology and other resources they need to fully engage at school or in other learning settings.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What we’ve heard from community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Viewed in broad terms, learning featured strongly in the responses to both the children’s activity and adult/young people’s survey. Children’s response indicated that they value reading, books, libraries and school as well as creative activities.</li> <li>• Adult’s responses placed a high value on education, and emphasised access to childcare, kindergarten and school as being important.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key data</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Childcare provision in Darebin shows a clear North-South divide, with 35% of children in Darebin-North living in a childcare desert, compared to 0% in Darebin-South.</li> <li>• 89% of four-year-olds in Darebin participated in kindergarten in 2022, the highest participation rate in Darebin in the last five years. Across Victoria, the four-year-old participation rate was 92% in 2022.</li> <li>• In 2021, 68.4% of people aged over 15 years in Darebin had completed Year 12 schooling (or equivalent), compared to 59.4% across Greater Melbourne.</li> <li>• 74.2% of students who completed Year 12 in Darebin in 2020 were in further education or training in 2021, compared to 49.4% of Year 12 non-completers (based on Department of Education On Track survey responses)</li> </ul>

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- Across Australia 49% of young people aged 15-19 surveyed by Mission Australia in 2023 identified school challenges, such as high workload, academic pressure, challenges with teachers or learning difficulties, as their biggest personal challenge (Mission Australia Youth Survey 2023).

**Aims**

- All children and young people in Darebin have access to high quality care, education and learning opportunities from the early years through to young adulthood. Access to education and learning is not limited by socioeconomic or structural barriers.
- Increased active participation and engagement in learning across the lifespan including kindergarten, school and other education and training.
- Children, young people and their families are well supported throughout their education journeys including through all of the critical transition points.
- Children, young people are equipped with the skills they need to succeed in life, are aware of the pathways available to them and receive the support they need to make choices about their next steps.

## Appendix: Policy Context

Council's plans, strategies and policies

Many of Council's strategic documents present commitments, principles, priorities, and topics that have been considered in the development of this C Strategy including:

- Darebin 2041 Community Vision: Darebin is an equitable, vibrant, and connected community. Darebin respects and supports First Nations People, values country, our diverse communities, and places. Darebin commits to mitigating the climate emergency, creating prosperity for current and future generations.
- 2021-2025 Council Plan (Incorporating the Darebin Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan): Commitment to promoting, protecting, and improving the wellbeing of our community, and addressing health inequality. Priorities are modifiable health risks and determinants of health. Approach involves ensuring health equity, focusing on environments for health, and taking a life course approach (targeting modifiable health risks). 10 Big Actions include: plan infrastructure for decades to come, support community members experiencing vulnerability, and expand our delivery of quality universal services.
- Breathing Space – The Darebin Open Space Strategy: Human health and wellbeing are directly affected by the built and natural environments. Safety, including cultural safety, in open spaces is important. Making the distribution of open space equitable. Recognising local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities, particularly traditional owners. Designing for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. Engaging with users, residents, and community groups to help inform the designing, planning, and managing of open space with particular emphasis on diverse communities. Enhancing women's visibility and representation in open space. Increasing opportunities for children to engage with nature. Engaging the community as partners in biodiversity protection. There are concentrations of households with limited access to open space particularly in Preston and Reservoir as well as parts of Alphington. Regional open space to have a play space while District open space to have, or may have, a play space.
- Community Engagement Policy 2023: Commitment to building a fair, inclusive, and equitable city by placing residents, business owners and the community sector at the heart of decision-making. Engagement principles are: respectful; action oriented; focused on justice and equity; inclusive; and integrity. Commitment to supporting the rights of people and groups who experience discrimination and disadvantage, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; children; young people; culturally and linguistically diverse people; migrants and refugees; women and girls; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ+) people; people with a disability; and people experiencing poverty, including intergenerational disadvantage and inequalities.
- Darebin Libraries and Learning Strategy 2020-2024: Four goals are: to improve equity of access; to support our thriving and resilient community; to create welcoming, safe, inclusive, and flexible spaces; and to deliver responsive services.
- Disability Access and Inclusion in Darebin – A community plan of access and inclusion 2021-2026: The six goals are accessible and inclusive communication; getting around Darebin – transport, footpaths, and parking; places we live, work and play; accessible and inclusive activities and

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events; pathways to employment for people with disability; and changing attitudes and raising awareness about disability.

- Early Years Infrastructure Planning Framework 2021-2041: Planning principles are equity, access, diversity and inclusion, connection to culture and Country, truth-telling, choice, quality and safety, integrated services for the whole community, community engagement and collaboration, environmental sustainability, access to natural environments, arts and creative culture, and economic development.
- Gender Equity and Preventing Violence Against Women Action Plan 2019-2023: Vision is a gender equitable, safe, and respectful Darebin community. Priority action areas are organisational leadership; safe, inclusive, and respectful communities; women's participation in community life; research and advocacy.
- Statement of Commitment to Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: Council respects and recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' values, living culture and practices. Council respects the human, cultural and spiritual rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations, Council is committed to working towards a future based on justice, respect, understanding and the elimination of disadvantages and barriers to equality, notably in health, education, housing, and employment, in the spirit of the Close the Gap Statement of Intent 2008. Darebin is a significant gathering place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the homeland of a number of significant Aboriginal peak bodies, organisations, and businesses. Council affirms the positive forward movement towards equality and equity, race relations, institutional integrity, historical acceptance through truth-telling and unity.
- Towards Equality – Darebin City Council's Equity, Inclusion and Human Rights Framework 2019-2029: Long-standing commitment to social justice, we consider the principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, and human rights in everything we do. Framework guides and helps us strive for a just society by reducing disadvantage, standing against discrimination, and sharing resources equitably, in partnership with the community, local agencies and organisations. It puts equity, inclusion, and human rights at the heart of all our work and will help us build a stronger, healthier, and happier community where everyone is welcome, valued, and respected.

#### Future Council plans and strategies

This Strategy will be a key reference for future plans and strategies that Council develops, to ensure that the needs of children, young people and families are addressed in an integrated way by Council across the breadth of its work. The flow of influence between this Strategy and future plans and strategies will be two way, with this Strategy also being responsive to issues and needs that are highlighted in those future plans.

Some of the upcoming plans and strategies that this Strategy will intersect with include:

- Aboriginal Action Plan
- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29
- Cultural Diversity Action Plan
- LGBTIQ+ Action Plan
- Prevention of Violence Against Women Action Plan

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- Disability Action Plan
- Economic Development Strategy
- Property Strategy
- Community Infrastructure Plan

## State and Federal Government policy and regulations

Some of the key state and federal policies, strategies and legislated requirements that have implications for specific themes and focus areas within this strategy include:

- Best Start, Best Life: Early Childhood Education That Works (State of Victoria, 2022)
- Child Safe Standards (Commission for Children and Young People, 2022)
- Closing the Gap (National Indigenous Australians Agency, 2020)
- Early Childhood Reform Plan: Ready for kinder, Ready for school, Ready for life (Department of Education and Training, 2017)
- Healthy kids, healthy futures (Victoria's five-year action plan) (Department of Health, 2021)
- Information sharing and MARAM reforms (State of Victoria, 2018)
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy (National Indigenous Australian Agency, 2021)
- National Action Plan for the Health of Children and Young People 2020-2030 (Department of Health, 2019)
- National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy (National Mental Health Commission, 2021)
- Our promise, Your future: Victoria's Youth Strategy 2022-2027 (Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, 2022)
- Roadmap for Reform: Strong families, safe children (Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, 2021)
- Supporting Children and Families in the Early Years: A Compact between DET, DFFS (previously DHHS) and Local Government (represented by MAV) 2017-2027 (Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Services, and MAV, 2017)
- The First 1000 Days: Conception to two years (Department of Social Services, 2023)
- Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities (Parliament of Victoria, 2006)
- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (Department of Education and Training, 2016)

## International policy and agreements

- Sustainable Development Goals
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Darebin Families, Youth & Children Strategy Stage 2 Engagement Report – July 2024



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**Darebin Families, Youth & Children  
Strategy  
Stage 2 Community Engagement Report  
July 2024**



Darebin Families, Youth & Children Strategy Stage 2 Engagement Report – July 2024

# Darebin Families, Youth & Children Strategy Stage 2 Engagement Report

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## Background

Darebin City Council is developing a new strategy for children, young people, and their families from 0 to 25 years old. The Families, Youth and Children Strategy will replace our previous Early Years Strategy 2011-2021 and the Youth Services Strategy 2019-2021. The strategy aims to enable Council and partners to take a collaborative, integrated, long-term, and strategic approach to improving outcomes for children and young people aged 0-25 and their families.

Council has undertaken an extensive two-stage community engagement process to inform the development of the draft Strategy.

### Stage 1 engagement

In the first stage of engagement, we engaged widely with community and stakeholders to inform the development of a draft strategy. This included:

- From October to November 2023, we asked the Darebin community four questions to help us understand what's important to children, young people and families, what is currently working well, what makes life, and what Council and our partners should focus on to help children, young people, and their families across our diverse community. In this phase we heard from over 650 people including 262 young people and adults who completed a survey, 387 children who completed an activity sheet, meetings with 8 stakeholder groups.
- In February 2024, 96 people from 46 organisations that work across the child, youth and family age spectrum participated in a full-day Families, Youth & Children Stakeholder Summit to review the feedback received from the community in stage 1 community engagement, identify principles for collaboration, explore Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results to inform the strategy and develop proposed Strategic Focus Areas for the strategy.
- In March 2024, 14 young people participated in a half-day Youth Roundtable workshop that co-designed and co-hosted by members of the Young Citizens Jury. Young people developed a vision of a 'Future Perfect' Darebin that met all the needs of young people, mapped out the assets that currently support young people in Darebin, the things that are missing and identified their priority actions to improve Darebin for young people. Based on the workshop the Young Citizens Jury also developed a document entitled 'Our Vision' which outlined their proposals for action in the key priority areas that had been identified in the Youth Roundtable.
- 13 people including representatives from six partners organisations, Darebin Young Citizens Jury members and Council officers participated in a facilitated sensemaking workshop to review outputs from the Stakeholder Summit and Youth Roundtable to synthesise the key principles and focus areas/themes for the Strategy.

A detailed report on the Stage 1 engagement process and findings was reported to Council in May 2024 and is available to the community on the Your Say Darebin platform ([https://yoursay.darebin.vic.gov.au/download\\_file/2008/88](https://yoursay.darebin.vic.gov.au/download_file/2008/88)).

## Darebin Families, Youth &amp; Children Strategy Stage 2 Engagement Report – July 2024

## Stage 2 engagement

The findings from Stage 1 engagement informed the development of a draft Strategy that was presented to Council in May 2024 for approval to be taken to Stage 2 engagement.

Stage 2 community engagement on the draft strategy ran from 29 May to 23 June 2024. Community and stakeholders were invited to provide feedback on the themes, focus areas and aims in the draft strategy, as well as the principles for collaboration and action (stakeholders only).

The purpose of the Stage 2 engagement was to:

- Check with the community if the themes, focus areas and aims identified in the draft strategy are the right areas to improve outcomes for children, young people, and their families.
- Seek feedback on whether any important themes, focus areas and aims are missing.
- Ask the community to prioritise aims for the draft strategy that Council and its partners should focus on first?

## Engagement activities and reach

**Over 300 people engaged through the Stage 2 process** including through the following activities:

- Online survey on the draft themes, focus areas and aims of the strategy. Promoted through Council communications and tailored invitations to special interest groups.
- Workshops with over 200 children and young people at 5 primary and 2 secondary schools.

Primary Schools	Secondary schools
Preston High School (Preston) Reservoir High School (Reservoir)	Northcote Primary School (Northcote) St Joseph's Primary School (Northcote) Bell Primary School (Preston) Preston North East Primary School (Preston) Preston Primary School (Preston)

- In-person engagement with 45 parents and grandparents at Council service delivery sessions.
  - Immunisation session (Preston City Hall)
  - Playful Storytelling session (Reservoir East Family Centre)
  - Rhyme Time and Story Time (Reservoir Library)
  - Rhyme Time and Story Time (Preston Library)
- A second Youth Roundtable with 10 youth leaders
- A second Stakeholder Summit with 52 participants from 23 organisations.
- A workshop with the Best Start Aboriginal Reference Group.

## Darebin Families, Youth &amp; Children Strategy Stage 2 Engagement Report – July 2024

## Profile of survey respondents

240 contributions were gathered through the online survey process, school workshops and face-to-face engagement at Council services. All of these contributions were recorded through the You Say platform.

Respondents came mainly from Northcote, Preston and Reservoir. It is important to note that we did not collect postcode information directly from school students so they were recorded against the postcode of the school they attend, rather than where they live. As school students represented a majority of the participants in this Stage, the postcode distribution is significantly influenced by the locations of the schools that participated.

Postcode	Count	Percent
3070 (Northcote)	84	35%
3071 (Thornbury)	5	2%
3072 (Preston)	93	39%
3073 (Reservoir)	52	22%
3083 (Bundoora/Kingsbury)	6	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

On the online survey respondents were asked whether they identified as a young person, a parent, a community member or a representative of an organisation. Children who engaged through the schools were recorded as young people, and comprised the majority of participants.

Are you? (Select all that apply)	Count	Percent
A young person	178	74%
A parent	7	3%
A community member	4	2%
Representing an organisation	1	0%
Other	1	0%
Did not answer	52	22%
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Darebin Families, Youth & Children Strategy Stage 2 Engagement Report – July 2024

### Stage 2 Youth Roundtable

10 young leaders participated in the Stage 2 Youth Roundtable. The young leaders were asked to review the themes, focus areas and aims in the draft strategy and identify what they would keep, add, change or drop.

Youth roundtable participants identified ‘health & wellbeing’ and ‘essentials for life’ as the most important themes for implementation and action.

### Which 3 themes and/or focus areas are most important for implementation and action?

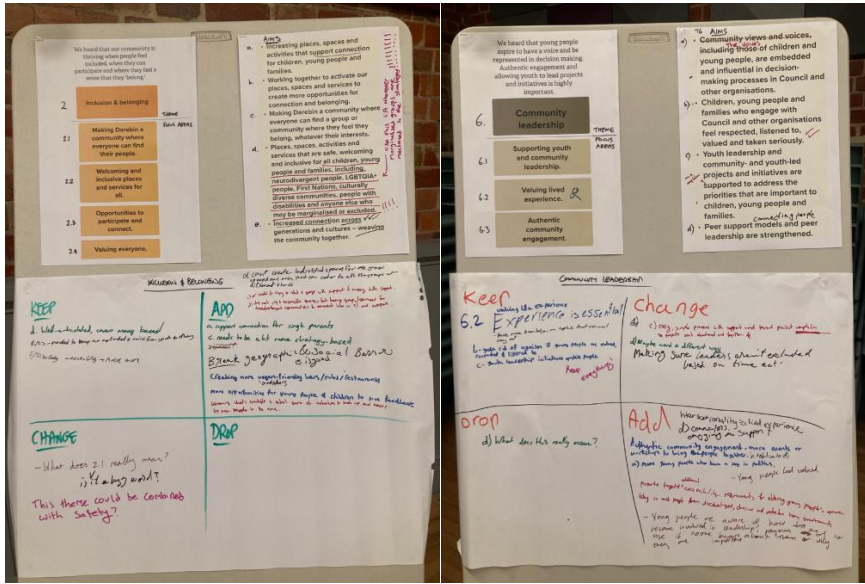
Number = frequency of votes in top 3’s



Youth roundtable images



Darebin Families, Youth & Children Strategy Stage 2 Engagement Report – July 2024



Stage 2 Stakeholder Summit

52 participants from 23 organisations participated in the Stage 2 stakeholder summit

Organisations represented at the Stage 2 summit
1000 Generations
AGA (employment, skills and support service)
Anglicare Victoria
Annie Dennis Children's Centre
Bridge Darebin
Darebin City Council
Darebin Information, Volunteer & Resource Service (DIVRS)
Darebin Young Citizens Jury
Department of Education
Early Learning Association Australia
EdConnect
Himilo Community Connect
Inner North Local Learning and Employment Network
Kids First Australia
La Trobe University
Merri Community Child Care Centre & Kindergarten
Oakhill Family Centre
Prace – Reconnect Program
Preston North East Primary School
Scouts
Victoria Police
Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
Your Community Health

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Summit participants engaged in a similar process to the Youth Roundtable participants, reviewing the themes, focus areas and aims in the draft strategy and identifying what they would keep, add, change or drop. Summit participants were also able to review the feedback that the Youth Roundtable participants had provided. This inclusion of the Youth Voice at the summit (alongside the participation of Young Citizens Jury members in the summit) was widely agreed to be a useful input into stakeholders' thinking. Stakeholders also identified which priorities or aims they were already working towards to identify hot spots for future collaboration.

Stakeholder summit images



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## Findings

Overall, the feedback on the draft Strategy was highly positive, with high levels of support for the themes, focus areas and aims from the community and stakeholders. Constructive feedback provided through the process has led to a number of changes being made in the revised strategy.

### Feedback on Focus Areas

Overall sentiment on the focus areas was very positive, with the vast majority of survey respondents agreeing that the focus areas supported Council and partners to meet the themes.

<b>Do the focus areas in the draft strategy support Council and its partners to meet this theme?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Theme 1: Essentials for Life	60	2	0
Theme 2: Inclusion & Belonging	59	3	0
Theme 3: Health & Wellbeing	58	3	0
Theme 4: Safety & Independence	61	1	0
Theme 5: Learning	58	3	0
Theme 6: Community Leadership	60	2	0
Theme 7: Systems of Support	61	1	0

In the primary and secondary school workshops participants were asked to identify which of the focus areas were a priority for them. The top five most frequently identified focus areas were ranked as follows:

1. Mental health and wellbeing.
1. Supporting families and young people facing cost of living pressures.
3. Helping all children, young people and families to have their basic needs met.
4. Safety in families and homes
5. Preparing young people for the future.

*Full results – which focus areas are a priority*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Focus Areas</b>	<b>Count of those who identified it as a priority</b>
<b>Theme 1: Essentials for Life</b>	Supporting families and young people facing cost of living pressures.	115
	Helping all children, young people and families to have their basic needs met.	107
	Helping young people to access secure and rewarding employment and career pathways.	59
	Financial literacy and life skills.	43
<b>Theme 2: Inclusion &amp; Belonging</b>	Valuing and including everyone.	75
	Welcoming and inclusive places and services for all.	55
	Opportunities to participate and connect.	48



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	Making Darebin a community where everyone can find their people.	43
<b>Theme 3: Health and Wellbeing</b>	Mental health and wellbeing	115
	Physical activity and active transport	80
	Access to thriving natural environments that support wellbeing	67
<b>Theme 4: Safety and Independence</b>	Safety in families and homes	91
	Community safety in public spaces and transport	87
	Physical, cultural, emotional and psychological safety in all settings	72
<b>Theme 5: Learning</b>	Preparing young people for the future.	87
	Access to high quality learning.	79
	Participation in learning.	53
<b>Theme 6: Community Leadership</b>	Supporting child, youth and community leadership	46
	Authentic community engagement	35
	Valuing lived experience	30
<b>Theme 7: Systems of support</b>	Accessible services	66
	Culturally safe services	55
	Responsive and engaging services	39
	Connected services	33

## Feedback on Aims

In the online survey and in a small number of school workshops with older students where time permitted, participants were asked to identify up to 3 priorities from the aims under each theme. The top 10 most frequently selected focus areas were ranked as follows

1. All children and young people in Darebin have access to high quality education and learning opportunities from the early years through to young adulthood.
2. The causes of youth homelessness are addressed so that no young person ends up homeless.
3. Supports with basic needs including housing supports, food relief and financial supports are available and accessible when needed, including wrap-around supports for those who need them.
4. Mental health support available when and where children, young people and families need it.
4. Children, young people are safe and feel safe at home and in the community.
6. Children and young people's access to education and learning is not limited by financial barriers.
6. Youth leadership and community- and youth-led projects and initiatives are supported to addresses the priorities that are important to children, young people and families.
6. A more connected and integrated service system in which there is no wrong door – wherever someone goes they'll get the help they need. A system that provides timely support when people need it.

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6. Darebin is a place where everyone feels physically, culturally, emotionally and psychologically safe.
6. Affordable housing is prioritised by all levels of government.

*Full results – which aims are a priority*

Theme	Focus Areas	Count of those who identified it as a priority
<b>Theme 1: Essentials for Life</b>	The causes of youth homelessness are addressed so that no young person ends up homeless.	20
	Supports with basic needs including housing supports, food relief and financial supports are available and accessible when needed, including wrap-around supports for those who need them.	19
	Affordable housing is prioritised by all levels of government.	16
	Young people are equipped with the life skills they need to thrive.	14
	Young people understand their rights as workers and those rights are respected by employers.	8
	People know what benefits and supports they are entitled to and are supported to access these.	8
	Young people are supported to identify and achieve their employment and career aspirations.	7
<b>Theme 2: Inclusion &amp; Belonging</b>	Increasing places, spaces and activities that support connection for children, young people and families.	14
	Working together to activate our places, spaces and services to create more opportunities for connection and belonging.	14
	Making Darebin a community where everyone can find a group or community where they feel they belong, whatever their interests.	10
	Places, spaces, activities and services that are safe, welcoming and inclusive for all children, young people and families, including neurodivergent people, LGBTQIA+ people, First Nations, culturally diverse communities, people with disabilities and anyone else who may be marginalised or excluded.	7
	Increased connection across generations and cultures – weaving the community together.	5
<b>Theme 3: Mental health &amp; wellbeing</b>	Mental health support available when and where children, young people and families need it.	18
	Children, young people and families feel socially connected	14
	Everyone has access to a wide range of physical activity opportunities to match their interests.	13
	Children, young people and families feel connected to nature.	13

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<b>Theme 4: Safety and Independence</b>	Children, young people are safe and feel safe at home and in the community.	18
	Darebin is a place where everyone feels physically, culturally, emotionally and psychologically safe.	16
	Public spaces and places are safe and welcoming for all children and young people.	13
	All services are culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.	10
	Child Safe Standards are a high priority for all Darebin services.	10
	Children are safe and protected from harm online.	9
	Children, young people and families are more aware of the supports available to assist them to be safe in their community.	8
<b>Theme 5: Learning</b>	All children and young people in Darebin have access to high quality education and learning opportunities from the early years through to young adulthood.	21
	Children and young people’s access to education and learning is not limited by financial barriers.	18
	Young people leave school with the skills they need to succeed in life and are aware of the pathways available to them.	17
	More children and young people participate and engage in kindergarten, school and other education and training.	11
	Children, young people and their families are well supported through all of the transitions in their education journey.	8
<b>Theme 6: Community Leadership</b>	Youth leadership and community- and youth-led projects and initiatives are supported to addresses the priorities that are important to children, young people and families.	16
	Community views and voices, including those of children and young people, are embedded and influential in decision-making processes in Council and other organisations.	14
	Children, young people and families who engage with Council and other organisations feel respected, listened to, valued and taken seriously.	14
	Peer support models and peer leadership are strengthened.	5
<b>Theme 7: Systems of Support</b>	A more connected and integrated service system in which there is no wrong door – wherever someone goes they’ll get the help they need. A system that provides timely support when people need it.	16
	Better communication so the community and services know what help is available and how to access it.	14
	A more responsive system that is aware of the community’s needs and intervenes early to improve outcomes. A system that proactively works to reach out and engage children, young people and families at risk of poor outcomes.	13
	Services are accessible for people from all cultures, are culturally safe, and child safe.	12

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	All services for children, young people and families achieve high standards for quality and clinical governance.	4
	Integrated ‘wrap-around’ services are available to those who need them.	2

### Stakeholder and youth feedback from the summit and roundtable

Some of the key themes from the stage 2 stakeholder summit and youth roundtable were:

- Cultural Safety flagged as an important consideration across all themes, not just safety and independence.
- Equity needs to be considered across all themes.
- Independence was not represented in the focus areas or aims for the ‘Safety & Independence’ theme.
- Prevention of violence against women needs to be included explicitly.
- Stronger support for focus on promotion of positive mental wellbeing.

### Changes made to the draft strategy in response to feedback

The most significant change is a structural change with the introduction of a set of ‘guiding principles’ to sit alongside the ‘action areas’ of the strategy. The initial draft strategy included seven ‘themes’. All of these themes have been retained in the revised draft, with five of the themes being renamed as action areas, and two becoming guiding principles alongside a further two additional guiding principles. The guiding principles represent critical underpinnings of the work that need to be embedded into action across each of the five action areas. To avoid overlap in terminology, the term ‘priorities’ has been adopted to replace the term ‘focus areas’ within each of the ‘action areas’.

Initial Draft	Revised Draft
Themes 1. Essentials for life 2. Inclusion & belonging 3. Health & wellbeing 4. Safety & independence 5. Learning 6. Community leadership 7. Systems of support	Action Areas 1. Essentials for life 2. Inclusion & belonging 3. Health & wellbeing 4. Safety & independence 5. Learning  Guiding Principles 1. Community leadership 2. A collaborative and responsive support system 3. Cultural safety 4. Equity

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These changes were made in response to community and stakeholder feedback including the following key points:

- Feedback from stakeholders was that cultural safety was an important consideration across all of the themes, not just the 'Safety & independence' theme where it was previously located.
- Feedback from stakeholders and community that equity was a critical consideration across all themes.
- Feedback in discussions with stakeholders that the 'community leadership' and 'systems of support' themes were cross-cutting themes with relevance across each of the other five themes.

The *Principles for Collaboration and Action* that were included in the initial draft have been retained in the revised draft, with some amendments made in response to stakeholder feedback. These sit as guidelines for collaboration, in line with the guiding principle of 'a collaborative and responsive support system'.

Other changes have been made in response to Stage 2 engagement feedback within the 'priorities' and 'aims' sections of the action areas. Most of these changes involved tightening of the language, clarifying the focus or combining points that were overlapping to create a more succinct and impactful set of priorities and aims. Some of the more substantial changes across the action areas are summarised in the table below:

Action area	Changes
Essentials for life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial literacy and life skills moved from this action area to the 'Learning' action area.</li> <li>• New aim related to affordable housing: 'Darebin has strong partnerships and advocacy to improve access to affordable housing for young people and families in our community'.</li> </ul>
Inclusion & belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No significant changes</li> </ul>
Health & wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active transport separated from physical activity and moved to 'Safety &amp; independence' action area.</li> <li>• New priority added: 'Affordable and accessible health services and supports'.</li> <li>• Stronger focus on promotion of mental health and wellbeing.</li> </ul>
Safety & independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explicit inclusion of 'preventing violence against women and keeping children safe from abuse and harm' as a priority.</li> <li>• Addition of a priority and aims focused on respecting and supporting young people's independence and self-determination in response to strong feedback from young people on this topic.</li> </ul>
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stronger focus on learning across the lifespan.</li> <li>• Supporting children and young people through their education journeys and transitions added as a priority.</li> </ul>

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## 9.5 PLAN FOR VICTORIA AND HOUSING TARGETS SUBMISSION

**Author:** Senior Strategic Planner

**Reviewed By:** General Manager City Sustainability and Strategy

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Victorian Government is currently conducting consultation (closing 30 August) ahead of preparing a new state-wide planning strategy: 'Plan for Victoria' (the Plan). The Plan will replace the *Plan Melbourne* strategy and will include regional areas and introduce state-wide *Housing Targets*.

In the new Plan, the Victorian Government (State) has significantly shifted its focus towards increasing housing supply, coinciding with a series of recent reforms released along with *Victoria's Housing Statement* to address the acute housing crisis facing Victoria and the nation.

The Plan is proposed to be based on the four pillars of: (i) affordable housing and choice, (ii) equity and jobs, (iii) thriving and liveable suburbs and towns, and (iv) sustainable environments and climate action.

The Council's draft submission broadly welcomes the State's focus on increasing housing supply to combat the housing crisis facing Victoria and the nation. Drawing from Council's existing strategies, long-standing positions on planning advocacy and reform, the draft submission (**Appendix A**) responds to the four pillars and the draft Housing Targets. The submission addresses the following key issues:

- Safeguard the role of the community in planning decisions and place-making for vibrant centres.
- Require affordable housing in new development and address inequitable access to housing.
- Ensure that as suburbs and centres become denser, funding is available to local government to ensure services and infrastructure can keep pace with additional demand.
- Maintain liveability through quality design, climate adaptive and resilient development.
- Maintain an urban form that supports biodiversity and health and wellbeing, including access to open space.

<b>Officer Recommendation</b>
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**That Council:**

- (1) Adopts the submission on Plan for Victoria (Appendix A) and lodges the submission by 30 August 2024.
- (2) Authorises Manager, City Futures, to make minor corrections and clarifications to the submission prior to lodgement.

## BACKGROUND / KEY INFORMATION

On November 27, 2023, the state government released for consultation a high-level framework for “Developing a new plan for Victoria”. Engage Victoria has invited public input on the State’s new draft planning strategy that would guide growth through to 2051. While this document will build upon *Plan Melbourne*, it aims to address key areas such as housing, transport, employment, and environmental sustainability for the whole of the State.

Affordable housing and choice are a central concern of the Plan. Other pillars of the Plan are equity and jobs, thriving and liveable suburbs and towns, sustainable environments and climate action. The draft pillars align closely with the Council’s own vision and objectives. However, no content has been provided at this stage to indicate the strategic directions, specific goals, or actions being considered for achieving these high-level principles.

Aligned with the broader intent of increasing housing supply, on June 14, 2024, the State government also released draft Housing Targets to guide the development of new homes in all Victorian local government areas.

It is understood that factors such accessibility to public transport and jobs, and current development trends were considered in setting the housing targets. Darebin has been set a draft target of 72,000 new homes by 2051. Council’s draft Darebin Housing Strategy identifies the need for 28,700 new dwellings by 2041, and a total capacity of 90,000 under current planning rules.

The consultation for the draft Plan and draft Housing Targets concludes on 30 August 2024. The Plan and targets are expected to be finalised by December 2024.

Having recently prepared the draft Darebin Housing Strategy for community engagement, Council is well placed to contribute to the discussion on housing targets and broader metropolitan and state planning policy. The draft submission is a whole-of-Council approach covering key Council service units and aims to address key advocacy matters.

### Previous Council Resolution

This matter is not the subject of a previous Council resolution.

### ALIGNMENT TO 2041 DAREBIN COMMUNITY VISION

Strategic Direction 1: Vibrant, Respectful and Connected

Strategic Direction 2: Prosperous, Liveable and Flourishing

Strategic Direction 3: Climate, Green and Sustainable

### ALIGNMENT TO 2021-25 COUNCIL PLAN

Strategic Direction 4 Responsible, Transparent and Responsive

### ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

A range of council plan strategic objectives has informed the submission as listed below.

*1.2 We will help to build an inclusive and empowered community, where social cohesion and community harmony are fostered*

*1.4 We will increase social connection to reduce isolation and loneliness, and support positive mental health*

1.5 *We will prioritise and respect the voices and aspirations of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Darebin*

2.1 *We will deliver equitable and accessible infrastructure to provide opportunities for our community to live well*

2.2 *We will design and create public spaces where our people feel safe, welcome, and respected, including improving lighting and safety for people walking, wheeling, cycling and driving*

2.3 *We will facilitate more affordable, social and public housing in Darebin, to meet our community's needs*

2.4 *We will foster local urban streetscapes and activity centres that connect our community, support economic recovery, and encourage people to live, work and play locally*

2.5 *We will invest in services and the built environment to improve access for our residents and visitors*

2.10 *We will leverage investment, partnerships and advocacy to drive Darebin's growth and sustainability*

2.11 *We will support, promote, and attract diverse local businesses and industries*

3.1 *We will adapt to climate change and build the resilience of our community, infrastructure and the built environment, with a focus on our vulnerable communities at risk of fuel poverty, and flooding*

3.2 *Aim to achieve 12% canopy cover on Council owned and managed land by 2025, prioritising catchment biodiversity and shopping areas*

3.4 *We will reduce carbon emissions by switching to renewable energy on a large scale for Council buildings and through community focused initiatives*

## DISCUSSION

### Aims of the submission for the new Plan for Victoria

In response to the new Plan and the proposed Housing Targets, a draft submission has been prepared (**Appendix A**).

A key theme of the proposed submission relates to financial sustainability and the ability of local government to keep pace with the demand for services and infrastructure that would be generated in meeting the proposed housing targets. The current rate-capping regime constrains the growth of Council's main revenue stream to a rate below that of inflation. This means that the cost of providing infrastructure and services and carrying out core functions is escalating at a greater rate than rates revenue – this is a key risk for Councils.

To address this imbalance, a broad review of the revenue model is required including the rate-capping model but also addressing value capture mechanisms, reforms to development contributions and other opportunities for diversification of revenue streams.

The draft submission also raises key advocacy asks on:

- Including mandatory affordable housing requirements in the planning scheme, along with other value capture mechanisms and development contributions, as well as open space reform.
- Ensuring a balance between fast-tracking new housing, and the need for high quality sustainable design, and community input in major developments. Stating that Council welcomes a fee-sharing arrangement for our officers' time.



- Supporting local businesses to embrace circular economy practices and reviewing the Commercial 1 Zone to ensure larger businesses aren't crowded out of our activity centres through residential encroachment.
- Investing in more frequent and reliable public transport services while prioritising active transport users with a Movement and Place Framework.
- Implement state-wide elevated ESD standards for new development to ensure that environmental sustainability is integrated up front into the planning process, making sure new housing is both resilient and future-proof.
- Strengthening ResCode by incorporating expanded tree canopy requirements and implementing a more effective and consistent state-led approach to managing flood risks and other climate hazards across the state.

### ***Achievability of the Housing Targets***

The submission raises concerns about whether the state's goal of 72,000 new homes in Darebin by 2051 is realistic. The Council's draft Housing Strategy, currently under consultation, forecasts a need for 28,700 new homes by 2041 based on population forecasts (Forecast id, Oct 2023), even though there is already a planned capacity for over 90,000 homes. To meet a target of 72,000 new dwellings by 2051 would require effectively doubling the number of houses in the municipality by 2051, delivering at a rate well above trend and 2.5 times above the forecast need.

On this, the draft submission asks for:

- A more realistic approach to the targets which reflects realistic delivery capacity and aligns with forecast population growth.
- Clarification on the proposed measurement for the targets.
- That the response to the housing crisis considers broader challenges to housing supply, including construction costs, labour supply, financing costs.

## **CONSIDERATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (2020) PRINCIPLES**

### **Financial Management**

The current rate-capping regime restricts Council's ability to support services and infrastructure. Without proper investment, future housing growth (and our growing community) could suffer. The submission recommends introducing novel planning reforms and tools to enable Councils to diversify revenue streams, ensuring that infrastructure keeps pace with housing expansion.

### **Consultation**

The submission is a whole-of-organisational response and has been informed by internal referrals to service units.

The main focus of this submission is on existing Council policies and well-established advocacy positions, all of which have been informed by previous engagement processes with our community.

The Plan Victoria engagement process allows the community to directly voice their opinions to the State Government.

## **Other Principles for consideration**

### **Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles**

- (f) collaboration with other Councils and Governments and statutory bodies is to be sought;
- (h) regional, state and national plans and policies are to be taken into account in strategic planning and decision making;

### **Public Transparency Principles**

- (c) Council information must be understandable and accessible to members of the municipal community;

### **Strategic Planning Principles**

- (b) strategic planning must address the Community Vision;

## **COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)**

Ensuring new housing can mitigate and adapt to climate change is essential. This involves not only addressing climate impacts but also managing urban heat islands and maintaining amenity. By adopting climate-resilient designs, new developments can better adapt to extreme weather while reducing their environmental footprint.

The submission advocates for a shift to more sustainable transport by reducing car use and promoting public and active transport.

Key measures to support this transition include increasing canopy cover, implementing water-sensitive urban design, and improving the active transport network. Additionally, integrating recreation spaces, open areas, and efficient transport connections will accommodate a growing population and contribute to a more resilient, vibrant community

### **Equity, Inclusion, Wellbeing and Human Rights Considerations**

It is unclear whether the State government has applied an Equity Impact Assessment (EIA) or considered the Victorian Human Rights Charter.

The draft submission has been prepared based on Council's long-standing advocacy positions supported by pillars of fairness and equity, and community wellbeing.

### **Economic Development and Cultural Considerations**

The submission calls for a deeper exploration of how the strategy to concentrate housing and employment can be fully leveraged to maximise economic and cultural benefits, including investment into community infrastructure and place-based projects to meet demand emerging from new housing.

### **Operational Impacts**

If the State government adopts the proposed changes, planning permit applications may rise in certain areas of the municipality. Preparing for this increase by streamlining processes and allocating resources effectively will be essential to managing the higher volume efficiently.

### Legal and Risk Implications

There are no legal implications with making a submission.



### IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

Pending adoption by Council, officers will lodge the submission by 30 August 2024.

### RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Victoria's Housing Statement - [Victoria's Housing Statement | vic.gov.au](https://www.vic.gov.au/victoria-housing-statement)  
([www.vic.gov.au](https://www.vic.gov.au))
- Plan Victoria engagement landing page - [Consultation opens | Developing a new plan for Victoria | Engage Victoria](#)

### Attachments

- Darebin Draft Submission to Plan for Victoria and draft Housing Targets (**Appendix A**)  
 

### DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires members of Council staff and persons engaged under contract to provide advice to Council to disclose any conflicts of interest in a matter to which the advice relates.

The Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

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### Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Darebin City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and waters we now call Darebin and affirms that Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people have lived on this land for millennia, practising their customs and ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. Council acknowledges that Elders past, present and emerging are central to the cohesion, intergenerational wellbeing and ongoing self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. They have played and continue to play a pivotal role in maintaining and transmitting culture, history and language.

Council respects and recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' values, living culture and practices, including their continuing spiritual connection to the land and waters and their right to self-determination. Council also recognises the diversity within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities have had and continue to play a unique role in the life of the Darebin municipality. Council recognises and values this ongoing contribution and its significant value for our city and Australian society more broadly.

(Extract from Darebin City Council's Statement of commitment to Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 2019)

### Introduction

Darebin City Council appreciates the opportunity to contribute towards a new 'Plan for Victoria,' a vision and strategy guiding our region's growth through 2050.

The four pillars of this plan: affordable housing and choice, equity and jobs, thriving and liveable suburbs and towns, and sustainable environments and climate action, closely align with the City of Darebin's values and strategic directions. An

additional category relating to the proposed housing targets has also been included to explore the proposed targets in detail.

This submission aims to provide a local perspective on addressing these key areas, ensuring that the needs and interests of local communities are prioritised.

### Affordable Housing and Choice

#### Affordable housing

Council supports the Victorian Government's intent to facilitate more affordable and diverse homes near transport, jobs, and essential services. Appropriate planning reforms, accompanied by sufficient state-backed infrastructure funding, are critical in improving housing affordability and supply.

In Darebin, the current shortfall of 7,000 affordable homes is projected to increase to 11,000 by 2036. Nearly 10,700 low- and middle-income households already require housing assistance.

The current voluntary developer-negotiated agreements are failing to meet the scale of affordable housing supply needed. Without state-led reforms to introduce mandatory inclusionary requirements for social and affordable housing, this issue will persist.

Of the 31 municipalities in Greater Melbourne, Darebin houses one of the largest proportions of Aboriginal residents. To improve housing and service participation in the municipality and beyond, Darebin has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV), through which it already offers rate concessions to residents housed in AHV properties.

Council is concerned that the state government's public housing renewal program involves the sale of public land to private developers. There is a substantial opportunity cost to this approach, providing a limited social housing increase and forever losing state land in premium inner Melbourne locations. Investment through models

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such as ground leases, housing trust funds, and direct public housing funding is necessary to improve affordability and address homelessness. Beyond the provision of 'bricks and mortar', social housing tenure models need to provide long term leasing (25+ years) to ensure certainty and stability for tenants and housing security to support families.

Darebin is willing to collaborate with the Victorian Government to consider alternative models to provide housing assistance. Our recently completed community housing project that leases Council land in Townhall Avenue, Preston, demonstrates how local and state government, the community housing sector, and philanthropic organisations can join forces to deliver social housing close to shops, services, and transport.

### Local Government role in fast-tracked development

Council is concerned that the Victorian Government's attempt to fast-track housing through state-led pathways for a range of major development categories progressively erodes local government decision-making powers and limits the ability of the community to be involved in major projects that shape their neighbourhoods. In the interest of streamlining the planning process, such reforms reduce the ability of local communities, businesses, and the Council to consider and influence major development outcomes in their own area.

Streamlined pathways expanded to meet housing targets create several issues for Council. For example, pathways that bypass Council assessment have significant impacts on the fees that Council receives from statutory planning applications. Where Councils may still be called upon to provide referral comments, these often require complex assessments across many of its departments, making the process cumbersome and financially challenging.

### Rate-capping impacts on Council's ability to support housing growth

To support housing growth, a more sustainable, efficient, and diverse revenue stream to fund local infrastructure and services is required.

The current rate-capping regime constrains the growth of Council's main revenue stream to a rate below that of inflation. The cost of providing infrastructure and services and conducting core functions is escalating at a greater rate than rates revenue.

In an established municipality like Darebin, this is compounded by the increased density of development and population, placing greater exponential demand on existing, ageing infrastructure in an urban environment where solutions are often more complex and expensive.

This places significant constraints on the financial sustainability and ability of local government to keep pace with the demand for services and infrastructure that would be generated by delivery of the proposed housing targets.

A broad review of the financial model is required to address this imbalance, including the rate-capping model, value capture mechanisms, reforms to development contributions, and other opportunities to diversify revenue streams.

### Infrastructure to support housing growth

The Plan for Victoria is an opportunity to reform the planning system to ensure open space and infrastructure needs of Melbourne's future communities are met. While the cost of meeting the growing demand for infrastructure and services is rising at a faster rate than Council's revenue base, current planning mechanisms that allow Council to generate alternative revenue streams remain highly inadequate.

Reforms should better facilitate equitable contributions from private developers towards the provision of open space and infrastructure required to support the demand generated by new development. This is particularly important in the

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context of any proposed uplift in the development capacity of land to meet housing targets.

The lack of agreed state-wide guidance on how to set open space contributions creates a challenging environment to justify and implement increased contribution rates that reflect the open space need generated by denser housing developments.

Current open space contribution mechanisms do not account for emerging models of build-to-rent residential developments. Even though such developments generate additional open space demand from their new residents they do not trigger open-space contributions as they do not involve subdivision .

An integrated state-wide provision in the Victorian Planning Scheme is crucial for aligning open space provision with the projected demand from future residential developments.

The current Development Contribution Plan Overlay (DCPO) system is overly complex, onerous to implement and administer, and inadequate for keeping up with the cost of providing infrastructure. Reforms should consider simplifying development levy contributions mechanisms.

State investment in supporting infrastructure is also required to accommodate the envisaged uplift in housing, including key service infrastructure such as drainage.

### We would like to see:

- The introduction of mandatory affordable housing requirements into the planning system to ensure the private housing market contributes to addressing the housing crisis, with any uplift in development capacity shared equitably with the community.
- Continued strategic state-led investment through models such as ground leases, housing trust funds, and direct public housing funding to improve affordability and address homelessness.
- Social housing tenure models that provide long term leasing (25+ years) to ensure housing

security for tenants, including families throughout the phases of the family life cycle.

- Reform of development and open space contributions to provide Councils with clear frameworks and tools for equitably sharing costs with developers.
- Commitment to increase investment in supporting infrastructure to service the high level of housing growth envisaged for established areas.
- A review of the local government revenue model to enable Councils to keep pace with growing infrastructure demands.
- State investment in homelessness services to ensure a comprehensive and integrated approach to addressing the housing crisis.
- The implementation of planning reforms to improve housing affordability and supply, supported by sufficient state-backed infrastructure funding.
- Clarification of the impact of Victorian Government housing targets and zoning changes on landowners, particularly with the imposition of the Windfall Gains Tax, and consideration of the expansion of exemptions for like-for-like rezonings that have minimal impact on development capacity.
- Ensuring fast-tracked housing supply does not compromise sustainable, high-quality design and maintains community input in major developments.
- The introduction of an evaluation framework to assess the effectiveness of the State's development facilitation programmes and powers, ensuring they achieve intended development goals, adhere to timeframes, and include a fee-sharing model with local government that reflects the workload involved.

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### Equity and Jobs

We support the Victorian Government's commitment to developing an updated spatial framework for Victoria.

Darebin is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive economy. To bring jobs and services closer to where people live, improved non-radial transport connecting suburbs and major activity centres is essential. This will allow people to access jobs and services without relying on radial train, tram, and bus lines, which largely serve the CBD. Instead, alternative transport routes will incentivise the creation of jobs outside of the CBD by making these areas more accessible.

Addressing the evolving employment landscape requires proactive funding strategies to manage workforce transitions and skill mismatches, ensuring equitable access to jobs across diverse sectors. Collaborative state grants and mentorship programmes are needed to prepare the local workforce and businesses for emerging industries.

To build economic resilience, it is necessary to establish innovation hubs by partnering with local educational institutions that can provide skills training in emerging industries.

#### We would like to see:

- Significant investment in improving public transport to support a growing population, with a particular focus on enhancing non-radial connections to better link suburbs for job access.
- The provision of collaborative funding through grants and mentorship programmes to support workforce transition and training in emerging industries.
- Enhanced planning frameworks to support co-working spaces, start-ups, makers, micro-manufacturers, and creative enterprises, ensuring these are embedded within current zoning. For example, better utilisation of the Commercial 3 Zone, designed to support creative enterprise, is needed.

→ Support for local businesses in adopting circular economy practices and transitioning towards sustainable resource recovery and management, while providing support for accessibility upgrades.

→ Investment in developing the Northern Innovation & Sustainability Precinct (NISP) in partnership with Darebin and Banyule City Councils, along with key institutions like La Trobe University, to drive economic and sustainability outcomes.

→ Collaboration with the community and local government to revitalise activity centres, through funding and partnership programmes that support community-led placemaking, activation of vacant shopfronts, and improvements to civic realm and transport design.

### Thriving and Liveable Suburbs and Towns

We welcome the Victorian Government's emphasis on 20-minute neighbourhoods. A focus on walkable neighbourhoods and sustainable transport aligns with Darebin's environmental sustainability and public health goals. However, height and capacity-driven development may not always enhance the liveability of activity centres, as many of our most accessible areas also possess distinct heritage and built-form character. A flexible planning approach is needed to foster a safe, inclusive, and well-designed urban environment.

#### Embed quality housing design

Meeting housing targets should not come at the expense of quality and sustainable development outcomes.

Councils must be supported in approving quality developments that create sustainable, resilient, liveable, and well-designed communities, rather than feeling pressured to approve poorly designed projects. For instance, current controls in the Residential Growth Zone (RGZ) often result in

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lower-density or poorer-quality development outcomes due to the lack of incentives for lot consolidation.

Furthermore, expanding State-initiated 'deemed to comply' mechanisms in the approvals process risks perpetuating design issues in new developments if not managed appropriately. Removing discretion from assessments undermines the performance-based principles of the planning system and limits opportunities for encouraging design excellence in new developments.

### Ensuring integrated land use and transport planning

Darebin supports reforms to parking requirements in the planning scheme to improve land use efficiency and support a sustainable transport network. However, reducing minimum parking requirements in accessible and well-serviced locations should be accompanied by a range of complementary initiatives that ensure public and active transport become attractive and viable alternatives to car use. This includes significantly increased state investment in public and active transport infrastructure, development contributions to support this investment, managing local issues around greater demand for on-street parking, and addressing other barriers to behaviour change, such as perceptions of safety and cultural barriers.

Darebin supports the Victorian Government's intent to apply a 'Movement and Place' framework to plan for liveable suburbs and towns. The existing network prioritises motor vehicles, reflecting traditional transport engineering approaches concerned with ensuring sufficient motor vehicle capacity in the road network.

Some areas of Darebin are particularly poorly serviced by public transport in comparison with other areas. For example, the Northland Major Activity Centre, which is anchored by a shopping centre, was established to be accessed by car. Public transport investment is required to better support the role and function of Northland as a Major Activity Centre.

We commend the Victorian Government's intent to integrate the 'active transport web' with the public transport network to promote healthy lifestyles. The Victorian Government's aspirational target of achieving 25% of trips by foot and cycle by 2030 is commendable. However, a shift away from private vehicle use will occur only when public and active transport become more attractive to users in terms of cost, time, and convenience. Greater incentives are needed to shift the focus towards active and public transport options by prioritising the needs of active transport users above those of private vehicle users.

While transitioning to electric vehicles is relevant to climate action, issues of road safety, amenity, and emergency service access persist. Infrastructure gaps and weak links in the active transport network can deter users, especially in disadvantaged areas, away from current public transport options, due to safety concerns. Darebin recommends a comprehensive approach like that used in Darebin's Strategic Transport Framework Plan, which prioritises last-mile connectivity and sustainable travel modes beyond traditional public transport corridors.

Safety, inclusivity, and diversity are vital for a thriving community. Our experience underscores the importance of community involvement in the planning and decision-making process, allowing residents to shape transportation priorities and co-design urban design features. Effective community engagement on place-based improvements is essential for achieving a shift towards active transport. Initiatives such as Darebin's 'Your Street Your Say' for example, continue to empower residents to actively engage in enhancing road safety and pedestrian-friendly design standards, ensuring equitable and inclusive transport services for all residents.

### We would like to see:

- ➔ Maintaining a flexible planning approach that allows councils to incorporate local variations to achieve design excellence, fostering a safe, inclusive, and well-designed urban environment.



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- Ensuring new deemed-to-comply planning mechanisms do not lead to poor-quality design outcomes (including consideration of strengthening design standards for internal amenity)
- Reviewing planning controls to address underdevelopment issues and encourage lot consolidation, particularly in the Residential Growth Zone (RGZ).
- Supporting reforms to parking requirements in the planning scheme to improve land use efficiency and promote a sustainable transport network, alongside necessary infrastructure and public transport investments.
- Ensuring contemporary design standards reduce reliance on motor vehicles and mitigate the negative impacts of excessive car ownership and use while supporting the transition away from internal combustion engines.
- Implementing a Movement and Place Framework that prioritises the needs of active transport users, focusing on their safety and road space requirements rather than increasing road capacity for private motor vehicles.
- Investing in more frequent and reliable public transport services, such as prioritising bus frequency to attract more passengers and reduce reliance on private cars.
- Prioritising public transport improvements in Darebin by:
  - ◆ Advancing the northern section of the Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) and leveraging opportunities like bus network reform and bicycle network improvements from key centres.
  - ◆ Introducing a new orbital bus route along the SRL corridor as an interim measure.
  - ◆ Extending tram route 11 to Edwardes Street, Reservoir.
  - ◆ Upgrading 14 tram stops along tram route 86 to accessible standards.
  - ◆ Introducing a new bus route with an express lane along Chandler Highway, connecting La Trobe University to Burnley Station.
  - ◆ Increasing the frequency of all train, tram, and bus routes.
- Embedding effective community engagement in place-based improvements to achieve a shift towards active transport and enhance liveability.
- Investing in expanding and linking active and sustainable transport networks through infrastructure upgrades to civic realms and local amenities, alongside incentives and regulatory reforms supporting active and sustainable transport.

### Sustainable Environments and Climate Action

#### Environmental sustainability

It is crucial that housing is resilient and caters for the needs of the future population. The pressures of a changing climate, the ongoing cost of living crisis, and housing affordability are complex, interrelated problems. More efficient and resilient buildings delivered now will reduce running costs, expensive retrofits and poor health and wellbeing outcomes in the future.

We note that significant policy reforms have been made towards a more sustainable built environment, including the Victorian Government's mandate for all new housing requiring a planning permit to be all-electric, the state's Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) reforms under Amendment VC216, and the National Construction Code's seven-star energy efficiency requirements for housing. These reforms address some of the standards proposed by the 24 Councils who lodged the Elevating ESD Targets planning scheme amendment, but incorporating the amendment in whole represents the next step in facilitating improved ESD outcomes for Victoria.

Darebin has consistently promoted the importance of ESD. The focus on housing supply in the Victorian Government's policy framework provides opportunity to incentivise exceptional environmental design, along with social and affordable housing.

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A transition to electric vehicles (EVs) in itself will achieve only limited improved planning outcomes. Of the many problems caused by motor vehicle travel, such as road fatalities and injuries, reduced amenity, neighbourhood noise, congestion, and difficulties for emergency service access, a transition to EVs only addresses the single issue of vehicle exhaust emissions. A Plan for Victoria should reduce the reliance of motor vehicles to reduce the negative impacts of excessive car ownership and use, in addition to any transition away from internal combustion engines.

Economic development and workforce readiness are central to Darebin's sustainability vision. To ensure a skilled workforce for a zero-carbon economy, the Victorian Government should invest in local partnerships such as free TAFE programmes, and pilot programmes for sustainable industries are crucial.

Darebin aims to transform the Northern Innovation and Sustainability Precinct (NISIP) into a zero-carbon hub by 2030. The Victorian Government should invest in NISIP and collaborate with La Trobe University, as well as Darebin and Banyule councils, to drive this innovation. This partnership should focus on equipping both existing and new businesses with essential skills and knowledge and supporting the development of sustainable enterprises.

### Climate action

We commend the Victorian Government's initiative to make neighbourhoods cool, ecologically responsive, and resilient while also setting a target to meet net-zero emissions by 2045.

Darebin declared a climate emergency in 2016, which was followed by over 2,351 governments worldwide. Council has recently endorsed its *Climate Emergency Plan 2024–30*, which sets forth ambitious goals around emissions reductions by 2027. To achieve this, we plan on fully electrifying council buildings and light fleet by 2030.

The Council has achieved a 71% emissions reduction (from the 2014 baseline) by sourcing renewable energy through the Victorian Energy Collaboration (VECO) programme led by 51

Victorian councils, and through a strong electrification programme. The latter recently saw two major sports centres, including an aquatic centre, go fully electric and achieve high energy efficiency standards

Programmes like our Solar Saver initiative have significantly reduced emissions, highlighting the importance of community-level engagement in achieving broader environmental goals. The Solar Saver programme has empowered over 2,100 Darebin households to embrace solar panels and is now helping to avoid more than 13,300 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> annually, which is equivalent to 2.7% of Darebin's current electricity emissions.

Adapting to climate change and building resilience in our community, infrastructure, and built environment requires a coordinated effort to respond to emerging threats and risks such as fuel poverty and flooding, particularly for more vulnerable residents. For example, without open space infrastructure investment into urban forest protection and expansion, it would become increasingly difficult to manage urban heat islands, further exacerbated by climate change and a densifying city.

Mitigation and adaptation, however, must not come at the expense of protecting biodiversity. Since 2021, for example, Darebin has collaborated with the Wurrundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation's Narrap Unit. This partnership involves conservation efforts in grassland areas, including revegetation, weed control, and ecological thinning to increase biodiversity. Darebin seeks the Victorian Government's leadership and collaboration with the Wurrundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to embed traditional owner cultural knowledge into biodiversity and conservation strategies and approaches.

### We would like to see:

- ➔ Authorising CASBE Council planning scheme amendment through Ministerial approval to ensure new developments:
  - ◆ Achieve net-zero carbon emissions.

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- ◆ Reduce household bills through enhanced energy efficiency.
  - ◆ Provide healthier and more comfortable environments for occupants.
  - ◆ Improve water quality, usage, and collection.
  - ◆ Protect and enhance greening and biodiversity.
  - ◆ Increase resilience to climate change impacts.
- Planning scheme amendments that:
- ◆ Require the retention and protection of private and public open space.
  - ◆ Implement state-wide elevated Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) standards for new developments
  - ◆ Integrate environmental sustainability objectives into planning tools, such as the vegetation protection overlay, to broaden their application for climate adaptation and resilience.
- Incentives for best practice environmentally sustainable design for net zero development.
- Ensuring new housing is both sustainable and inclusive, balancing the needs of the existing community with development pressures.
- Facilitating joint delivery of a resilient transport network for Melbourne's north through collaboration between councils and state agencies.
- Supporting changes to the Victoria Planning Provisions that reduce reliance on motor vehicles.
- Ensuring all strategic plans and local planning policies reflect the ambitions and objectives set out in Darebin's Climate Emergency Plan and the Victorian Government's Climate Change Strategy.
- Introducing state-sponsored programs to reduce heating and cooling costs for vulnerable populations in existing inefficient homes, including those in public and social housing.
- Funding collaboratively Darebin's pilot programme for neighbourhood electrification to respond to climate change.
- Embedding of traditional owner cultural knowledge into biodiversity and conservation strategies through partnership with local and regional Aboriginal organisations and communities.
- Expanding tree canopy requirements in ResCode and implement a state-wide approach for monitoring and compliance to combat urban heat island effects.
- Adoption of a more efficient, state-led approach to flood management and climate hazard controls to enhance community resilience.

### Housing Targets

Realistic housing targets can help direct housing growth to appropriate locations and ensure sufficient housing supply is provided to meet the demands of the state's growing population. They provide an opportunity to establish a clear direction for where housing growth and supply should be directed across the state in a sustainable and integrated manner.

To this end, Darebin has recently prepared a draft Housing Strategy focused on increasing housing capacity in Darebin's most accessible locations, to better concentrate growth and density where existing services, facilities, public transport, and infrastructure are established.

Darebin has a range of concerns about the draft housing targets. Housing targets risk exacerbating existing infrastructure and service constraints, potentially undermining the liveability of our communities, without necessarily increasing the supply of quality housing unless implemented alongside additional state-led reforms and initiatives.

### Realistic housing targets

The proposed statewide basis of the housing targets far exceeds the housing required to support

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population growth. For example, the *Housing Statement* outlines a target of 2.24 million new houses across the state by 2051. This far exceeds the 1.6 million additional dwellings projected by the Victorian Government's own 'Victoria in Future' forecast.

Darebin's population is forecast to increase by 65,000 residents to 215,000 by 2041 (Forecast id, as at October 2023), requiring an additional 28,700 dwellings. Council's own work, based on current planning control and policy settings, suggests approximately 93,000 new dwellings could hypothetically be developed within the municipality. This suggests that Darebin already has the capacity to accommodate the projected demand to 2041.

The draft housing target of 72,000 new dwellings for Darebin would effectively double the number of houses in the municipality by 2051, exceeding the forecasted need by 2.5 times as identified in Darebin's draft Housing Strategy. Thus, new housing would need to be delivered at a rate well above trend and higher than any level of growth previously experienced in Darebin.

Darebin therefore views the draft housing targets, in excess of current and future need, to represent a policy goal rather than actual housing need, whose purpose is to put downward pressure on housing affordability. While such a goal is ambitious, Darebin questions the practicality of the draft housing targets.

To meet the housing target, significant government incentives and investment are required, beyond what the private market will provide. Without such support, there is a risk that the proposed housing targets set the state and local governments up for failure from the very outset.

### Implementation challenges

The planning system or local government cannot deliver housing or force the private market to construct more dwellings. If the targets relate to the number of approved planning permits, local government can only assess and approve submitted applications. It has no control over the number of applications it receives. Equally, if

housing targets relate to the number of constructed dwellings, local government can only approve planning permit applications. It cannot compel developers to act on permits.

Since most new housing will be delivered by the private market in response to actual demand, it remains uncertain whether the housing targets will be delivered if demand does not eventually materialise. Ultimately, planning can only create the right settings for private development by ensuring sufficient land is zoned to accommodate projected growth and that no unnecessary barriers are in place for the approval of development.

The role of a local government in delivering the housing targets and the metrics for evaluating and measuring the delivery of housing is unclear.

Preliminary information released to the public by the Victorian Government suggests that the targets relate to the number of houses constructed by 2051. Based on officer level briefings and meeting with the Department of Transport and Planning representatives, it is understood that the housing target is an expression of the 'feasible capacity' of residential land within a municipality.

Nevertheless, housing targets should reflect realistic capacity and not rely on theoretical capacity, by considering the realistic carrying capacity of land, informed by market testing of certain forms of development and densities. The Victorian Government should clarify what constitutes 'feasible capacity' and how this will be measured. If feasible capacity relates to development feasibility, guidance should be provided to Councils on defining what constitutes feasible development and the process to undertake feasibility testing. This will help integrate feasibility into housing strategies and inform decisions on the zoning of residential land.

### Consider broader impediments to housing supply

A considerable number of approved planning permits are in the development pipeline and can increase housing supply in the near term. But these are not being acted upon by developers. For example, the Municipal Association of Victoria

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(MAV) suggests that approved planning permits in the development pipeline could allow for the construction of 120,000 dwellings across the state.

The issue is therefore not whether planning approvals for new housing are now being granted by local governments. Rather, issues such as construction costs, interplay of financial markets with interest rates, taxation settings, profitability, sales rates, the availability of labour, and other market factors are influencing the efficient delivery of new and affordable housing. The Victorian Government should therefore focus on leveraging these factors.

### Infrastructure to support housing targets

Doubling the number of houses in a municipality will place significant strain on existing local infrastructure and services. To address this, housing targets must be accompanied by a commitment from the Victorian Government to significantly increase and plan long-term investment to support and improve infrastructure and services.

Besides physical constraints and access to public transport, the housing targets should consider:

- ◆ Access to existing or planned areas of public open space and other social infrastructure.
- ◆ Access to existing or planned employment land.
- ◆ The capacity of health and education services to accommodate growth.
- ◆ The ability of utilities and other development infrastructure to support development.

These factors would help guide necessary investments in alignment with population growth and facilitate the effective staging of development.

### Including diversity and affordability in housing targets

Housing targets should consider housing diversity and not just supply of new houses and should include targets for social and affordable housing. To increase housing choice in well-located areas, it

is important that new housing is provided to be responsive to the needs of a diverse cross-section of the community. This would ensure new residents are not forced to settle in less accessible, outer areas of the city or the state, where housing is more affordable, but ongoing transport costs are high.

Most of the new housing developed in Darebin in recent years has consisted of one- and two-bedroom dwellings. However, there is a growing need for larger housing, including apartments, in inner-urban areas that is responsive to the needs of families and larger households. Housing targets should therefore also consider diversity outcomes such as the need for: different forms and sizes of houses (number of bedrooms, development typologies); accessible and adaptable design; social and affordable housing; and key worker housing.

All levels of government and the private sector have a role to play in urgently increasing the supply of non-market social and affordable housing. The current system, which relies on voluntary negotiated agreements with developers, is not sufficient for addressing the current crisis.

### Modelling inputs into targets

It is important that the urban modelling prepared by the Victorian Government reflects infrastructure capacity, as it would determine the actual carrying capacity of land to accommodate new development and inform where infrastructure upgrades are necessary.

The proposed 50% capacity discount to heritage areas may be insufficient. In Council's experience, heritage areas within current residential areas largely remain intact. Most new development here involves existing single dwellings being restored or extended with minimal medium-density development. Therefore, a 50% discount may be more relevant to heritage retail strips and commercial areas, but not predominantly residential areas.

Darebin is experiencing underdevelopment in highly accessible residential areas of the municipality with high land values, where dual

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occupancy/side-by-side development is favoured over higher-density development. The feasibility modelling should factor in this issue to avoid applying unrealistic density expectations. Further guidance on suitable controls (including facilitating lot consolidation) to overcome issues of underdevelopment is needed.

Furthermore, covenants are an important consideration when modelling capacity. For example, a significant portion of northwest Reservoir is covered by restrictive covenants that limit development to single dwellings on a lot. Therefore, covenants too will significantly impact capacity.

### Housing statement refinement and implementation process

Darebin welcomes the Victorian Government’s consultation on the draft housing targets. It is important that the final housing targets meaningfully consider and respond to submissions made by Councils, peak bodies, and the community. Continued engagement is important for ensuring realistic final housing targets are set collaboratively rather than being imposed on Councils and the community.

Darebin’s draft Housing Strategy is currently open for community consultation.

The next phase of the project will seek to implement aspects of the strategy into the planning scheme. Council is willing to partner to pilot and assess the Victorian Government’s housing targets through this implementation process. Short of this, it is requested that detailed guidance is provided on how recently completed strategic work is to respond to the housing targets once they are finalised.

### We would like to see:

- Adoption of a more realistic approach to setting housing targets that align with actual population growth and delivery capacity, as outlined in Darebin’s draft housing strategy.
- Provision of clear guidance on the evaluation and measurement of proposed housing targets,

defining the role of local government in their implementation.

- Addressing broader impediments to housing supply by influencing key factors such as construction costs, financial markets, interest rates, taxation, profitability, sales rates, labour availability, and other market dynamics to effectively unblock housing development.
- Commitment to a significant increase in investment for supporting infrastructure and services alongside the introduction of housing targets, establishing a long-term plan for sustained support.
- Promotion of housing diversity by ensuring targets include a range of housing types and sizes, accessible and adaptable designs, as well as targets for social, affordable, and key worker housing.
- Incorporation of detailed feedback from Council into the modelling of housing targets to ensure they are realistic and consider limitations such as restrictive covenants, heritage precincts, and underdevelopment.
- Maintaining ongoing engagement with Councils to refine housing targets, offering opportunities for partnerships and pilot projects within Darebin’s new housing strategy.

### Conclusion

Darebin Council is committed to collaborating with the State and other stakeholders to advance the pillars framing the future Plan for Victoria. By aligning our efforts, sharing resources, and collaborating on place-based initiatives, we can create a more resilient, inclusive, and prosperous future for all residents.

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**9.6 DECLARATION OF A SPECIAL CHARGE : SOLAR SAVER  
ROUND 4.2 (BATCH 5)****Author:** Senior Officer, Solar Saver**Reviewed By:** General Manager City Sustainability and Strategy

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Solar Saver program is an action of the Council Plan 2021-25. A target of 150 system installations has been set in the Council Plan Action Plan for 2024/25 for the Solar Saver program.

There are 15 installations enabled through this special charge declaration batch. The value of this proposed Special Charge declaration is \$90,716.73 excluding GST. This is the last batch that will be processed prior to applying a 5% processing fee as per the Council decision on 24 June.

If supported, Council will pay the upfront cost for installation and supply of the solar power systems and split systems for heating and cooling at properties as listed in **Appendix A**. Council will be repaid these costs, as detailed in confidential **Appendix B**. Around 30-40% of the gross cost is returned to Council at the point that works are invoiced for the Small Technology Certificates (STCs) generated by the solar systems. Most participants are eligible for State Government rebates, and this will reduce the upfront cost to Council and the amount charged to participants. The value of Solar Victoria rebates is estimated to be \$17,818.22 excl. GST.

No interest is charged to participants on Special Charge repayments. Annual repayments are more than offset by participants' savings on their energy bills. Therefore, the program provides the upfront financial supported for those that need it most environmental benefits.

This report recommends that Council declare a Special Charge Scheme under Section 163 of the *Local Government Act 1989* for the purposes of defraying expenses relating to the provision of solar energy systems and other energy efficient appliances on residential properties participating in the Solar Saver program. No objections were received in response to the public notification process.

<b>Officer Recommendation</b>
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**That Council:**

- (1) Having complied with the requirements of sections 163A, 163B and 223 of the Local Government Act 1989 ("Act"), and otherwise according to law, declares a Special Charge ("Special Charge") under section 163 of the Act as follows:
  - a. A Special Charge is declared for the period commencing on the day on which Council issues a notice levying payment of the special rate and concluding on the tenth anniversary of that day.
  - b. The Special Charge is declared for the purpose of defraying any expense incurred by Council in relation to the provision of solar energy systems on properties participating in the Solar Saver scheme, which:

- 
- i. Council considers there is or will be a special benefit to those persons required to pay the Special Charge (and who are described in succeeding parts of this resolution); and
      - ii. Arises out of Council's functions of advocating and promoting proposals which are in the best interests of the community and ensuring the peace, order and good government of Council's municipal district.
    - c. The total:
      - i. Cost of performing the function described in paragraph 1(b) of this resolution is \$90,716.73 excl. GST; and
      - ii. Amount for the Special Charge to be levied is \$90,716.73 excl. GST, or such other amount as is lawfully levied as a consequence of this resolution.
    - d. The Special Charge is declared in relation to all rateable land described in the table included as confidential Appendix B to this report, in the amount specified in the table as applying to each piece of rateable land.
    - e. The following list is specified as the criteria that form the basis of the Special Charge so declared:
      - Ownership of any land described in paragraph 1(d) of this resolution.
    - f. The following is specified as the manner in which the Special Charge so declared will be assessed and levied:
      - i. A Special Charge calculated by reference to the size of the solar energy system being installed and the particular costs of installation at each property participating in the Solar Saver scheme, in respect of which an Agreement has been executed, totalling \$90,716.73 excl. GST for the residential batch, being the total cost of the scheme to Council
      - ii. To be levied each year for a period of 10 years.
    - g. Having regard to the preceding paragraphs of this resolution and subject to section 166(1) of the Act, let it be recorded that the owners of the land described in paragraph 1(d) of this resolution will pay the Special Charge in the amount set out in paragraph 1(f) of this resolution in the following manner:
      - i. Payment annually by a lump sum on or before one month following the issue by Council of a notice levying payment under section 163(4) of the Act; or
      - ii. Payment annually by four instalments to be paid by the dates which are fixed by Council in a notice levying payment under section 163(4) of the Act.
  - (2) Considers that there will be a special benefit to those required to pay the Special Charge *because* there will be a benefit to them that is over and above, or greater than, the benefit that is available to those who are not subject to the proposed Special Charge, as a result of the expenditure proposed by the Special Charge, in that the properties will have the benefit of a solar energy system being installed.
  - (3) For the *purposes* of having determined the total amount of the Special Charge to be levied:
    - a. Considers and formally records that only those rateable properties included in the Solar Saver scheme as proposed will derive a special benefit from the imposition of the Special Charge, and there are no community benefits to be paid by Council; and



- b. Formally determines for the purposes of section 163(2)(a), (2A) and (2B) of the Act that the estimated proportion of the total benefits of the Special Charge to which the performance of the function or the exercise of the power relates (including all special benefits and community benefits) that will accrue as special benefits to those who are liable to pay the Special Charge is 100%.
- (4) Directs that notice be given to all owners and occupiers of properties included in the Scheme in writing of the decision of Council to declare and levy the Special Charge, and the reasons for the decision. For the purposes of this paragraph, the reasons for the decision of Council to declare the Special Charge are that:
- a. There is no objection to the Scheme, and it is otherwise considered that there is a broad level of support for the Special Charge from all property owners and occupiers.
  - b. Council considers that it is acting in accordance with the functions and powers conferred on it under the Local Government Act 1989, having regard to its role, purposes and objectives under the Act, particularly in relation to its functions of advocating and promoting proposals which are in the best interests of the community and ensuring the peace, order and good government of Council's municipal district.
  - c. All those who are liable or required to pay the Special Charge and the properties respectively owned or occupied by them will receive a special benefit of a solar energy system being installed at the property.
  - d. Where a participant wishes to withdraw from the Scheme, agrees to such withdrawal where the participant has given written notice of their desire to withdraw from the Scheme before Council has incurred any expenditure in relation to the participant's solar system.

## BACKGROUND / KEY INFORMATION

Through its Council Plan and newly adopted Climate Emergency Plan 2024-2030, Council is committed to take action on the climate emergency. In the Council Plan, this is detailed in Big Action 3 and in Strategic direction 3, which both highlight Darebin's leadership in driving reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and support for vulnerable communities. In Strategic Objective number 3, Council has committed to take an adaptation approach and build resilience in the community. Strategic Action 3.1 supports the 4-year program to support solar installation and energy efficiency retrofits for our vulnerable households.

Key aspects of the Solar Saver program include:

- Council undertakes procurement of good value solar systems and installation with 10-year warranties.
- Program participants register interest, receive quotes and the property owners sign an owner agreement.
- Council declares a Special Charge and pays the upfront cost of the solar system and installation for participants.
- Solar Saver participants pay the Special Charge over a 10-year period to reimburse Council's upfront payment – which is more than offset by their energy bill savings.
- As detailed below, Council has resolved that interest is not charged to participants and that the program will be funded through Council's existing budget.

This is the fifth Special Charge to be declared for the Solar Saver program round 4.2.

Over 2,000 households have participated in previous Darebin Council Solar Saver programs.

#### Public Notice

On 22 July 2024 the CEO through its delegation authorised the intention to declare a Special Charge (**Appendix C**):

*CEO Authorises, through its current instrument of delegation passed on 24 October 2022:*

- (1) *Council hereby gives notice of its intention to declare a Special Charge in accordance with section 163 of the Local Government Act 1989 (Act) as follows:*
  - a) *Council declares a Special Charge for the period commencing on the day on which Council issues a notice levying payment of the special rate and concluding on the tenth anniversary of that day.*
  - b) *We declare this Special Charge for the purpose of defraying any expense incurred by Council in relation to the provision of solar energy systems on residential properties participating in the Solar Saver scheme, which:*
    - i. *Council considers is or will be a special benefit to those persons or organisations required to pay the Special Charge (and who are described in succeeding parts of this resolution); and*
    - ii. *Arises out of Council's functions of advocating and promoting proposals which are in the best interests of the community and ensuring the peace, order and good government of Council's municipal district.*
  - c) *The total:*
    - i. *Cost of performing the function described in paragraph 1(b) of this resolution is \$90,716.73 excl. GST; and*
    - ii. *Amount for the Special Charge to be levied is \$90,716.73 excl. GST, or such other amount as is lawfully levied as a consequence of this resolution.*
  - d) *We declare the Special Charge in relation to all rateable land described in the table included as Appendix B to this report, in the amount specified in the table as applying to each piece of rateable land.*
  - e) *Ownership of any land described in paragraph 1(d) of this resolution is the basis of the Special Charge.*
  - f) *The Special Charge will be assessed and levied as follows:*
    - i. *Each Special Charge is calculated by reference to the size of the solar energy system being installed and the particular costs of installation at each property participating in the Solar Saver scheme, in respect of which an Owner Agreement has been executed, totalling \$90,716.73 being the total cost of the scheme to Council;*
    - ii. *The Special Charge will be levied each year for a period of 10 years.*
  - g) *Having regard to the preceding paragraphs of this resolution and subject to section 166(1) of the Act, it is recorded that the owners of the land described in paragraph 1(d) of this resolution will, subject to a further resolution of Council, pay the Special Charge in the amount set out in paragraph 1(f) of this resolution in the following manner:*

- i. Payment annually by a lump sum on or before one month following the issue by Council of a notice levying payment under section 163(4) of the Act; or Payment annually by four instalments to be paid by the dates which are fixed by Council in a notice levying payment under section 163(4) of the Act.*
- (2) Council considers that there will be a special benefit to the persons required to pay the Special Charge because there will be a benefit to those persons that is over and above, or greater than, the benefit that is available to persons who are not subject to the proposed Special Charge, as a result of the expenditure proposed by the Special Charge, in that the properties will have the benefit of a solar energy system being installed.*
- (3) For the purposes of having determined the total amount of the Special Charge to be levied:
  - a) Council considers and formally records that only those rateable properties included in the Solar Saver scheme as proposed will derive a special benefit from the imposition of the Special Charge, and there are no community benefits to be paid by Council; and*
  - b) Formally determines for the purposes of section 163(2) (a), (2A) and (2B) of the Act that the estimated proportion of the total benefits of the Special Charge to which the performance of the function or the exercise of the power relates (including all special benefits and community benefits) that will accrue as special benefits to the persons who are liable to pay the Special Charge is 100%.**
- (4) CEO will give public notice in The Age newspaper of Council's via authorisation of this report. Authorisation form has been included in this report as Appendix C.*
- (5) Council will send separate letters, enclosing a copy of: authorisation form, Appendix C to this report; Appendix A to this report; and the public notice referred to in Paragraph 4 of this resolution, to the owners of the properties included in the scheme, advising of Council's intention to levy the Special Charge, the amount for which the property owner will be liable, the basis of calculation of the Special Charge, and notification that submissions and/or objections in relation to the proposal will be considered by Council in accordance with sections 163A, 163B and 223 of the Act.*
- (6) Council will convene a meeting of the Hearing of Submissions Committee, at a date and time to be fixed, to hear any persons or organisations who, in their written submissions made under section 223 of the Act, advise that they wish to appear in person, or to be represented by a person specified in the submission, at a meeting in support of their submission.*
- (7) CEO authorises the Acting Manager Climate Emergency and Sustainable Transport to carry out any and all other administrative procedures necessary to enable Council to carry out its functions under sections 163A, 163(1A), (1B) and (1C), 163B and 223 of the Act.'*

**Previous Council Resolution**

At its meeting held on 24 October 2022, Council resolved:

- (1) 'Awards the appointment of The Environment Shop Pty Ltd as the trustee for Environment Futures Trust, trading as EnviroGroup as supplier of contract no. CT20222 for the Darebin Solar Saver Program 2022 – 2025 for Supply - Residential and non-residential systems: up to 100kW. The contract terms are to commence on 21 November 2022 and conclude on 30 June 2025 with the option to extend to 31 December 2025.*

- (2) *Awards the appointment of The Environment Shop Pty Ltd as the trustee for Environment Futures Trust, trading as EnviroGroup as supplier of contract no. CT20222 for the Darebin Solar Saver Program 2022 – 2025 for Supply – Efficient Heating and Cooling systems: up to 10kW. The contract terms are to commence on 21 November 2022 and conclude on 30 June 2025 with the option to extend to 31 December 2025. This will be subject to a trial of 20 installations in 2022-2023.*
- (3) *Authorises the General Manager City Sustainability and Strategy to finalise and execute the supply contracts on behalf of Darebin Council, and all subsequent contracts associated with future implementation stages for supply - residential and non-residential solar PV systems during the contract period.*
- (4) *Authorises the General Manager City Sustainability and Strategy to finalise and execute the supply contracts on behalf of Darebin Council, and all subsequent contracts associated with future implementation stages for supply - efficient heating and cooling systems during the contract period.*
- (5) *Authorises the General Manager City Sustainability and Strategy to review and approve contract variation requirements within the scope of service provisions and subject to satisfactory performance reviews. This includes the 6 months price variation allowed in the contract.*
- (6) *Authorises the General Manager City Sustainability and Strategy to exercise options for extensions if and when required.'*

At its meeting held on 24 October 2022, Council resolved:

- (1) *'In the exercise of the powers conferred by Section 11 of the Local Government Act 2020 (the Act) and the other legislation referred to in the attached Instruments of Delegation, resolves:*
  - a. *To delegate to the person holding the position, acting in or performing the duties of Chief Executive Officer the powers, duties and functions set out in the 'Instrument of Delegation to the Chief Executive Officer (S5)' (Appendix B) subject to the conditions and limitations specified in that Instrument of Delegation.*
  - b. *To delegate to the members of Council staff holding, acting in or performing the duties of the officers or positions referred to in the 'Instrument of Delegation to members of Council staff (S6)' (Appendix C) the powers, duties and functions set out in that instrument, subject to the conditions and limitations specified in that Instrument.*
  - c. *Adopts and affix Council's Common Seal to the following Instruments of Delegation provided as attachments to this report:*
    - i. *Instrument of Delegation from Council to the CEO (S5) (Appendix B);*
    - ii. *Instrument of Delegation from Council to members of Council Staff (S6) (Appendix C);*
  - d. *That these instruments come into force immediately the Common Seal of Council is affixed to each instrument.'*

At its meeting held on 24 June 2024, Council resolved in part to:

- (1) Endorse the revised Solar Saver program (Special Charge) eligibility criteria for 2024-25.
- (2) Endorse increasing the financial cap per household from \$6,000 to \$10,000, and give households the option to make upfront payments on-top of the cap if they wish to install approved products that would exceed the \$10,000 cap.

- (3) Endorse making the following products available for Special Charge customers:
  - a. Solar panels
  - b. Split system air conditioning and heating
  - c. Hot water heat pump systems.
- (4) Endorse allowing former Darebin Solar Saver residential customers who have completely paid back their debt to Council to apply to participate in the special charge program again.
- (5) Endorse introducing a 5% processing fee for Special Charge customers, where customers pay a processing fee that is equal to 5% of the value of the product/s they are having installed through the Special Charge scheme.

All customers included in this Special Charge Declaration are part of Batch 5. Batch 5 customers signed quotes for the Solar Saver program prior to this Council resolution coming into effect. All future customers will also have a 5% processing fee applied to the amount they are required to pay Council.

### **ALIGNMENT TO 2041 DAREBIN COMMUNITY VISION**

Strategic Direction 3: Climate, Green and Sustainable

### **ALIGNMENT TO 2021-25 COUNCIL PLAN**

Strategic Direction 3: Climate, Green and Sustainable

### **ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

3.1 We will adapt to climate change and build the resilience of our community, infrastructure and the built environment, with a focus on our vulnerable communities at risk of fuel poverty, and flooding

This project is aligned to Strategic Action 3-1. Through Solar Saver 4-year program, support solar installation and energy efficiency retrofits for our vulnerable households, including public and social housing, and renters.

- Batch 5 in round 4.2 of the Solar Saver program will see 79kW of solar powered generation. This will help avoid 117 tCO<sub>2</sub> per year, which is equivalent of taking 43 cars off the road each year.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Proposed Special Charge Declaration**

Under Section 163 of the *Local Government Act 1989 (Act)*, Council is empowered to declare a Special Charge for the purposes of defraying any expenses in relation to the performance of a function or the exercise of a power of Council, if Council considers that the performance of the function or the exercise of the power is, or will be, of special benefit to the persons or organisations required to pay the special rate or Special Charge.

In this case, the installation of solar energy systems or energy efficient equipment on properties as part of the Solar Saver program arises out of Council's functions of advocating and promoting proposals which are in the best interests of the community and ensuring the peace, order and good governance of Council's municipal district and promotes the social, economic and environmental viability and sustainability of the municipal district.

Each participating property has signed an Owner Agreement with Council to participate in the scheme, which includes the overall cost and repayments which would be paid by the property should the scheme be approved (see confidential **Appendix B**).

In September 2004, the Minister for Local Government issued a guideline for the preparation of Special Charge schemes. The guideline specifically deals with the calculation of the maximum total amount that a council may levy as a Special Charge.

The guideline requires that Council identify the following:

- A. Purpose of the works
- B. Ensure coherence
- C. Calculate total cost
- D. Identify special beneficiaries
- E. Determine the properties to include
- F. Estimate total special benefits
- G. Estimate community benefits
- H. Calculate the benefit ratio
- I. Calculate the maximum total levy.

**A. Purpose of the Works**

The purpose of the works is to supply and install solar energy systems or energy efficient equipment on properties to reduce energy costs and encourage and increase the use of renewable energy in Darebin.

**B. Ensure Coherence**

The proposed works have a natural coherence with the proposed beneficiaries, as the properties proposed to be included in the scheme are receiving solar energy systems to the value of their participation.

**C. Calculate the Total Cost**

The proposed installations include the following items:

- Assessment and administration costs
- Supply and installation of solar energy systems

For the purposes of section 163(1) of the Act, the total cost of the works is calculated at **\$90,716.73** for the residential batch based on signed agreements.

The expenses in the estimate of works are consistent with the allowable expenses listed in section 163(6) of the Act.

**D. Identify the Special Beneficiaries**

Council is required to identify those properties that would receive a special benefit from the proposed works. A special benefit is received by a property if the proposed works or services will provide a benefit that is additional to or greater than the benefit to other properties.

The Ministerial Guideline notes that a special benefit is considered to exist if it could reasonably be expected to benefit the owners or occupiers of the property. It is not necessary for the benefit to be used by the particular owners or occupiers of a specified property at a particular time in order for a special benefit to be attributed to the property.

Property owners participating in the Solar Saver program are considered to receive special benefit from the proposed supply and installation of solar PV systems by means of:

- Reduced energy costs over the life of the solar PV system
- Ownership of the solar PV system after the special rate repayments are paid in full
- Increased property value

The proposed properties taking part in the scheme, the owners of which have signed an Owner Agreement with Council to participate in the scheme, are listed in **Appendix A**.

#### **E. Determine Properties to Include**

Once the properties that receive special benefit are identified, Council must decide which properties to include in the scheme. If a property will receive a special benefit but is not included in the scheme, the calculation of the benefit ratio will result in Council paying the share of costs related to the special benefits for that property.

It is accepted that only those properties at which the solar energy systems are installed will receive a special benefit from the scheme. Accordingly, it is proposed to include only those properties whose owners have signed Owner Agreements in the scheme. Council will not, then, be required to pay a share of costs related to special benefits for any property that is not included in the scheme.

#### **F. Estimate Total Special Benefits**

As per the Ministerial Guideline for Special Rates and Charges, total special benefits are defined according to the formula below:

$$\mathbf{TSB} = \mathbf{TSB}_{(in)} + \mathbf{TSB}_{(out)}$$

- **TSB** is the estimated total special benefit for all properties that have been identified to receive a special benefit
- **TSB<sub>(in)</sub>** is the estimated total special benefit for those properties that are included in the scheme
- **TSB<sub>(out)</sub>** is the estimated total special benefit for those properties with an identified special benefit that are not included in the scheme

For the purposes of the proposed scheme, total special benefits have been calculated as follows:

- **TSB<sub>(in)</sub>** – The estimated total special benefit is based on the quoted cost of the solar PV system to be installed (which has been included in the Owner Agreement signed by the property owner). It is expected that the benefit in reduced energy costs will exceed this special benefit.
- **TSB<sub>(out)</sub>** – This is not applicable as all participating properties are included.

**G. Estimate Community Benefits**

Whilst the reduction of energy use, greenhouse emissions and increase of renewable energy is considered a community benefit there are no direct quantifiable costs.

- **TCB** – Total Community Benefit is assessed to be 0 benefit units

**H. Calculate the Benefit Ratio**

The benefit ratio is calculated as:

$$R = \frac{\text{TSB}_{(\text{in})}}{\text{TSB}_{(\text{in})} + \text{TSB}_{(\text{out})} + \text{TCB}}$$

Where:

$$\text{TSB}_{(\text{in})} = \$90,716.73 \text{ for the residential batch;}$$

$$\text{TSB}_{(\text{out})} = 0$$

$$\text{TCB} = 0$$

$$R = 1$$

**I. Calculate the Maximum Total Levy**

In order to calculate the maximum total levy **S**, the following formula is used:

$$\underline{\mathbf{S = R \times C}}$$

Where **R** is the benefit ratio and **C** is the cost of all works

$$\text{Therefore } \mathbf{S} = 1 * \$90,716.73 = \mathbf{\$90,716.73}$$

Note there is no community benefit amount payable by Council.

**Apportionment of Costs**

Once the maximum levy amount has been calculated, it is necessary to establish an appropriate way to distribute these costs to all affected landowners.

As the properties have all received individual quotations based on the solar system and work required, it is proposed to apportion the costs based on these quotes. It is noted that the participants have been notified and signed agreements on the basis of these costs for the purpose of declaring this scheme.

It is proposed to distribute the costs as shown in confidential **Appendix B**.

**Statutory Process**

The Local Government Act requires Council to give public notice of its proposed declaration of the special charge and write to all people who will be liable to contribute. The proposed declaration of the special charge has been prepared in accordance with the Act. Public notice has been issued in accordance with the Act and no objections have been received.



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## CONSIDERATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (2020) PRINCIPLES

### Financial Management

- Should the proposed Special Charge scheme proceed, Council will pay \$90,716.73 (excluding GST, pre-rebate and post-STC claim), for the supply and installation of the solar PV systems on the residential properties listed in **Appendix A**. The gross amount, pre-rebate, pre-STC and incl. GST is \$125,449.20. If all expected rebates are provided, the Special Charge amount will be \$72,898.51 excl. GST (after the Small Technology Certificate (STC) claim and Solar Victoria rebate).
- Council will pay upfront costs for installation and supply of the solar power systems as listed in confidential **Appendix B**. Around 30% to 40% of this cost is returned to Council at the point that works are invoiced for the STCs generated by the solar systems. The balance is repaid by beneficiaries of the Special Charge Scheme over 10 years. Fourteen of the fifteen participants are also expected to be eligible for state government rebates and this is expected to reduce the upfront cost to Council and Special Charges to be raised. It is estimated that the total upfront cost will be reduced by approximately \$17,818.22 excl GST after rebates are confirmed. Thus, Council will pay \$72,898.51 (post STC, post rebates, excl GST) if all rebates are approved.
- The rebates adjustments will be made after Council's decision and when rebates and confirmation from all participants is confirmed.
- In accordance with their respective Owner Agreements property owners will pay for the cost of the solar energy system, listed in confidential **Appendix B** (and as adjusted above), by equal instalments apportioned over a 10-year period, commencing from October - November 2024.
- Council is expected to receive **\$9,071.67** in Special Charge repayments annually for this scheme over the 10-year period. Some households may pay the total amount earlier.
- Payments to Council by property owners for works via Special Charge schemes are GST exempt. Should a property be sold during the 10-year period in which the Special Charge scheme applies, the amount outstanding on the Special Charge scheme at the time of the property sale will be paid in full to Council.
- The administrative, contract management, community engagement and communications and compliance costs associated with administration of the Solar Saver program is provided for within the 2024-2025 budget as an operating project.

### Community Engagement

- All participating households have received a site visit and quotations to participate in the program. Council gave public notice and notified the participating ratepayers as per the CEO authorisation on the 22 July 2024.

### Other Principles for consideration

This report recommends proceeding with declaration of the Special Charge Schemes. This is supported by all the property owners that are proposed to be levied.

Council could also decide not to proceed with declaration of the Special Charge Scheme or seek further information to make a decision.

**Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles**

- (c) the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted;

**Public Transparency Principles**

- (b) Council information must be publicly available unless (i) the information is confidential by virtue of this Act or any other Act; or (ii) public availability of the information would be contrary to the public interest;

**Strategic Planning Principles**

- (b) strategic planning must address the Community Vision;
- (e) strategic planning must provide for ongoing monitoring of progress and regular reviews to identify and address changing circumstances;

**Service Performance Principles**

- (c) quality and costs standards for services set by the Council should provide good value to the municipal community;

**COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS****Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)**

The current residential batch is expected to see the installation of 79kW across 15 installations and an estimated equivalent annual greenhouse gas saving of 117 tCO<sub>2</sub>-e.

**Equity, Inclusion, Wellbeing and Human Rights Considerations:**

This batch is made up exclusively of households meeting the eligibility criteria set up by Council. 93% are expected to be eligible for the Solar Homes rebate from the Victorian Government. This program is also oriented to people facing discrimination as per eligibility criteria.

**Economic Development and Cultural Considerations**

For individual households participating, the program is designed so that they will save more on their energy bills than they will be paying back to Council so that they are financially better off from the outset.

This program is designed to reach Darebin's diverse community. Households who need interpreters or other communication support are prioritised.

**Operational Impacts**

This Special Charge Batch can be delivered within program resources.

**Legal and Risk Implications**

A risk analysis has been undertaken for the program. Solar installations are electrical works and are required by law to be signed off by an authorised electrician through a certificate of electrical safety.

Random independent audits of the work will also be undertaken by Council to ensure installations comply with Council specifications. Occupational Health and Safety processes have been assessed and will be audited on site through these audits. Ten-year warranties are required on panels, inverters and installation.

## IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS



The next step will be the installation phase of this batch of solar installations. The solar providers will manage the physical installations in communication with Council and the participants.

Independent auditors will be used to audit a random sample of the safe work procedures of the installations as they occur real time, as well as the electrical safety of the work, post-installation.

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

- *Local Government Act 1989 and 2020*
- The Macquarie Special Rates and Charges Manual 2012

## Attachments

- Solar Saver 4.2 - Batch 5 - list of addresses and cost to Council (**Appendix A**) [↓](#) 
- CONFIDENTIAL - Solar Saver 4.2 - Batch 5 - Property addresses and prices (**Appendix B**) Confidential - enclosed under separate cover
- Appendix C - Intention to declare a special charge Authorisation form - Solar Saver 4.2 Batch 5\_Redacted (**Appendix C**) [↓](#) 

## DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires members of Council staff and persons engaged under contract to provide advice to Council to disclose any conflicts of interest in a matter to which the advice relates.

The Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

## DECLARATION OF A SPECIAL CHARGE : SOLAR SAVER ROUND 4.2 (BATCH 5)

26 AUGUST 2024

## Appendix A

### Table of properties intended to be subject to the Solar Saver special charge scheme

Each listed property has been assessed as to the size of solar panel and installation costs and the owner has signed the Owner Agreement to have a solar energy system installed at their property.

#### FULL LIST OF ADDRESSES AND COSTS

Addresses
12 Gill Street RESERVOIR VIC 3073
73 Glasgow Avenue RESERVOIR VIC 3073
38 Stott Street NORTHCOTE VIC 3070
8/65 Newcastle Street PRESTON VIC 3072
169 Murray Road PRESTON VIC 3072
22 Grange Boulevard BUNDOORA VIC 3083
27 Harper Street NORTHCOTE VIC 3070
8 Francis Grove THORNBURY VIC 3071
51 Naroona Road ALPHINGTON VIC 3078
19 Prospect Hill Drive BUNDOORA VIC 3083
3/4 Pershing Street RESERVOIR VIC 3073
196 Gillies Street FAIRFIELD VIC 3078
6 Kalimna Street PRESTON VIC 3072
79 Raleigh Street THORNBURY VIC 3071
28/41-43 Leinster Grove NORTHCOTE VIC 3070

<b>Total cost to households (post STC, ex GST) and pre-Solar Victoria rebates applied</b>	\$90,716.73
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#### SUMMARY

TOTAL kilowatts to be installed	79kW
Number of installations	15
TOTAL cost to households (exc GST, post STC, pre rebate)	\$90,716.73
Projected price of STCs to be claimed (inc GST)	\$25,660.80
Projected rebates from Solar Victoria (exc GST)	\$ 17,818.22
Projected GROSS total cost to Council (inc GST, pre- STCs and pre-rebates)	\$125,449.20
Projected final cost to council (exc GST, post STCs, post Solar Victoria rebates)	\$72,898.51

## INTENTION TO DECLARE A SPECIAL CHARGE

23 JULY 2024

**Appendix E****Authorisation form: INTENTION TO DECLARE A SPECIAL CHARGE - SOLAR SAVER (4.2 BATCH 5)**

**CEO Authorises**, through its current instrument of delegation passed on 24 October 2022:

- (1) Council hereby gives notice of its intention to declare a Special Charge in accordance with section 163 of the Local Government Act 1989 (Act) as follows:
  - a) Council declares a Special Charge for the period commencing on the day on which Council issues a notice levying payment of the special rate and concluding on the tenth anniversary of that day.
  - b) We declare this Special Charge for the purpose of defraying any expense incurred by Council in relation to the provision of solar energy systems on residential properties participating in the Solar Saver scheme, which:
    - i. Council considers is or will be a special benefit to those persons or organisations required to pay the Special Charge (and who are described in succeeding parts of this resolution); and
    - ii. Arises out of Council's functions of advocating and promoting proposals which are in the best interests of the community and ensuring the peace, order and good government of Council's municipal district.
  - c) The total:
    - i. Cost of performing the function described in paragraph 1(b) of this resolution is \$90,716.73 ex GST; and the
    - ii. Amount for the Special Charge to be levied is \$90,716.73 ex GST (post STC rebates and pre Solar Vic rebates), or such other amount as is lawfully levied as a consequence of this resolution.
  - d) We declare the Special Charge in relation to all rateable land described in the table included as **Appendix B** to this report, in the amount specified in the table as applying to each piece of rateable land.
  - e) Ownership of any land described in paragraph 1(d) of this resolution is the basis of the Special Charge.
  - f) The Special Charge will be assessed and levied as follows:
    - i. Each Special Charge is calculated by reference to the size of the solar energy system being installed and the particular costs of installation at each property participating in the Solar Saver scheme, in respect of which an Owner Agreement has been executed, totalling \$90,716.73 ex GST (post STC, pre Solar Vic rebates) being the total cost of the scheme to Council;
    - ii. The Special Charge will be levied each year for a period of 10 years.
  - g) Having regard to the preceding paragraphs of this resolution and subject to section 166(1) of the Act, it is recorded that the owners of the land described in paragraph 1(d) of this resolution will, subject to a further resolution of Council, pay the Special Charge in the amount set out in paragraph 1(f) of this resolution in the following manner:
    - i. Payment annually by a lump sum on or before one month following the issue by Council of a notice levying payment under section 163(4) of the Act; or Payment annually by four instalments to be paid by the dates which are fixed by Council in a notice levying payment under section


INTENTION TO DECLARE A SPECIAL CHARGE

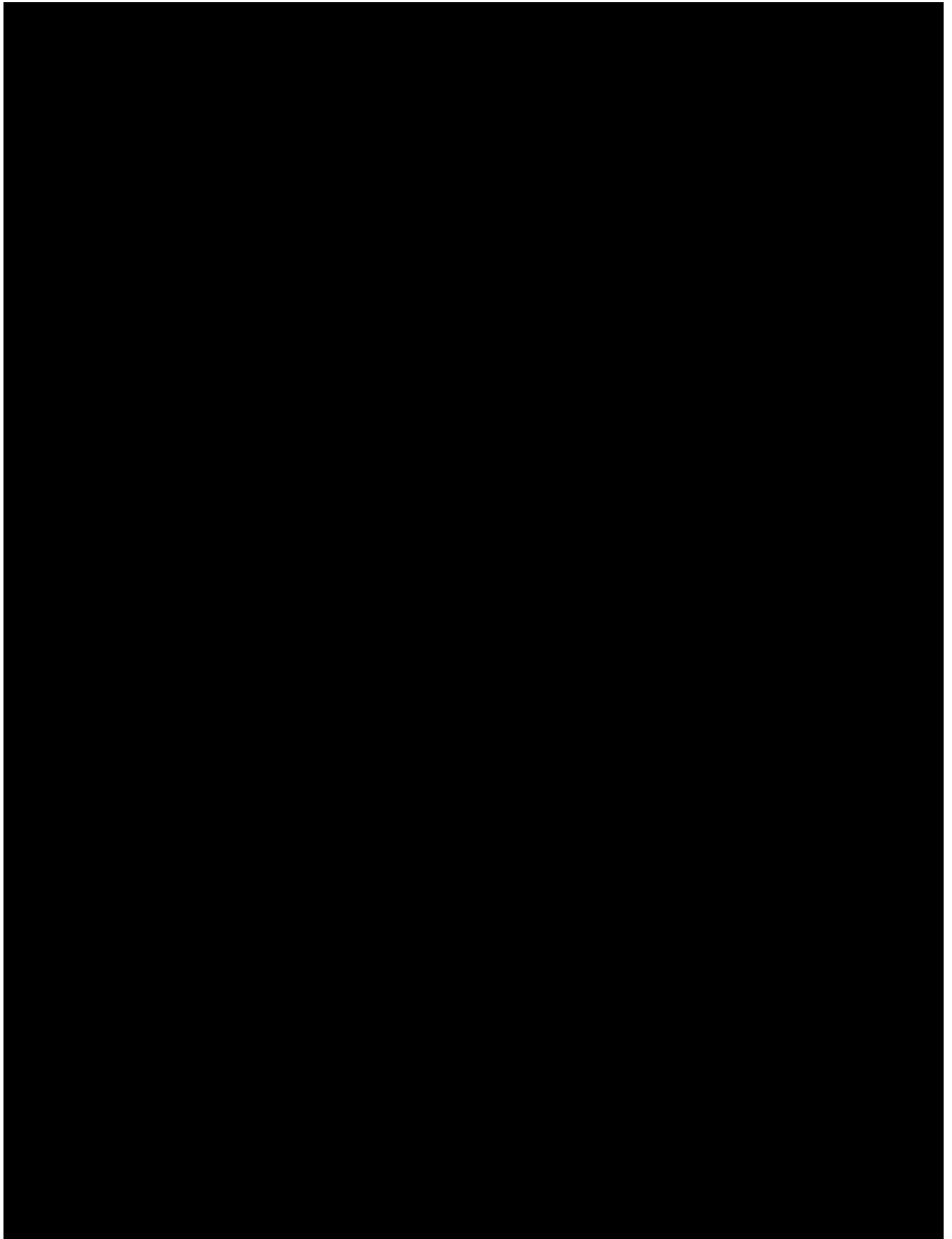
23 JULY 2024

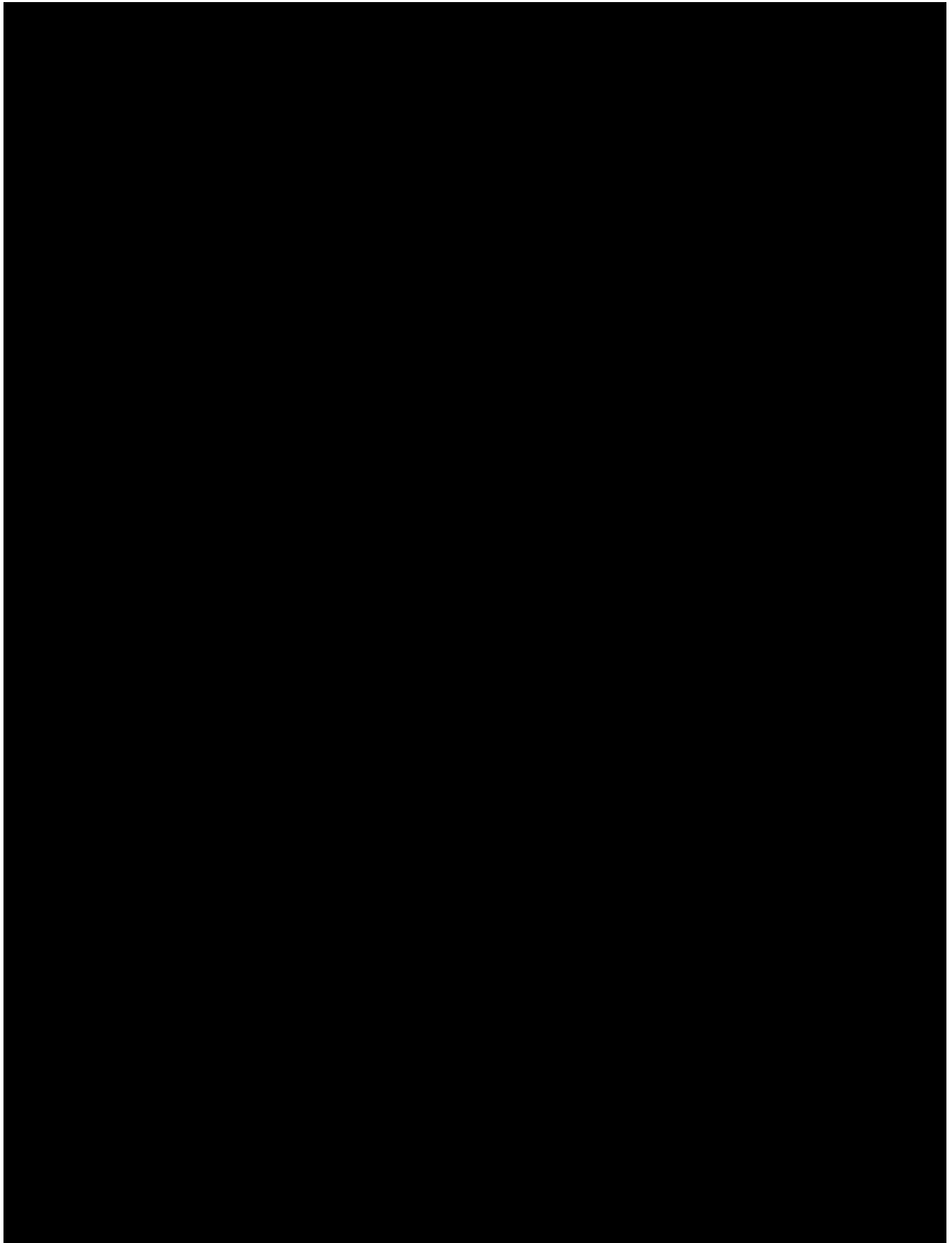
163(4) of the Act.

- (2) Council considers that there will be a special benefit to the persons required to pay the Special Charge because there will be a benefit to those persons that is over and above, or greater than, the benefit that is available to persons who are not subject to the proposed Special Charge, as a result of the expenditure proposed by the Special Charge, in that the properties will have the benefit of a solar energy system being installed.
- (3) For the purposes of having determined the total amount of the Special Charge to be levied:
  - a) Council considers and formally records that only those rateable properties included in the Solar Saver scheme as proposed will derive a special benefit from the imposition of the Special Charge, and there are no community benefits to be paid by Council; and
  - b) Formally determines for the purposes of section 163(2) (a), (2A) and (2B) of the Act that the estimated proportion of the total benefits of the Special Charge to which the performance of the function or the exercise of the power relates (including all special benefits and community benefits) that will accrue as special benefits to the persons who are liable to pay the Special Charge is 100%.
- (4) CEO will give public notice in The Age newspaper of Council's via authorisation of this report. Authorisation form has been included in this report as **Appendix E**.
- (5) Council will send separate letters, enclosing a copy of: authorisation form, Appendix E to this report; Appendix B to this report; and the public notice referred to in Paragraph 4 of this resolution, to the owners of the properties included in the scheme, advising of Council's intention to levy the Special Charge, the amount for which the property owner will be liable, the basis of calculation of the Special Charge, and notification that submissions and/or objections in relation to the proposal will be considered by Council in accordance with sections 163A, 163B and 223 of the Act.
- (6) Council will convene a meeting of the Hearing of Submissions Committee, at a date and time to be fixed, to hear any persons or organisations who, in their written submissions made under section 223 of the Act, advise that they wish to appear in person, or to be represented by a person specified in the submission, at a meeting in support of their submission.
- (7) CEO authorises the Manager Climate Emergency and Sustainable Transport to carry out any and all other administrative procedures necessary to enable Council to carry out its functions under sections 163A, 163(1A), (1B) and (1C), 163B and 223 of the Act.

CEO: Peter Smith

Approved	Not approved
	
Date: 22/07/2024	Date:







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**9.7 ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING IMPLEMENTATION****Author:** Team Leader Transport Planning**Reviewed By:** General Manager City Sustainability and Strategy

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report includes the outcomes from a recent expression of interest (EOI) seeking electric vehicle (EV) charging providers to install, operate and maintain EV chargers on Council's land.

Four submissions were received to the EOI. Some submissions have included the council nominated locations, and one has nominated additional charging locations.

Officers have assessed the EOIs and are recommending Council enter into partnership with recommended preferred provider(s).

The process to arrive at a lease agreement will include community consultation and relevant planning permit processes where required.

Future locations for electric vehicle charging infrastructure will be considered between Council and endorsed provider(s). This will enable a continued expansion of the EV charging network, which will align with Darebin's Climate Emergency Plan 2024-2030 and support the transition to low emissions vehicles.

<b>Officer Recommendation</b>
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**That Council:**

- (1) Enters into agreements with the following providers to supply and maintain with electric vehicle charging infrastructure at sites within Darebin determined by Council:
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_, and
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_.
- (2) Prohibits the advertising of tobacco, gambling (including lotteries and scratch tickets), alcohol, and fossil fuels in electric vehicle charging infrastructure lease agreements.
- (3) Authorise officers to run a new EOI process once provider(s) have installed 20 EV Chargers, or, five years have elapsed since the Council resolution, whichever comes first.
- (4) Delegates to the CEO (or their delegate) the authority to negotiate and execute agreements with endorsed provider(s) as required to implement Council's decision.

**BACKGROUND / KEY INFORMATION**

On 27 June 2022 Council endorsed the [Electric Vehicle Charging Policy](#) (EV Policy), implementing the 2021-2025 Council Plan Action item to "Develop a policy for how Council may permit commercial or private electric vehicle charging infrastructure on our public streets".

The EV charging policy provides guidance on:

- The circumstances under which Council may permit public charging infrastructure on Council owned/operated land.
- Consideration of measures for new developments, including ‘future proofing’ parking spaces for future car charging facilities.

### Electric Vehicle Charging – Expression of Interest

From 31 May to 5 July 2024, Council released to the market an EOI for EV charging providers to enter into a lease, under which the tenant will install, operate and maintain electric vehicle (EV) charging stations on Council managed land.

The EOI process has been created to enable Council to take a supporting role in the rollout of EV charging infrastructure, whilst not incurring the costs associated with installation and maintenance.

As part of the EOI process Council identified and proposed five premises across the City of Darebin that would be suitable for the installation of public EV chargers. The sites and types of chargers requested aligns with the approach in the Northern Council’s Alliance electric vehicle charging transition plan. The sites provided to the market included:

Option ID	Address	Description
N1	6-10 MITCHELL STREET NORTHCOTE 3070	Mitchell St carpark
N2	5-7 ARTHURTON ROAD NORTHCOTE 3070	Arthurton Rd carpark
P1	401 BELL STREET PRESTON 3072	Darebin Arts Centre carpark
P2	45-47 TOWNHALL AVE PRESTON 3072	Preston Library carpark
R1	25 EDWARDES STREET RESERVOIR 3073	Reservoir Library carpark

Respondents were also able to nominate alternative sites, either within these same activity centres or others across the City of Darebin.

Responses to the EOI were assessed against the evaluation criteria (**Appendix A**).

### Electric Vehicle Charging Speeds

The EOI recommended 50kW EV chargers. Speeds between 25-50kW DC are classified as medium/fast chargers<sup>1</sup> and caters for the *Opportunistic* charging that takes place when someone was going to that particular location anyway, and takes the opportunity to top up, because of the availability of a charger.

Charging speeds have a range of variables (ambient temp, battery state of charge etc.) however indicatively, in an hour of charging on a 50kW DC charger, a Tesla Model 3 Standard Range model could charge 70% of the battery capacity - for example, from 10% to 80%.

The NCA community transition plan recommended the rollout of opportunistic chargers around activity centres, including in Darebin.

<sup>1</sup> Community Electric Vehicle Transition Plan: Part A Prepared for the Northern Councils Alliance

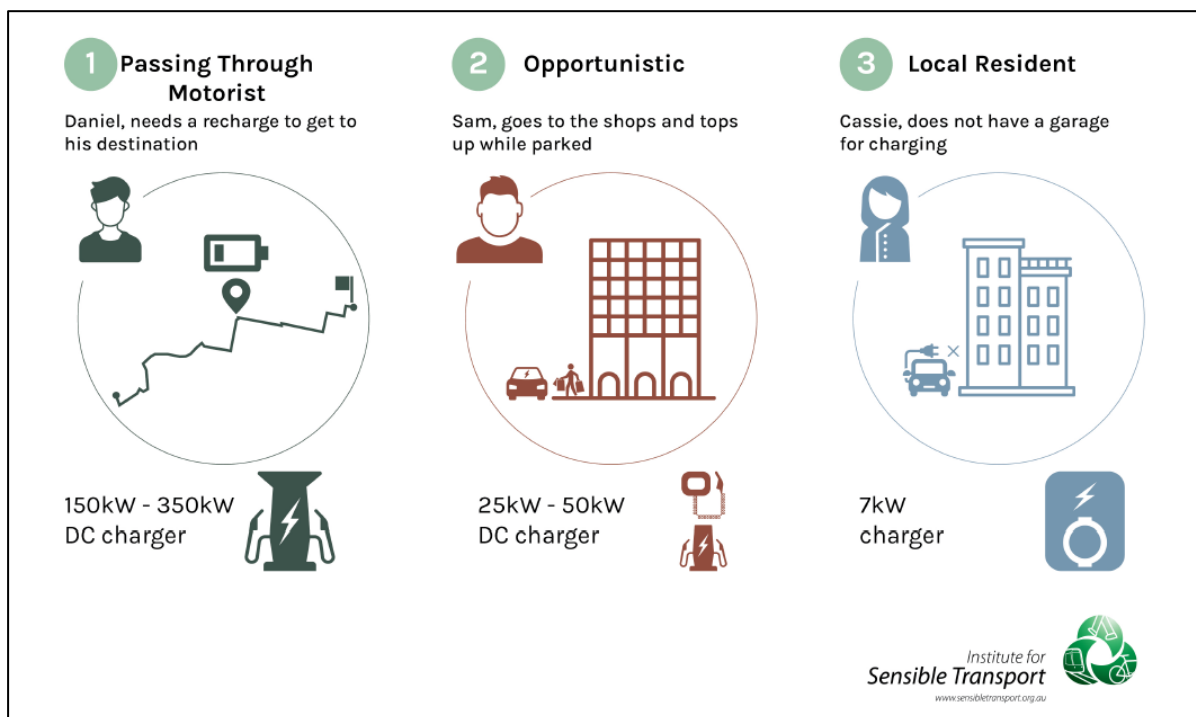


Figure 1: Relevant EV charger types depending on location.

**Previous Council Resolution**

At the Council meeting held on 27 June 2022, Council resolved:

**That Council:**

- (1) Adopts the updated Darebin Transport Strategy included at **Attachment A**.
- (2) Adopts the Electric Vehicle Charging Policy included at **Attachment B**.
- (3) Thanks the community and key stakeholders for providing valuable feedback to the process of developing the Darebin Transport Strategy Refresh and Electric Vehicle Charging Policy.

The 2023-24 Council Plan Action Plan included the action of running an EOI to identify potential EV charging partners.

**ALIGNMENT TO 2041 DAREBIN COMMUNITY VISION**

Strategic Direction 3: Climate, Green and Sustainable

**ALIGNMENT TO 2021-25 COUNCIL PLAN**

Strategic Direction 3: Climate, Green and Sustainable

**ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

3.4 We will reduce carbon emissions by switching to renewable energy on a large scale for Council buildings and through community focused initiatives

## DISCUSSION

### Recommended Providers

The recommended providers of ground mounted chargers achieved the highest scores during the evaluation process. The suppliers have experience working with Local Governments, will use 100% renewable energy and have committed to incorporate education and information about Wurrundjeri Woi Wurrung land and culture.

Officers considered that entering into lease agreements with the recommended providers will help ensure Council achieves its Climate Emergency Plan target of facilitating the installation of 66 public electric vehicle chargers within Darebin. The recommended providers offer slightly different approaches to providing a charging service and the locations being requested are also generally different. These differences would enable quicker expansion of the charging network within Darebin.

Currently there are a mixture of Darebin owned and managed slow and mid-range charging options for electric vehicle owners. There are currently 18 spaces for cars to charge at public chargers in Darebin. If the recommended providers are supported by Council, it is expected that this number will be added to within the next 4 to 8 months.

Locations will be considered between Council and the endorsed provider(s) to continue the expansion of the EV charging network. This is proposed to be facilitated by officers under delegation.

It is recommended that once either provider(s) has installed 20 EV chargers or five years have elapsed since the Council resolution (whichever comes first), Council would run a new EOI process to determine if other EV charging providers are interested in partnering with Council.

Prior to executing the lease agreement, a planning permit must be obtained by any provider before undertaking advertising activity. This would be stipulated as a requirement in the first step of the process, which would include signing a 'Heads of Agreement' by both parties. The planning application would undergo a formal notification process in accordance with the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. If applicable, officers will ensure that the lease stipulates that advertising of tobacco, gambling, alcohol, fossil fuels, consistent with the Council resolution of 26 September 2022, will not be permitted.

### Recommended Locations

Officers will work with endorsed providers in progressing the locations proposed in the EOI and alternative locations put forward by the providers.

Further information around the evaluation, locations and commercial details is provided in the confidential **Appendices B & C** issued under a separate cover.

## CONSIDERATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (2020) PRINCIPLES

### Financial Management

The proposed approach seeks to leverage private sector funding because it is fair for users, not ratepayers, to cover the costs of this infrastructure.

This also means that the expansion of EV charging infrastructure does not rely on Council funds. The role of Council in this model is to provide land (through a lease agreement), and enforcement to ensure compliance with the EV parking restrictions. Both the leasing function and enforcement function are provided within Council's normal operating budgets.

The costs associated with installing electric vehicle charging infrastructure and the ongoing maintenance will be borne by the EV charging suppliers. Revenue is then derived by the supplier through a 'user-pays' model or advertising.

The rent collected by Council through the lease agreements can be diverted back to services for the local community.

### **Community Engagement**

Previous consultation on the EV policy asked the community about preferred locations for EV chargers, and the EOI process is considered as implementing the Policy.

That said, following a Council resolution of the EV charging infrastructure suppliers, it is proposed that consultation will commence with impacted stakeholders including other Council departments, businesses and residents near the nominated sites.

One of the terms of the agreement would be that the lease agreement will be dependent on the outcome of consultation. Through consultation, if a location is determined as unsuitable, then Council will work with the provider in identifying alternative sites. Only when a location has successfully been through community consultation will Council and the provider enter into a lease agreement.

Once the sites are confirmed and leases are executed, works will begin on each site. It is expected that the time between signing the lease agreement and installation will be between 3 to 6 months.

### **Other Principles for consideration**

#### **Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles**

- (c) the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted;

#### **Public Transparency Principles**

- (a) Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of this Act or any other Act;

#### **Strategic Planning Principles**

- (b) strategic planning must address the Community Vision;

#### **Service Performance Principles**

- (a) services should be provided in an equitable manner and be responsive to the diverse needs of the municipal community;

## COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

### Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)

The transport sector is currently the third largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Australia, with direct emissions amounting for 21% of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions (Figure 6). Transport emissions increased by 8.7% from 2022, reflecting the ongoing recovery from COVID-19 related travel restrictions. Since 2005, transport emissions have increased by 19%.

When coupled with falling emissions in other sectors, transport's contribution to Australia's total emissions is projected to be 26% of all direct emissions without further action by 2030. This would result in transport being Australia's highest emitting sector by 2030.

Councils Climate Emergency Plan includes Action 2.4.2:

*Continue to implement the Darebin Electric Vehicle Policy to facilitate the expansion of the electric vehicle network by partnering with the Northern Council Alliance to implement the Community Electric Vehicle Transition Plan for public car charging including facilitating the installation of 66 public electric vehicle chargers within Darebin.*

### Equity, Inclusion, Wellbeing and Human Rights Considerations:

An Equity Impact Assessment (EIA) was undertaken when Councils EV policy was being developed.

During community consultation on the EV policy and through EIA process it was identified that personal ownership of EV's or other vehicles is beyond the means of many community members. Additionally, many community members also experience 'transport disadvantage' through inequitable access to public transport and safe bike and walking routes, especially in the northern and eastern areas of Darebin.

In this regard, it was recognised the important role the Darebin Transport Strategy (DTS) plays in overcoming these barriers and providing a range of convenient and safe transport choices. Through its various policies and actions, the DTS remains an important strategic document that directs public transport, bike riding, walking and road safety improvements within the municipality.

Consultation with Aboriginal and Torre Strait Islander organisations noted the importance to recognise that infrastructure is located on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung land and to use this project as an opportunity promote Aboriginal culture. This has been reflected in the EOI process and both recommended providers have committed to incorporating education and information about Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung land and culture.

### Economic Development and Cultural Considerations

It is expected that the charging infrastructure will contribute to the local economy, whereby people will often shop or dine during the charge duration.

### Operational Impacts

Standard car parking spaces will be reallocated to EV vehicles only in suitable locations.

In the early stage of the lease, utilisation may not be as high as a standard carpark in the same space. It is expected that over the life of the lease, the utilisation will be similar to current activity.

Council will be responsible for enforcing the 'EV vehicles only' restriction through Councils operating budgets. Road Safety Road Rule 203C governs stopping in a parking area for the charging of electric-powered vehicles. The Road Rule specifies:

- (1) *A driver must not stop in a parking area for the charging of electric-powered vehicles unless—*
  - (a) *the driver's vehicle is an electric-powered vehicle; and*
  - (b) *the electric-powered vehicle is plugged*



Example of Electric Vehicle Charging Only sign in accordance with the Road Rules

### Legal and Risk Implications

EV charging and technology is still a relatively new industry and a new form of infrastructure at public locations. Council will continue to work with providers and ensure providers have an adequate level of insurance cover that will be maintained as part of delivery of the project, including OHS and warranties.

All work must be carried out by a qualified electrician with a requirement to provide a safe work method statement (SWMS).

Council must follow the statutory processes outlined in Section 115 of the Local Government Act 2020. These processes will be followed as they relate to the value of the lease and term.

Changing car parking is sensitive, and members of the community may object to converting a car park into a charging bay. This could place any agreement with a provider at risk. To reduce this risk, localised consultation will occur before the final leasing agreement is entered into.

## IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

Once the successful provider(s) are confirmed, Council will seek to formally enter into leases with the selected operator for each site. It is intended that each lease will be for a term of 9 years and 360 days.

The successful supplier(s) will be required to meet minimum requirements and specific obligations under the negotiated lease agreement, including covering all the costs associated with the installation, maintenance and operation of the charging station. There will also be limitations on the type of advertising where relevant.



The implementation of EV chargers is expected to follow the below timeline for the remainder of 2024:

- Council Meeting – 26 August 2024
- Enter into Heads of Agreement, confirm locations and undertake community consultation- November 2024
- Planning permit process if relevant – from December 2024
- Issue Lease Agreement – December 2024
- Finalise Lease Agreement – January 2025
- Installation of first EV Chargers – from January 2025

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Darebin City Council Electric Vehicle Charging Policy
- Community Electric Vehicle Transition Plan: Part A, Northern Council Alliance
- Darebin Climate Emergency Plan 2024-2030
- Darebin Transport Strategy

## Attachments

- Expression of Interest Documentation (**Appendix A**)  
- CONFIDENTIAL - Electric Vehicle Charging Expression of Interest Evaluation (**Appendix B**) Enclosed under separate cover Confidential - enclosed under separate cover
- CONFIDENTIAL - Summary of Recommended Suppliers (**Appendix C**) Enclosed under separate cover Confidential - enclosed under separate cover
- CONFIDENTIAL - Provider Information for resolution on Electric Vehicle Charging Implementation (**Appendix D**) Enclosed under separate cover Confidential - enclosed under separate cover



**DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST**

Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires members of Council staff and persons engaged under contract to provide advice to Council to disclose any conflicts of interest in a matter to which the advice relates.

The Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that the General Manager City Sustainability and Strategy has an interest in this matter, and has disclosed this interest to the CEO.



## Request for Expressions of Interest

### Lease land for public EV charging stations ('EOI') No 2024-002

#### EOI CLOSING DATE:

**4:00pm Friday, 5 July 2024**

#### Lodging EOI submissions

#### Electronically – [Electric Vehicle Charging EOI](#)

Completed EOI form including all required attachments must be lodged using the above link before the closing date.

Please ensure you allow enough time to complete the form and upload your submission through the portal.

#### Warning

**Darebin City Council staff will accept no responsibility for lodging of EOI submissions.**

**Faxed, emailed, verbal or late EOI submissions are invalid and will not be considered.**

274 Gower Street

Preston VIC 3072

Tel: 8470 8888

[www.Darebin.vic.gov.au](http://www.Darebin.vic.gov.au)



**PART 1**

**INTRODUCTION – EOI DESCRIPTION**

Expressions of Interest (EOI) are sought by Darebin City Council (Council) to enter into a lease, under which the tenant will install, operate and maintain electric vehicle (EV) charging stations on the leased land ('Premises').

Respondents must submit an EOI in the manner required by this Request for Expressions of Interest (Request for EOI).

**1. Context**

Council is committed to supporting a transition of the community private vehicle fleet to EVs.

One of the ways Council can support this transition is by facilitating the expansion of the public EV charging network across the City of Darebin. Improving access to EV charging is an important action item in the [Darebin Transport Strategy](#). In 2022, Darebin Council endorsed our electric vehicle charging policy. Proponents are encouraged to review the policy (Part B) which is available [here](#).

**2. Council vision**

Council plans to have all activity centres in the City of Darebin well serviced with public EV chargers, so that all residents and visitors who require EV charging can access it.

**3. Premises**

Council has identified five (5) premises across the City of Darebin that would be suitable for the installation of public EV chargers. The 5 Premises are:

Option ID	Address	Description
N1	6-10 MITCHELL STREET NORTHCOTE 3070	Mitchell St carpark
N2	5-7 ARTHURTON ROAD NORTHCOTE 3070	Arthurton Rd carpark
P1	401 BELL STREET PRESTON 3072	Darebin Arts Centre carpark
P2	45-47 TOWNHALL AVE PRESTON 3072	Preston Library carpark
R1	25 EDWARDES STREET RESERVOIR 3073	Reservoir Library carpark

More detail on each of the Premises can be found at **Appendix A**.

Respondents may also propose alternative sites, either within these same activity centres or others across the City of Darebin. When selecting alternative sites, the respondents must give consideration to the requirements of Council’s electric vehicle charging policy.

Respondents must also avoid sites that are zoned ‘Residential’.

A condition of any lease entered into will be on the basis that the Premises are leased on an “as is” basis and Council has no responsibility or liability to undertake any works to the Premises.



#### 4. Lease agreement

For those respondents who best meet the evaluation criteria set by Council (Evaluation Criteria) to lease the Premises, Council intends to invite those respondents (Successful Respondents) to enter into a Heads of Agreement for a lease commencing on or after an agreed commencement date.

The lease will include the following key provisions:

- a) The projected length of the lease term will be limited to a maximum of nine (9) years and three hundred and sixty (360) days, with break clauses for both parties.
- b) The Successful Respondent is to construct the electric vehicle charging stations at the Premises at its own cost in accordance with an agreed construction program and required permits. This includes any requires upgrades for power supply to the Premises.
- c) The Successful Respondent will be responsible for all repairs and maintenance across the lease term.
- d) The Successful Respondent is required to install a dedicated, separate electrical meter at the Premises to ensure that the Successful Respondent is directly responsible for payment for the electricity. If no meter exists at the Premises, the Successful Respondent will be responsible for coordinating and funding the installation of one.
- e) The Successful Respondent will be responsible for removing all infrastructure and to make-good the Premises at the end of the lease term.

The parties acknowledge and agree that:

- a) Any lease agreement is not formalised until the agreement is fully executed and that either party may give notice to the other party withdrawing its interest in this matter at any time prior to full execution of the lease.
- b) The Successful Respondent will be liable for Council's legal costs where it gives Council notice under the above point 1 after signing the Heads of Agreement.

#### 5. Fees and outgoings

As part of this Request for EOI, respondents are asked to detail what financial payment they will provide to Council to lease the Premises. Current market value will be used in determining the rental fee payable. However, the community benefit provided by the Successful Respondent by installing the required infrastructure will be taken into account when assessing the Evaluation Criteria.

#### 6. Expressing interest

Suitably qualified Respondents that can satisfy the Evaluation Criteria and meet the Specification requirements for potential tenants ('Part 2 Specifications'), may express their interest in occupying the Premises under a lease with Council.



## 7. Evaluation criteria

EOI responses will be evaluated against the following criteria:

Criteria	Detail	Weighting
Relevant Experience and Resources	Provide evidence of experience installing, operating, and maintaining DC EV chargers on Council owned or managed land in the Australian context.	10
Financial Payment	<p>Details of what Financial Payment the Respondent will provide to Council in return for the lease of the land. This could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fixed rate rent (at market value)</li> <li>• Staggered rent</li> <li>• Profit sharing</li> <li>• Other payment model</li> </ul> <p>Current market value will be taken into consideration when assessing this criterion</p>	20
EV Charging Specifications and Capability	<p>Demonstrate how the proposal meets the EV Charging Specifications in this Request for EOI.</p> <p>Demonstrate that the proposal meets the relevant Australian Standards.</p> <p>Detail the capability to deliver the infrastructure, and the expected timeframes of when the chargers would be installed.</p> <p>Usage Rates (In \$/kwh)</p> <p>Detail the capability to provide ongoing maintenance and operation of the EV chargers, including response times to faults or outages.</p> <p>Details the capability to respond and action requests from Council and the community.</p> <p>Quarterly reports and annual reports of chargers performance metrics</p>	25
EV Charging Network Expansion	Demonstrate how the proposal expands the public EV charging network in the City of Darebin and improves access to EV charging for residents.	5
Innovation and Future Proofing	<p>Detail any innovative approaches used in the proposal, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locally manufactured EV chargers or components</li> <li>• EV charging solutions integrated with ancillary services; e.g. Community batteries, Bikes</li> <li>• Social enterprise</li> </ul> <p>Demonstrate how the proposal is future-proofed for more chargers to be added</p>	10
Community Benefit	<p>Demonstrate how the proposal will deliver community benefit to residents of the City of Darebin. This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local employment opportunities</li> <li>• Minimised visual impact</li> <li>• Minimised advertising</li> <li>• Inclusivity and accessibility</li> <li>• Concession and/or hardship assistance</li> </ul>	10



Environmental Sustainability	Detail any sustainable approaches to EV charging used in the policy, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of renewable energy source or direct use of renewable energy</li> <li>• Use of recycled materials</li> <li>• End-of-life recycling considerations</li> <li>• Sustainability accreditation of the organisation</li> </ul>	10
Alignment with Council Policy	Demonstrate how the proposal aligns with the City of Darebin's <a href="#">EV Charging Policy</a> , as well as any other relevant policies and strategies.	10
Quality and Warranties	EV charger warranty provisions.	Pass/Fail
Insurance	Council's standard requirement for insurance, limits of liability is as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Liability combined – minimum \$20,000,000</li> <li>• Professional Indemnity - minimum \$5,000,000</li> <li>• WorkCover – Certificate of Currency as proof of cover</li> </ul>	Pass/Fail
OHS Requirements	Respondent must have OHS Policy. All works have to be undertaken by licensed and qualified electrician. Contractor must submit SWMS and risk assessment and get approved prior to commencement of site works.	Pass/Fail

**8. Timetable**

The following is a timetable for key events in the EOI process.

Please note, these are indicative times only and are subject to change.

Stage	Timeframe
Expression of Interest Opens	31 May 2024
Questions Close	14 June 2024
Expression of Interest Closes	5 July 2024
Evaluation	July 2024
Council Meeting	August 2024
Execution of Lease Agreement	September 2024
Review of alternative locations/Consultation	September/October 2024



### KEY CONDITIONS OF EOI

<b>Name of EOI</b>	<b>Lease land for public EV charging stations</b>
<b>EOI Number</b>	<b>2024-002</b>
<b>Location of Service</b>	<b>Various</b>
<b>Closing Date</b>	<b>Friday, 5 July 2024</b>
<b>Closing Time</b>	<b>4:00pm</b>
<b>Contact Person</b>	<p>All enquiries relating to the EOI process should be emailed to:</p> <p><a href="mailto:Kevin.deleeuw@darebin.vic.gov.au">Kevin.deleeuw@darebin.vic.gov.au</a></p> <p><a href="mailto:David.Logan@darebin.vic.gov.au">David.Logan@darebin.vic.gov.au</a></p> <p>No verbal answers will be given to respondent questions.</p>
<b>Lodging an Electronic EOI</b>	<p>EOI submissions must be lodged with the Council by the closing date and time and in accordance with the Standard Conditions provided in this document, by using the below link:</p> <p><a href="#">Electric Vehicle Charging EOI</a></p>



## Part 2 – Specifications

### MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

All respondents must be able to meet the below requirements in order for their EOI to be considered by Council.

#### EV Charging Specifications

Hardware:

- Level 3 DC fast charging – Minimum 20kW, preferred 50kW+
- Chargers and plugs must be usable for all EV types
- Ability to charge 2x EVs simultaneously is preferred
- Must have load management capability for future proofing
- Either integrated cables or BYO cables will be accepted
- Compliant with the relevant Australian Standards

Software:

- Stations must be networked through software
- Multiple payments options including onsite, apps and online
- Able to accept payment from other membership platforms
- Council access to data, including charging duration, number of uses, charging station health, and energy usage
- Ability to limit user's charge time or discourage over-staying

#### Other

- Successful Respondents will be required to cover the costs of new parking signs and line marking and to coordinate their installation with Council
- Commitment to using renewable energy sources
- EV charging must not be provided free-of-charge for any period of time.
- Chargers must have the capacity to bill users for electricity used – outline what rates the software platform provider will charge for usage (In \$/kwh);
- Suppliers are to be aware that onsite advertising as part of the EV charger unit/installation is not preferred on Darebin City Council land
- Where advertising is proposed, promotion of tobacco, alcohol, pornography, sex work/brothels, weapons, and betting/gambling and related or similar industries is not permitted on any advertising infrastructure related to the EV charging station. The use of such advertising by any Provider to be disclosed to Council in the initial application process. Separate Planning approvals are required for the presence of advertising.
- Warranty and defect liability period





## 1. Outputs

The Contractor is required to provide EV Charging Infrastructure and Service to Council users and customers.

### Requirements

- All electric and civil design and works necessary for the EV charger installation
- The capacity of the local electrical supply network is suitable (or can be reasonably upgraded by the applicant). Note: Council will bear no cost or responsibility for the provision of, or upgrade to electrical supply infrastructure to service a proposed EV charging facility
- Includes the supply, installation and commissioning of free-standing DC fast charging stations;
- Provide warranties (hardware, software, workmanship) and operational performance warranty
- Permanently hard-wire the unit to meet the relevant Australian Standards;
- Provide a new unit and that must meet the relevant Australian Standards;
- Be updated over the lease time to keep up with technological improvements in electric cars and charging facilities.
- Connection approval from DNSP
- Offer a charging solution that allows for any EV user to charge their car at the facility (i.e not be exclusive to a particular brand of car).
- The car charging facility space must be accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days per week

Note: *The Respondent will grant Council access to the bay for necessary activities such as road works, festivals, or events. Council will aim to provide advance notice to the Respondent in these situations. No compensation will be available from Council in these circumstances.*

### Infrastructure

To be designed and installed according to the following design guidelines but not limited to;

- A minimum effective footpath width of 1.5m must be provided. In areas of high pedestrian usage, such as shopping strips, a higher minimum width may be required, in line with Council officer advice;
- The dimensions of infrastructure should be minimised, and the layout of infrastructure designed to minimise clutter and obstructions to pedestrians and road users.
- The charging infrastructure should minimise visual intrusion and not detract from the sense of place and character.
- The facility and all ancillary infrastructure (including signage, parking bays and charging infrastructure) shall be easily visible and accessible for users.
- Prior to the commencement of construction, detailed designs should be provided to Council for each site (in the form of 'as designed drawings' including scale and accurate dimensions). This will act as a hold point for Council to approve prior to construction commencing.
- Provide a tethered solution with built in cord, preferably retractable, in a bright colour (such as yellow or orange) for easy identification and hazard reduction (tripping).
- Includes a suitable hardstand mounting platform and electrical supply appropriate for the particular charger/s proposed by the Respondent. All equipment and mounting options to be supplied by the Respondent.



- Provide protection of the asset
- Include integrated bicycle facilities such as electric bike charging

#### Installation

Electrical infrastructure must be installed by a licensed electrical contractor and installation must be compliant with Australian Standards for electrical works and any other relevant statutory requirements.

Charging stations and associated infrastructure locations, setbacks, mounting plinths, electrical pillars/pits, lighting if required to be approved by Council prior to installation.

The successful Respondent must:

- Coordinate installation with oversight and approvals from the Distribution Network Service Providers and Council.
- Seek necessary approvals from DNSP in the instances where a new point of supply will be required, or an upgrade of existing supply capacity is required.
- Works will need to have all permits / approvals obtained before commencing construction. This will include but is not limited to, Traffic Management Plans, Construction Plans, Works within Road Reserve Permits, Statutory permits if required.
- Not alter or add to existing or approved structures, fixtures or fittings without written approval of Council.
- Submit Traffic Management Plans to Council for approval prior to work commencing on site;
- Provide Council with appropriate and relevant certifications, e.g. certificate of electrical safety, to confirm compliance with relevant standards.

#### Software

The Respondent must provide an overview of the software used in the proposed EV chargers.

As a minimum, the software must:

- Have onsite/online/Mobile app user payment options to bill users for electricity used – outline what rates the software platform provider will charge for usage (In \$/kwh);
- Have fault detection.
- Respondent to outline how fault detection triggers an investigation & potential call-out to fix a faulty EV charger.
- Have capability to send data to digital apps (I.e. Respondent's app) and websites (i.e. PlugShare) to inform EV drivers which charging stations are available.
- The capability to limit a user's maximum charge time to 2hrs per vehicle to promote vehicle rotation from 7am to 8pm. Other mechanisms to discourage over-staying for example through higher fees.

## **2. Maintenance and Service**

A maintenance and service agreement will be developed by the successful Respondent and issued to Council for review. The maintenance and service agreement will last for the duration of the lease.

The Respondent must:



- Describe the payment process for all users including fees (rates per kw/h and any membership fees);
- Describe the customer service assistance that will be provided e.g help troubleshoot problems with charging; complaints handling, hours of operation for the call centre, etc.
- Describe how any faults (including vandalism) are identified and the timelines to rectify faults or damage.
- Describe how risk of vandalism and public injury is mitigated.
- Provide visual examples of the user interface and the data that will be visible and accessible by customers.
- Provide details on any associated helplines including the hours available eg. (24/7) for EV drivers.
- If you are proposing additional sites, you will need to provide a map showing the location with information as to why you have selected
- The provider will be responsible for cleaning the charging unit and parking space
- Council will accept no responsibility for damage caused to the EV charging. Maintenance costs will be borne by the applicant.

### 3. Environment and Community

- The EV charging facilities must be powered by 100% accredited Green Power for the duration of the lease
- Sustainability solutions (e.g. locally manufactured chargers, recycled materials and end-of-life recycling)
- Darebin City Council branding as a co-partner
- Describe opportunities to incorporate education and information about Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung land and culture into new infrastructure
- Describe what opportunities are available for free or discounted fees for users with Pensioner Cards or experiencing Hardship

### 4. Reporting

As a minimum, Council requires:

- Provider to collect and share usage information on their facilities to Council and agrees to report monthly in a standardized format on:
  - Total number of hours of use per month
  - Times during the day that the chargers are used
  - Average charge (time, kWh) per vehicle per month
  - Rates (if any) in c/kwh
  - Membership numbers per month (if applicable). Note the charging facility is to be accessible to any EV users (either they are member or not).
  - Top 20 postcodes of users for each charging station is also desirable
- Details around revenue from selling electricity and/or advertising
- The Provider needs to comply with the Privacy and Data Protection Act and when they are collection information from the customers they have a notice indicating information will be shared with City of Darebin.



## STANDARD CONDITIONS OF EOI

### 1. PURPOSE OF THE EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

The purposes of the EOI process are to:

- 1.1. provide an indicative outline of the site available to respondent;
- 1.2. allow the Council the opportunity to assess the level of interest expressed in the site;
- 1.3. assess the suitability of respondents to occupy the Council property;
- 1.4. advise respondents of the information required for their EOI to be considered; and
- 1.5. advise respondents in advance of some of the key conditions of the proposed licence.

### 2. DETAILS OF REQUIRED SERVICE

The details of the property for which EOI submissions are sought are set out in the EOI Description.

### 3. CONDUCT OF THE EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

- 3.1. The Request for Expressions of Interest provides an outline of the Council property and requires the respondents to provide summary information about their financial viability, suitability and alignment with Council's vision for the property.
- 3.2. Where, at the Council's discretion, adequate interest has been expressed in the property, suitable parties will be approached to negotiate the terms of the licence agreement.
- 3.3. The Council does not warrant that it will enter into agreements following the EOI and reserves the right to:
  - 3.4.1 seek further interested parties outside the process envisaged under this Request for Expressions of Interest; or
  - 3.4.2 proceed with any other method which it considers appropriate to enter into agreements for part or all of the property.
- 3.4. The submission of an EOI by a respondent will not give rise to any agreement governing or in any way concerning the EOI process or any aspect of the EOI process. The Council expressly disclaims any intention to enter into any such agreement.

### 4. PROBITY OF THE EOI PROCESS

- 4.1. Respondents must not approach, or request any other person to approach –
  - any member of the Council's staff; or
  - councillor of the Council –individually:
  - to solicit support for their application;
  - offering of any gifts or hospitality, perceived or actual: or



- otherwise seek to influence the outcome of the EOI process.

The EOI of any respondent which engages in conduct prohibited under clause 4 may not be considered by the Council.

## 5. SUBMISSION OF EOI

- 5.1. EOI submissions must be submitted by the closing time on the closing date indicated in the Key Conditions of EOI. The Council will not consider late EOIs.
- 5.2. EOI submissions must be lodged online using the method indicated in the Key Conditions of EOI "Lodging an EOI".
- 5.3. Respondents should submit all information which they consider relevant to allow assessment of their suitability for selection.
- 5.4. Darebin City Council staff will accept no responsibility for lodging of any EOI. Faxed, emailed, verbal or late EOI submissions are invalid and will not be considered.

## 6. THE EOI PROCESS

The process to be followed by the Council is as follows:

- 6.1. evaluate EOI submissions;
- 6.2. Council may at its absolute discretion seek to inform the evaluation using additional client references as appropriate, in addition to the client references nominated by respondents. Such information will be sourced confidentially and in confidence.
- 6.3. shortlist respondents which satisfy the criteria detailed in this Request for Expressions of Interest (respondents should note that interviews may be required);
- 6.4. provide Heads of Agreement to short listed respondents; and
- 6.5. prepare Licence Agreements on the terms outlined in the Heads of Agreement.

## 7. FURTHER INFORMATION

All enquiries relating to the Request for Expressions of Interest must be directed to the "Contact Person" specified in the Key Conditions of EOI ("**Contact Person**")

## 8. DISCREPANCIES AND OMISSIONS

- 8.1. Should a respondent find a discrepancy or omission in the Request for Expressions of Interest (EOI) or should there be any doubt as to the meaning of the Request for Expressions of Interest, a respondent should notify the Contact Person before the closing date for EOI submissions.
- 8.2. If necessary a discrepancy or omission will be rectified, or a matter will be clarified, by issue of an addendum to all persons who have collected the Request for Expressions of Interest.
- 8.3. Respondents should note that any statement made by a member of the Council's staff cannot be construed as modifying this request for Expressions of Interest unless confirmed in writing by the Contact Person.

## 9. EOI ADDENDA

The Council may issue to each respondent addenda to the Request for EOI no less than 4 days prior to the Closing Time for EOI.



The Contact Person has no authority to make any representation or give any explanation to respondents as to the meaning of anything contained in the Request for EOI or anything to be done or not to be done by a respondent, other than by a written addendum.

#### 10. LATE EOI's

The Council takes no responsibility for submissions which are not submitted using the online form at the Closing Time for the EOI request. EOI submissions that are not submitted at the Closing Time for EOI submissions will be non-conforming.

#### 11. RECORDS MANAGEMENT

11.1. Record means any document within the meaning of the Evidence Act 2008 (Vic), including:

- (a) anything on which there is writing; or
- (b) anything on which there are marks, figures, symbols or perforations having a meaning for persons qualified to interpret them; or
- (c) anything from which sounds, images or writings can be reproduced with or without the aid of anything else; or
- (d) a map, plan, drawing or photograph.

11.2. Recordkeeping means making and maintaining complete, accurate and reliable evidence of business transactions in the form of recorded information.

##### 11.3. *Ownership & Custody*

The Darebin City Council retains legal ownership of all records of the services provided by the outsourced organisation. Upon termination or completion of this Agreement, the beneficial ownership of all records of the services provided by the outsourced organisation will be transferred to the Victorian Government.

##### 11.4. *Access*

The outsourced organisation must immediately provide access to records relating to services provided by the outsourced organisation in any of the following circumstances:

- (i) in accordance with the requirements of the Public Records Act 1973 and all relevant legislation, including the Information Privacy Act 2000, Freedom of Information Act 1982, Health Records Act 2001 and Evidence Act 2008;
- (ii) to the Victorian Auditor-General or Victorian Ombudsman upon request in writing;
- (iii) to a Government representative upon request in writing; or
- (iv) for the purposes of performance monitoring.

##### 11.5. *Disposal*

The outsourced organisation must only dispose of a record in accordance with standards issued under the Public Records Act 1973 and in accordance with any specific instructions provided by the Public Records Office Victoria from time to time. When transferring custody of records to the agency the outsourced organisation must transfer the records in a format and manner which allow the records to be quickly and easily retrieved, reviewed and utilised by the Darebin City Council.



## Appendix A



EV EOI Appendix  
A.pdf

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**9.8 YEAR ONE PERFORMANCE OF WAT DJERRING ANIMAL FACILITY****Author:** Manager City Safety and Compliance**Reviewed By:** General Manager City Sustainability and Strategy

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

On 26 September 2022 Council resolved to enter into contract with Whittlesea to deliver an in-house service for animal welfare services at its Epping facility for 5 years, with an expenditure of up to \$2.2 million.

This in-house contract between Whittlesea, Merri-Bek and Darebin was developed in alignment with the Domestic Animal Management Plan, which emphasises a partnership model involving not-for-profit and community groups with 84Y agreements for accepting animals from the facility. In-house adoption services are also provided at the facility.

This report presents the performance of the first year of operations (October 2022 – October 2023).

<b>Officer Recommendation</b>
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**That Council:**

- (1) Notes Year one performance of the wat djerring Animal Facility (Oct 2022-Oct 2023).
- 

**BACKGROUND / KEY INFORMATION**

The wat djerring Animal Facility is owned by the Whittlesea City Council and located in Epping. The facility was constructed in 2016. Darebin contributed to the construction of the facility, along with Merri-bek Council with a view to operating a shared facility. Facility operations were contracted to the RSPCA from 2017 to 2022.

The facility was renamed *wat djerring*, meaning 'we together', and was chosen after consultation with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWWCHAC).

On 26 September 2022, Council resolved to enter into contract with Whittlesea Council to deliver an 'in-house' service for animal welfare services at the facility, with an expenditure of up to \$2.2 million over 5 years.

The in-house contract between Whittlesea, Merri-bek, and Darebin was developed in alignment with the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP), which emphasised a partnership model involving not-for-profit and community groups with 84Y agreements for accepting animals from the facility. Direct adoption services are also offered at wat djerring.

***In-house model contract service levels***

On 16 October 2022, Whittlesea City Council assumed full operational management of the wat djerring Animal Facility.



Services provided at the wat djerring Animal Facility include:

- Offering shelter and care to stray, abandoned, and surrendered animals.
- Reuniting lost pets with their owners.
- Facilitating pet adoptions to find loving homes.
- Providing comprehensive veterinary care for the animals housed at the facility.
- Delivering education and support services to pet owners.
- Providing welfare boarding for pets owned by victims of family violence.

### **Previous Council Resolution**

At its meeting held on 26 September 2022, Council resolved:

*That Council:*

- (2) *Authorises the Chief Executive Officer or delegate to do all things necessary to enter into an Animal Welfare Services Agreement with City of Whittlesea for the delivery of animal welfare services at Epping Animal Welfare Facility (EAWF) effective 16 October 2022 for 5 years with a possible 5-year extension.*
- (3) *Authorises the Chief Executive Officer or delegate to do all things necessary to execute a Deed of Variation to the Epping Animal Welfare Facility Agreement entered in December 2015, which recognises the interests of City of Darebin as an original partner in establishing the Epping Animal Welfare Facility (EAWF).*
- (4) *Provide endorsement for expenditure of up to \$2.2 million over the initial 5 years of the contract.*
- (5) *Notes that any budget variances over the contract term will be considered through Council's annual budget development and reporting processes.*
- (6) *Requires half-yearly reporting to Council of animal welfare indicators included at Attachment D.*
- (7) *Writes to Whittlesea, seeking direct animal adoption services to commence within 6 months of the in-house service model commencing.*
- (8) *Notes that the Epping Animal Welfare Facility Agreement has been designed to achieve Council's legislative obligations and Council's policy set out in its Domestic Animal Management Plan, including rehoming all treatable domestic animals that Council manages.*
- (9) *Notes that Council's further approval will be sought before exercising the 5-year extension in 2027.*

### **ALIGNMENT TO 2041 DAREBIN COMMUNITY VISION**

Strategic Direction 1: Vibrant, Respectful and Connected

### **ALIGNMENT TO 2021-25 COUNCIL PLAN**

Strategic Direction 4 Responsible, Transparent and Responsive

### **ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

4.3 We will transform our services and service delivery models to ensure they meet the current, emerging and future needs of our community

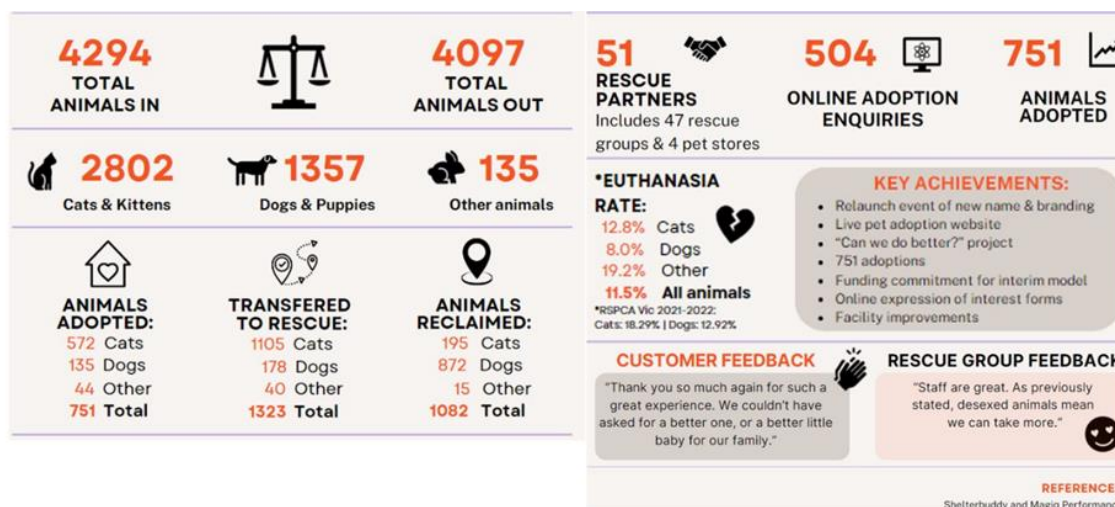
**DISCUSSION**

**wat djerring Animal Facility service performance**

Between 16 October 2022 and 15 October 2023 a total of 4,294 animals were under the care of the Facility:

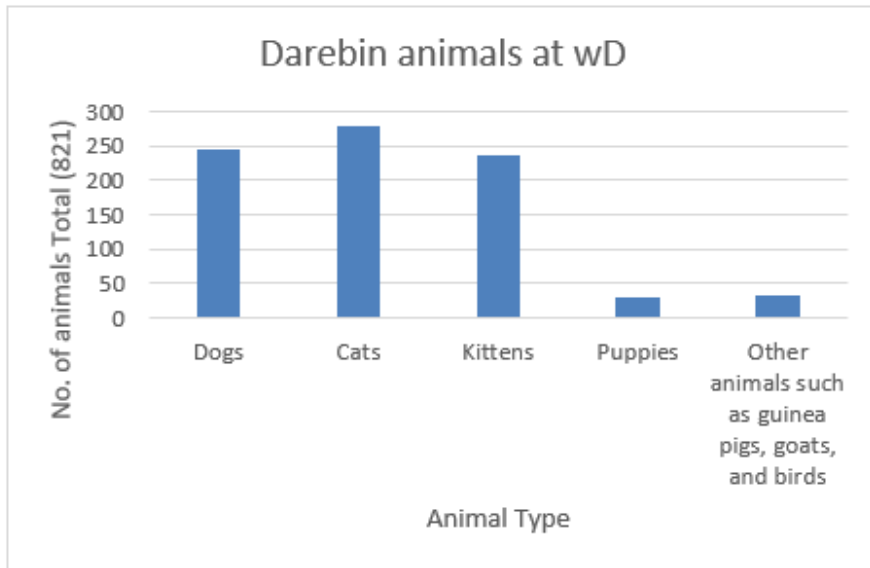
- 2,802 cats and kittens
- 1,357 dogs and puppies, and
- 135 other animals including livestock, rabbits, guinea pigs, poultry and birds.

The following at-a-glance annual performance report is provided by Whittlesea:



821 animals from Darebin received care at the Facility. This group comprised:

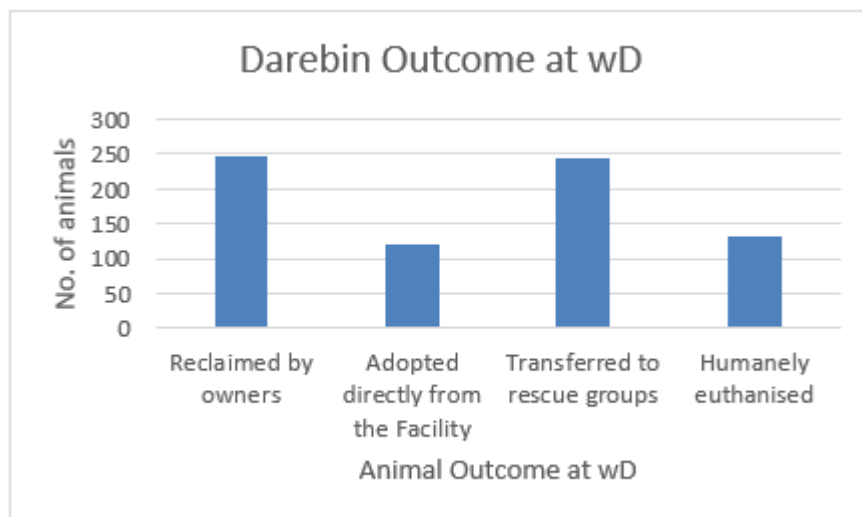
Darebin Animal Type	Total no.
Dogs	246
Cats	278
Kittens	236
Puppies	30
Other animals such as guinea pigs, goats, and birds	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>821</b>



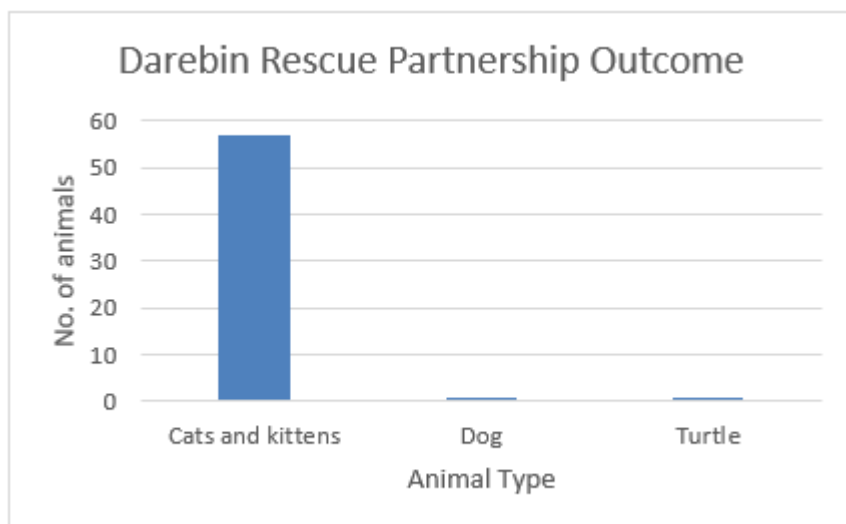
Among the cats and dogs:

Darebin Outcome	Total no.
Reclaimed by owners	246
Adopted directly from the Facility	119
Transferred to rescue groups	245
Humanely euthanised	131 (with 59* of these being cats deemed feral by veterinarians)

\* Feral/wild/uncontrollable cats are euthanised in accordance with the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* as specified in the Code of Practice for the Managements of Dogs and Cats in Shelters and Pounds. This is discussed in more detail below.



In addition to animals transferred to wat djerring, a number of animals are directly transferred from Darebin to rescue groups through direct partnerships with rescue organisations:



### Minimising euthanasia rates

Euthanasia is a complex and sensitive topic, and the contract's clauses provide a framework for humane practices without setting specific targets. This approach aligns with Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP), which emphasises activities to minimise euthanasia rates.

Officers have collaborated with partner councils to implement activities aimed at reducing overall euthanasia rates, such as extending roster hours, encouraging partnerships with shelters and rescue groups, providing desexing and neonatal programs, and supporting responsible pet ownership initiatives. This resulted into a reduced euthanasia rates (compared to the previous year) over the first year of the operations: 12.8% for cats and 8.0% for dogs, contrasting with previous facility rates of 18.29% for cats and 12.9% for dogs.

Feral, wild and uncontrollable cats are euthanised in accordance with the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* as specified in *the Code of Practice for the Managements of Dogs and Cats in Shelters and Pounds*. These cats are unable to be rehabilitated and are deemed feral due to their limited experience/contact with humans and unsociability in a domestic environment.

Other reasons for euthanasia included Panleukopenia positive, Disease/Illness, Unassisted Death (this would be due to catastrophic injury or advanced illness), FeLV/FIV positive, unweaned (neonates without mother), Fear/Anxiety, Declared Dangerous, Court Order, Aggression, Failure to pass behaviour evaluation.

All euthanasia decisions undergo careful consideration by the Ethics Committee as a last resort, ensuring a compassionate and thoughtful approach to each circumstance.

These practices at wat djerring result in higher operating costs because the animals are held longer, and increased care is provided to save as many animal lives as possible.

### Adoption service

Both Darebin and Merri-bek Councils introduced a direct adoption service when considering and endorsing the 5-year in-house service contract with Whittlesea.

This has contributed to increased costs of providing the in-house contract model.

Costs include increased resources to manage the adoption process, developing a dedicated adoption management website, marketing and promotion efforts, staff training, adoption events, medical and behaviour assessments, and administrative support. These costs have been incorporated into the annual budget process.

A review of the facility was undertaken after the first 3 months of operations, which included consulting with 15 shelter and rescue groups who partner with Councils through Section 84Y agreements. After considering feedback from these groups, Council contract partners decided to incrementally increase the proportion of direct adoptions from the facility. Specific additional resources were allocated to support this initiative, alongside enhancements to the level of support provided to rescue groups receiving animals.

The facility operates at maximum capacity most of the time, and this limits options to expand adoption services.

### Financial sustainability of current services

The cost to deliver services has exceeded the service costs that were projected in the business case that informed the transition to an in-house contract model.

Some of the reasons why service costs are significantly higher than planned include:

- introducing a direct adoption service
- increased animal surrenders and intake at the facility due to economic pressures (4294 incoming animals in comparison to 3000 forecasted in business case)
- the business case did not include in-house veterinary services or desexing animals before transferring them out of the facility – services that have been introduced to the facility
- global vaccination shortages
- panleukopenia outbreaks
- overall length of stay arising from minimising euthanasia (31.5 days average)
- inflation.

Partner Councils are working together to identify future service options for Council consideration.

### Direct 84Y agreements between Darebin and rescue partners

Council has agreements with rescue groups where Council directly sends captured animals to them. This occurs under a section 84Y agreement (see [here for more information](#)). These agreements help reduce the pressure on wat djerring, and therefore costs. It also supports animal welfare by helping to relieve overcrowding at wat djerring, which is increasingly important as economic factors lead to people relishing their pets.

In 2022-23, 59 animals were transferred directly to rescue partners, and in 2023-24, the following animals were transferred:

Darebin Rescue Partnership Outcome	Total no.
Cats and kittens	62
Dog	0
Turtle	1
Total	63

A transfer voucher is provided to support rescue partners, and this is included in the annual operating budget.

This financial year (24-25) officers project Council will transfer around 70 cats, and therefore provide 70 support vouchers with combined value of \$14K.

## **CONSIDERATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (2020) PRINCIPLES**

### **Financial Management**

In its first year (2022-23), Darebin's projected spend for its 20.29% share of the in-house service model was forecasted at \$399,713, according to the business case and Findex cost-benefit analysis. However, actual expenditure exceeded this amount, reaching \$470,000, which includes the costs associated with the adoption model for the first year.

For the second year (2023-24), operational costs are expected to rise due to the continued implementation of the adoption model, with an estimated expenditure of around \$585,000 for Darebin. The funding envelope for Darebin's 5-year contract is \$2.2 million, with current expenditure already nearing \$1,055,000.

At this rate, officers anticipate reaching the \$2.2 million expenditure target before the end of the 5-year contract.

Council approval is required to expend more than \$2.2 million over the 5 year contract. Officers have started work developing service options, and will bring a report to Council in early 2025 to inform the budget process.

### **Community Engagement**

The current service model was informed by community engagement that shaped the Darebin Animal Management Plan.

In the lead up to both Darebin and Merri-bek Councils considering the contract decision in 2022, the community campaigned for direct adoptions.

The next planned engagement with the community will be to inform the new Domestic Animal Management Plan.

Service outcomes are regularly reported on Darebin's website, and can be found here: [Our Animal Initiatives](#).

### **Other Principles for consideration**

#### **Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles**

(f) collaboration with other Councils and Governments and statutory bodies is to be sought;

#### **Public Transparency Principles**

(d) Public awareness of the availability of Council information must be facilitated

#### **Strategic Planning Principles**

(a) an integrated approach to planning, monitoring and performance reporting is to be adopted;

**Service Performance Principles**

- (d) a Council should seek to continuously improve service delivery to the municipal community in response to performance monitoring;

**COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS****Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)**

Animal management and welfare services prevents and minimise stray animals on public land, which helps to reduce risks to local ecosystems.

**Equity, Inclusion, Wellbeing and Human Rights Considerations:**

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and no rights are withheld through the recommendations of this report.

**Operational Impacts**

No operational impacts have been identified through reporting back the first year of operations.

**Legal and Risk Implications**

No legal impacts have been identified through reporting back the first year of operations.

**RELATED DOCUMENTS**

Nil.

**Attachments**

Nil

**DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST**

Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires members of Council staff and persons engaged under contract to provide advice to Council to disclose any conflicts of interest in a matter to which the advice relates.

The Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that the General Manager City Sustainability and Strategy adopted 2 animals from the facility in 2023-24.

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**9.9**                      **2023/24 Q4 PERFORMANCE REPORT (NON-FINANCIAL)  
ENDING 30 JUNE 2024****Author:**                      Coordinator Corporate Strategy**Reviewed By:**              Acting General Manager Customer & Corporate

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Council is required by the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) to prepare a Council Plan containing the strategic objectives of Council, strategies for achieving those objectives, and indicators to monitor the achievement of those objectives.

The 2023-24 Q4 performance report includes: the 2023/24 Council Plan Action Plan (CPAP) Capital Works Program, Council Resolutions, and Procurement (**Appendix A**), The 2023-24 CPAP provides an overview of Council's performance in delivering the year three actions that will contribute to the completion of the (revised) 2021-25 Council Plan.

As of 30 June 2024, the CPAP had 63.8% (51) of actions completed, 33.8% (27) of actions were not completed, and 2.5% (2 actions) were deferred, as detailed in **Appendix A**.

<b>Officer Recommendation</b>
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**That** Council:

- (1) Notes the quarter four results for the 2023/24 Council Plan Action Plan at **Appendix A**.
- (2) Notes the quarter four update of the Capital Works program at **Appendix A**.
- (3) Notes the quarter four update on Council Resolutions contained within this report for the financial year 2023-24.
- (4) Notes the quarter four Procurement update contained within this report.


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**BACKGROUND / KEY INFORMATION**

Underpinning the 2023-24 Council Plan Action Plan is 2041 Darebin Community Vision and the (revised) Council Plan 2021-25. For 2023-24 there are 80 year three actions across the four strategic directions.

The quarterly performance report provides an overview of Council's performance in delivering year three actions that will contribute to the completion of the four-year strategic actions in the (revised) Council Plan 2021-25.

The Q4 Council Plan Action Plan progress report reflects the status of the actions adopted by Council on 26 June 2023.

Embedded into the Council Plan is the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan. This enables Council to meet its obligations under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* by outlining how we will protect, promote, and improve the public health and wellbeing of our community. Strategic actions that form the health and wellbeing component are identified by a heart symbol.  The 2023-24 Council Plan Action Plan includes 32 health and wellbeing actions equalling 40% of all year three actions.



**Previous Council Resolution**

At its meeting held on 26 June 2023, Council resolved:

*'That Council:*

- (1) Note the revised Council Plan 2021-25 (incorporating the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan) and 2023-24 Council Plan Action Plan were out on community exhibition seeking community feedback during the period 23 May to 6 June 2023.*
- (2) Acknowledge the community feedback provided and note officers will write thanking individuals for their time in responding to the revised Council Plan 2021-25 and Council Plan Action Plan.*
- (3) Adopt the revised Council Plan 2021-25 (incorporating the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan) at Appendix A.*
- (4) Adopt the draft 2023-24 Council Plan Action Plan at Appendix B.*
- (5) Authorise the CEO to amend the Council Plan 2021-25 and 2023-24 Council Plan Action Plan to reflect any amendments resolved by the Council in the 2023-24 Budget.'*

**ALIGNMENT TO 2041 DAREBIN COMMUNITY VISION**

Strategic Direction 1: Vibrant, Respectful and Connected

Strategic Direction 2: Prosperous, Liveable and Flourishing

Strategic Direction 3: Climate, Green and Sustainable

**ALIGNMENT TO 2021-25 COUNCIL PLAN**

Strategic Direction 1: Vibrant, Respectful and Connected

Strategic Direction 2: Prosperous, Liveable and Flourishing

Strategic Direction 3: Climate, Green and Sustainable

Strategic Direction 4 Responsible, Transparent and Responsive

**ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

This report provides an overview of Q4 performance focusing on non-financial information, ending 30 June 2024.

## DISCUSSION

### Overall Performance Summary for Q4:

Performance measurement	Q4 summary commentary	Status
<b>Council Plan Action Plan performance</b>	63.8% of actions are completed, 33.8% of actions are not completed and 2.5% (2 actions) were deferred.	<b>63.8% of actions completed</b>
<b>Capital Works Performance</b>	103 of 141 projects were completed, seven projects at risk/delayed, two project were not completed, two projects were discontinued, and one project deferred.	
<b>Council Resolutions</b>	38 actions arising from resolutions have been made through Council meetings, 14 have been completed and 24 are in progress.	<b>37% completed and 63% in progress</b>
<b>Procurement Update</b>	The primary procurement focus is on local business improvement each year. There has been a strong increase 18% to local businesses payments in Q4.  For the complete FY2023/24, 14.8% was paid to local suppliers in comparison to 12% for the prior FY2022/2023.	<b>On track</b>

### Delivery of the 2023/24 Council Plan Action Plan

The Q3 performance report was estimated that 70% of the 2023/24 Council Plan Action Plan would be delivered by the end of financial year. The completion results of 63.8% at Q4, is lower than the estimated at Q3. This variance is due to sixteen actions that were reported as on track at Q3 but were reported as not completed at Q4.

Six of these actions were completed in July, just a few weeks past 30 June. These actions have since either been completed or are nearing completion and do not require further reporting.

Ten actions were incomplete at the end of Q4 due to uncontrollable variables, such as delays in project construction, resourcing, external agencies, unplanned work and work taking longer than expected. These actions have been carried over into the 2024/25 CPAP and will be reported on as part of 2024/25 CPAP reporting.

Further detail has been provided below on the actions reported as not completed in the Council Plan Action Plan progress updated under each strategic direction.

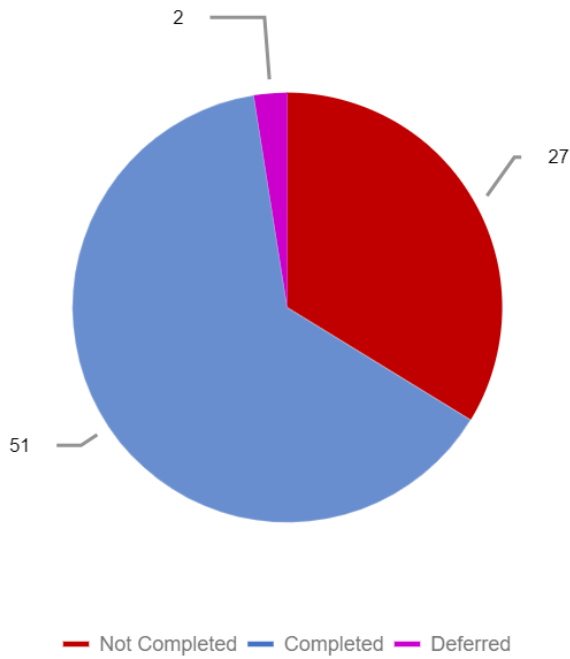
### Non- financial Performance:

The Q4 results for the 2023-24 CPAP are detailed in **Appendix A**.

### Q3 Council Plan Action Plan Performance Update

The 2023-24 CPAP has a total of 80 yearly actions. As at the end of Q4, 30 June 2024, 63.8% (51 actions) were Completed, 33.8% (27 actions) were Not Completed, and 2.5% (2 actions) were Deferred.

Figure One: Q4 yearly action progress for 2023-24 Council Plan Action Plan

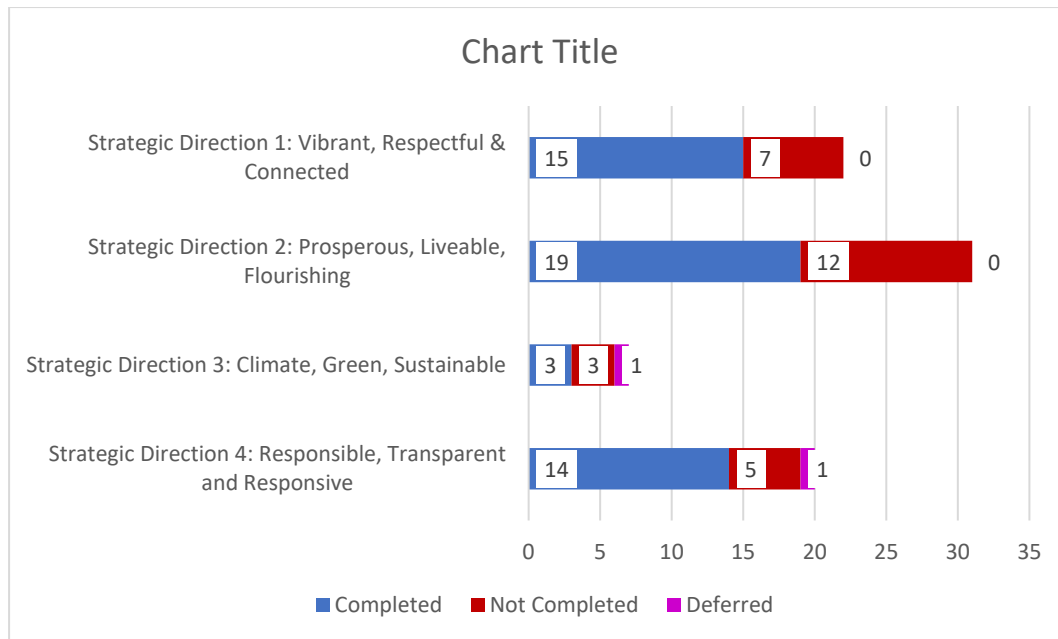


The table below compares the CPAP action performance from Q1 to Q4.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
				No.	%
<b>Complete</b>	2	6	7	51	63.8
<b>Not Completed</b>	-	-	-	27	33.8
<b>On Track</b>	66	63	58	-	-
<b>Delayed</b>	4	6	7	-	-
<b>Off Track</b>	1	4	6	-	-
<b>Deferred</b>	0	0	1	2	2.5
<b>Not Started</b>	7	1	1	-	-

Figure Two: Q4 status of all actions by Strategic Direction

The following graphs illustrate the status of the 80 actions as of the end of Q4, as well as the progress breakdown for each Strategic Direction.

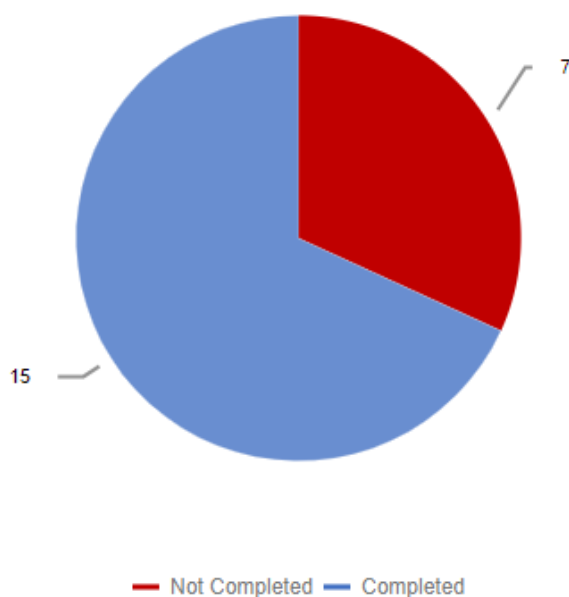


This graph shows that there is an even distribution of completed and not completed actions for each of the strategic directions.

**Strategic Direction 1: Vibrant, Respectful and Connected**

Strategic direction one is focused on the community and its people. The priority and four-year objectives are centred on improving the lives of the community by celebrating diversity, supporting empowerment, connecting to, and preserving local history and providing vibrant and dynamic spaces, amenities, and events for all. This strategic direction has eight strategic objectives spanning across four years with 22 actions to be delivered throughout 2023-24.

**Figure Three: Q4 Status of Strategic Direction 1 actions**



The 2023-24 Council Plan Action Plan includes 22 actions that deliver Strategic Direction 1: Vibrant, Respectful and Connected.

Highlights this quarter include:

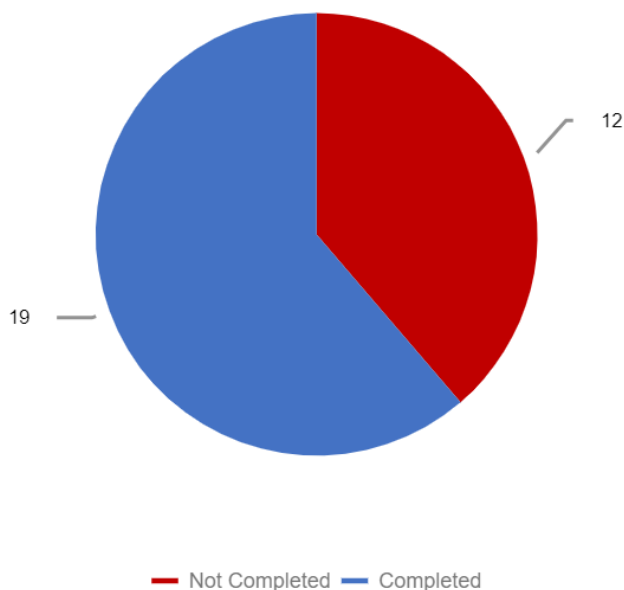
- A new grant stream was created after consultation with Aboriginal Organisations and Darebin Aboriginal Advisory Committee in 2023. This grant round was launched on March 4 and closed on April 30, 2024.
- Total of 11,017 participants registered in sporting clubs during the 23-24 Financial year registering an increase of 5.45% over 22-23 financial year numbers.
- East Preston Community Centre continued to deliver weekly digital support sessions and a 'computers for older adults' course.
- There were 116 community grants awarded in 2023-24, of which 102 (87%) focused on activities supporting events that address loneliness through supporting social connectedness and positive mental health.
- The IC Oration was delivered on 21 May and featured renowned author and journalist George Megalogenis and Anthea Hancocks, CEO of the Scanlon Foundation.
- Council continued to implement the Gender Equality and Preventing Violence Against Women Action Plan, using an intersectional approach.
- The Council's submission to Excelling level accreditation with Welcoming Cities Standards has been completed.

At the end of Q4, actions reported as not completed include:

- The development of the Aboriginal Action Plan is continuing. This quarter the focus was on consultation with members of the Darebin Aboriginal Advisory Committee. Internal stakeholder consultation is currently in progress, along with preparation and scheduling of external consultation with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. This action will continue in 24/25.
- Delivery of the Wurundjeri Garden at Bundoora Park is continuing. Given the complexity of the work, this action will continue in 24/25.
- The development of the Cultural Diversity Action Plan has continued but has been delayed given the complexity in addition to other unplanned work and service delivery priorities that have arisen during this year. This action will continue in 24/25.
- Aged Care reform work has focused on preparing for the introduction of new Aged Care Standards and Aged Care Act as of July 1, 2025. Delays by the Commonwealth, including constant changes to Age Care Reform timelines, have impacted the capacity to meet project timelines.
- Development of the Climate Emergency Plan is nearing completion.

### **Strategic Direction 2: Prosperous, Liveable and Flourishing**

Strategic direction two is focused on creating infrastructure and spaces for the community to feel safe, respected and welcomed as well as to develop partnerships to support local businesses and community to drive growth and economic sustainability. This strategic direction has 11 strategic objectives, spanning across the four years with 31 actions to be delivered throughout 2023-24.

**Figure Four: Q4 Status of Strategic Direction 2 actions**

The 2023-24 Council Plan Action Plan includes 31 actions that deliver Strategic Direction 2: Prosperous, Liveable and Flourishing.

Highlights this quarter include:

- Council and the Department of Education signed a Building Blocks Partnership Memorandum of Understanding in April 2024, outlining a joint commitment to invest in the expansion of kindergarten capacity in Darebin over coming years.
- The redevelopment of John Hall Reserve Pavilion is on schedule and within adopted budget. Works are scheduled to commence early in the new financial year.
- Council endorsed a priority list of Local Area Placemaking projects, including area speed reductions, in June 2024.
- Council continued to develop a draft of the Community Infrastructure Plan throughout the year. This included a high-level assessment of community infrastructure needs over the next 10 years, as well an audit tool to gather information about the use and configuration of existing Council facilities and whether they are fit-for-purpose given projected community needs.
- A strategic assessment to inform the review of the General Local Law has been completed, including an assessment of requirements, strengths and areas for improvements, alignment to Council policies and goals, and mega-trends that regulatory services may need to respond to.
- A draft of a new housing supply strategy has been prepared and is scheduled for consultation in August 2024.
- A Draft Northern Innovation and Sustainability Precinct investment opportunity statement document has recently been finalised.

At the end of Q4, actions reported as not completed include:

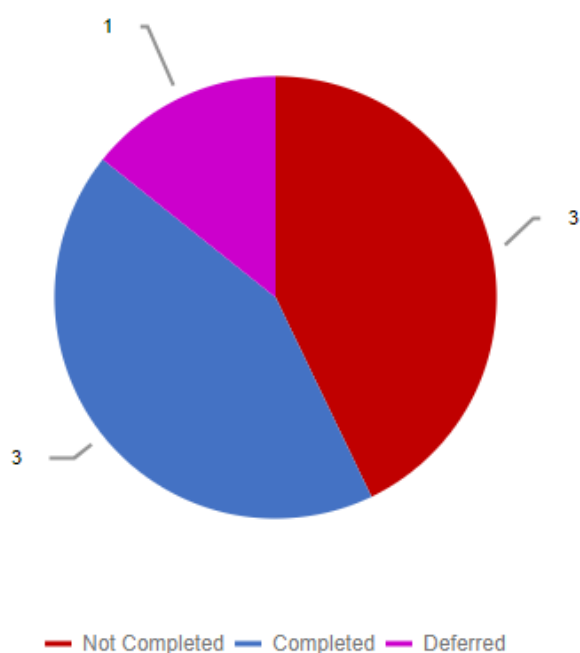
- Following completion of the design work, construction of the KP Hardiman has yet to commence.
- Development of an Integrated Families, Youth and Children Strategy is continuing, with stage 2 community engagement completed in June.

- Detailed engineering designs have been completed for priority Local Area Placemaking projects, which will be built in July and August. Delays were experienced because more time was needed to ensure the design outcome was fit for purpose, and diversion routes for buses were possible to allow nearby major repair works at the intersection of Massey Avenue and Amery Street.
- Development of a Community Safety Framework will continue in 24/25. This work was delayed given the complexity of the work in addition to other unplanned work and service delivery priorities that have arisen during this period. In this quarter, a review of Councils policies and responses to community safety activities was undertaken.
- New flood mapping is being finalised by Melbourne Water. In the meantime, Council has progressed background work for the preparation of draft planning scheme provisions.
- Construction has been completed at Belgrove & Ovando intersection. Design is continuing for future Blackspot projects. The Mitchell/Victoria design is being updated and awaiting DTP approval following the scope change.
- An expression of interest (EOI) process is underway to identify Electric Vehicle charging partners to expand the public charging network in Darebin. The EOI will be open until early July.
- Following the completion of a strategic assessment in 2023/24, the review of the General Local law will proceed to community engagement in 2025.

**Strategic Direction 3: Climate, Green and Sustainable**

Strategic Direction three is focused on building and ensuring the community and Council owned infrastructure is resilient to climate change, increasing canopy cover over Council managed land, improving water quality and biodiversity across Darebin, improving air and water by reducing carbon emissions through renewable energy, and reusing waste to stimulate a local circular economy. This strategic direction has five strategic objectives spanning across four years with 7 actions to be delivered throughout 2023-24.

**Figure Five: Q4 Status of Strategic Direction 3 actions**



The 2023-24 Council Plan Action Plan includes 7 actions that deliver Strategic Direction 3: Climate, Green and Sustainable.

Highlights this quarter include:

- 99 solar systems were installed using a special charge. A further 89 solar systems were installed through Council's Bulk Buy contract. The Solar Saver program service review was approved at Council in June, which increased the household income eligibility, maximum system cost and introduced hot water heat pumps to the list of products available.
- Monthly monitoring has occurred each month by members of the Edgars Creek and Edwardes Lake Task Force in April, May and June. Data has been collected at 10 different monitoring locations along the Edgars Creek and at the Lake.

At the end of Q4, actions reported as Not Completed include:

- The second round of community consultation on the Climate Emergency Plan was completed in April and the final Plan will be considered by Council in July 2024.

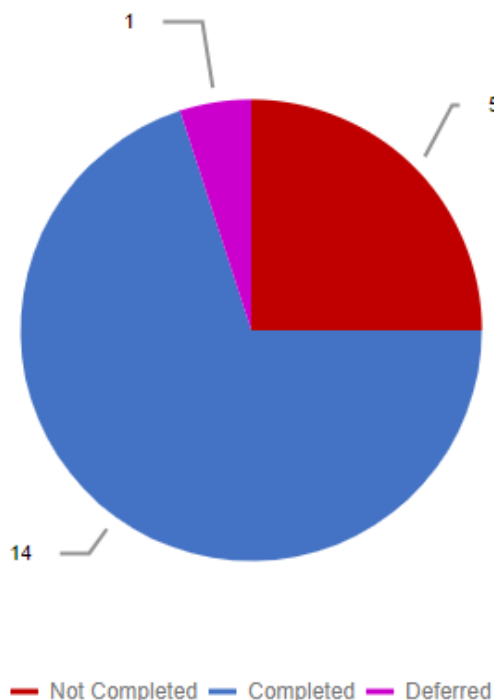
At the end of Q4, the following action was reported as Deferred:

- Council is continuing to work towards the purchase of three parcels of land at Clements Reserve, However the order of work has been adjusted with remediation works now planned to occur prior to acquisition.

**Strategic Direction 4: Responsible, Transparent and Responsive**

Strategic direction four is focused on transparent and accountable decision making, ensuring that the organisation is financially responsible, managing resources effectively to ensure our current and future services meet the needs of our community, as well as planning and supporting our community through change. This strategic direction has five strategic objectives, spanning across four years with 20 actions to delivered throughout 2023-24.

**Figure Six: Q4 status of Strategic Direction 4 actions**





The 2023-24 Council Plan Action Plan includes 20 actions that deliver Strategic Direction 4: Responsible, Transparent and Responsive.

Highlights this quarter include:

- Actions contained in the Good Governance Action Plan have been completed.
- The condition survey of 5% of the drainage network has been completed as planned. Work to assess the full drainage network is planned over several years and will continue.
- The Art and Cultural Collection Asset Management Plan (AMP) has been completed.
- The Plant and Fleet asset management plan has been completed.
- The service review program for 2023/2024 has finished one significant review and is close to completing two additional major reviews. One major review is on hold. Over 15 smaller process improvements have also been concluded.
- Implementation of the four-year Organisational Strategy program has occurred, with many actions crossing multiple years. Review of the Governance model is under way. Programs are building momentum with key Project Control Groups (PCGs) in place, reporting monthly and key changes and variations being managed. Review of the 24/25 action plan has been completed.
- The first iteration of a detailed Benefits Realisation Plan for the Enterprise Resource Plan (ERP) solution has been completed. This plan incorporates sector best practice and was developed through engagement with all key stakeholder departments.
- The 2024 Election Project Plan is progressing and information has begun being published for candidates including social media posts regarding the MAV Stand for Council program. Further communications will be published in due course.

At the end of Q4, actions reported as Not Completed include:

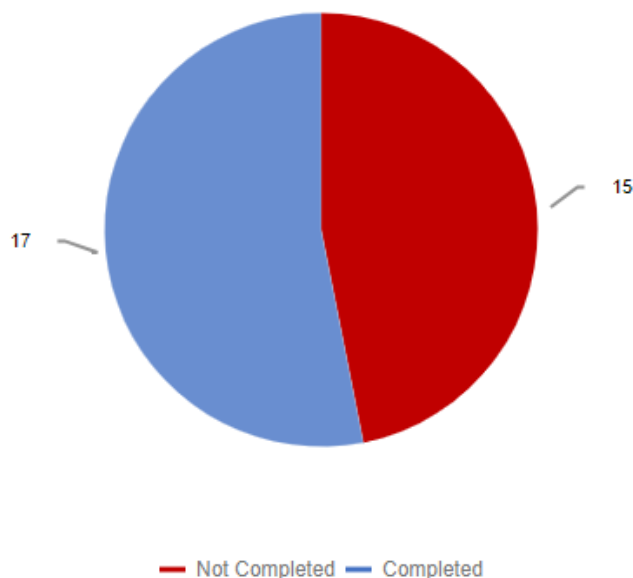
- Consultation on a draft Leasing and Licensing Policy has been completed. Further community engagement may be needed. Currently work on a draft Policy is continuing.
- Work to establish a Property Strategy has been delayed. However, foundational data has been collected including completion of Building Asset data collection, Community Infrastructure needs analysis and verification of Council's property register and map.
- Council's ICT Governance Framework, including project governance, has been developed and is currently under review by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and the Audit and Risk Committee for formal adoption.

At the end of Q4, the following action was reported as Deferred:

- Development of detailed business requirements for systems replacement and test the open market for available options has been deferred to commence in the next financial year.

#### **Q4 2023-24 Health and Wellbeing Actions**

There are 32 Health and Wellbeing actions in the 2023-24 CPAP. Of these, 53.1% (17 actions) are 'Completed', 46.9% (15 actions) are 'Not Completed'.

**Figure Seven: Q4 status of Health and Wellbeing Actions****Health and Wellbeing Highlights**

- There are currently 2,340 registered participants in 2023-24 annual sports clubs, and an additional 2,491 participants registered for the summer and 6843 for winter. Of these participants, 3050 are females, 254 are from First Nations backgrounds, 1073 from low socio- economic backgrounds and 1,073 from CALD backgrounds. Council is supporting a range of events to increase participation by communities at risk of exclusion, including programs catered specially for Aboriginal and First nations People like Mums and Dads swimming, Gym sessions, Men's Golf and Elders line dancing.
- In May 2024, Council in partnership with Cancer Council delivered key messages via social media to raise awareness of Bowel Cancer in the community.
- East Preston Community Centre with its stakeholders continued the weekly drop-in digital support sessions. These sessions provide one on one digital support to help connect residents to services, friends and family. The Centre has continued to provide a space for community members to connect, share information and support one another face to face addressing social isolation. EPCC also ran a 6-week digital safety course which was attended by the local community. Topics included how to create and manage passwords and identify online threats.
- There were 116 community grants awarded in 2023-24. 102 (87%) focused on activities supporting events that address loneliness through supporting social connectedness and positive mental health. These programs and projects continue to be delivered throughout 2023-24.
- The Free from Violence (FFV) new grant program has commenced. Approximately 25 Coordinators and Team Leaders across the whole of Council have been engaged to commence the FFV program Health Check activity.
- Council, in partnership with Banyule, Whittlesea and Nillumbik Councils applied for VicHealth vaping prevention grant to encourage cessation of vaping and smoking among young people. Although the application was unsuccessful, Council continues to run social media campaign to encourage cessation of vaping and smoking in the community.
- Health and Wellbeing programs and community supports at East Preston Community Centre (EPCC) included:

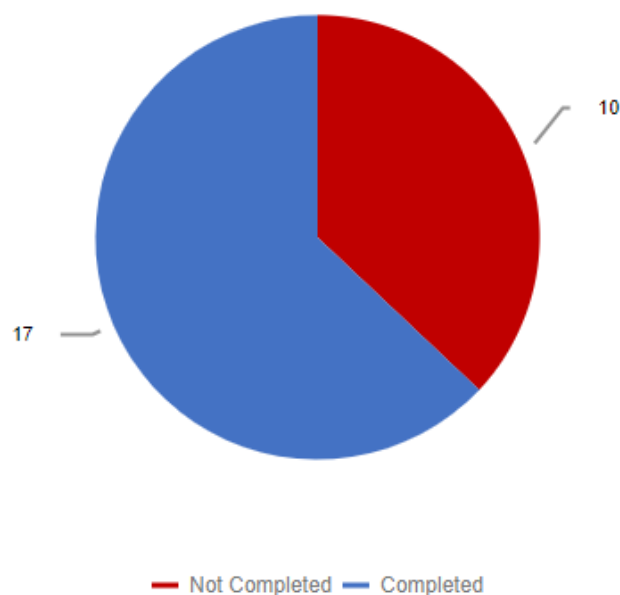
- Free school holiday activities and weekly external outreach BBQ and activities in the park connecting families with local service providers as well as a weekly health kiosk where community can access free blood pressure monitoring and health advice.
- Provision of complex case support providing supported access to health and community services including forms, information and digital access.
- Planted 150 seedlings and harvested 35kg of fresh produce providing multiple health benefits by eating fresh food but also enhanced sense of community, lower stress levels, provide food security, physical activity and better mental health.
- A pop-up fresh food market providing free access to a variety of fresh produce addressing food insecurity and access to healthy food.

Refer to **Appendix A** for more information.

**10 Big Actions**

There are a total of twenty-seven year three actions that contribute to the achievement of the 10 Big Actions. Of these, 63% (17 actions) are ‘Completed’, 37% (10 actions) are ‘Not Completed’.

**Figure Eight: Q4 status of actions contributing to the Big Actions**



Refer to **Appendix A** for more information.

**Project Performance update**

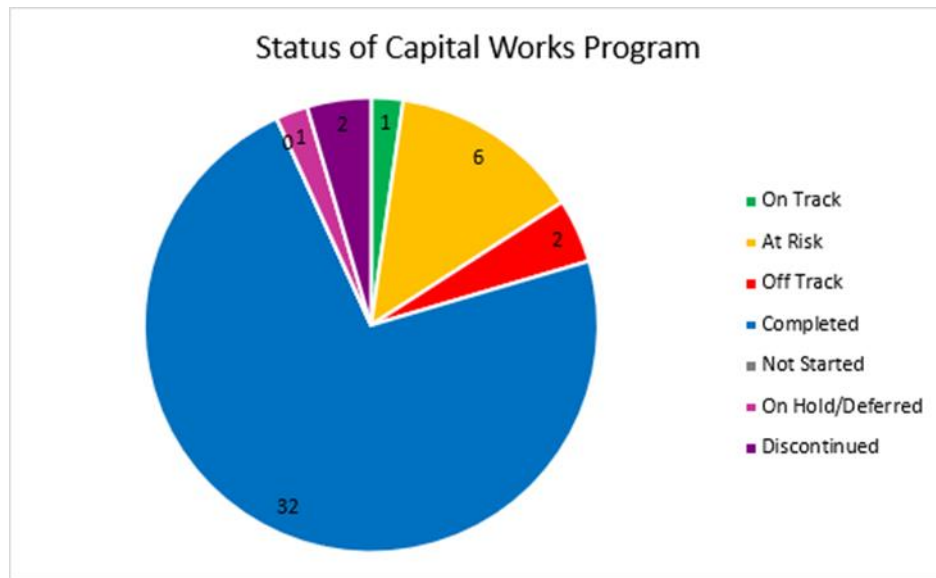
The capital works program continues Council’s strong investment in new and renewed infrastructure.

During the Q3 review of the Annual Budget 2023-2024, Council committed \$33.015 million to its 2023-2024 capital works program of 141 projects. Some of these projects are being delivered over several financial years.

At 30 June 2024, 73% of projects and programs were complete and 27% were closed or delayed and will continue into 2024-2025.

Actual spend on the capital works program for 2023-2024 was \$28 million which represents 85% of the portfolio budget. Total spend during the year also includes savings achieved which is calculated as \$26.1M (actual spend) plus \$1.9M of achieved savings for projects delivered.

**Figure Nine: Q4 Status of Programs and Major Projects**

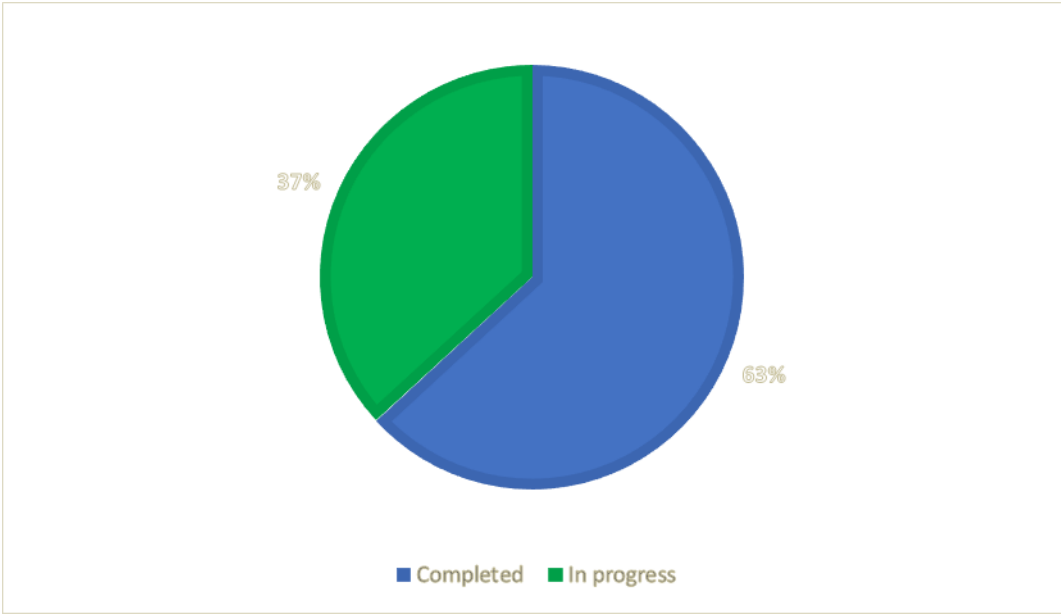


Refer to **Appendix A** for more information.

**Council Resolution Status Report**

There were 38 Council resolutions in the fourth quarter of the 2023-24 financial year, 14 have been completed and 24 resolutions are in progress. 26 of these were adopted as per the officer recommendation and 15 were adopted by Council with an alternate resolution. This includes 8 Notices of Motion, 2 Petitions, 0 Notices of Rescission and 0 Urgent Business items. Of the 38 resolutions, 2 items were referred to Budget and 5 requested a further report or briefing.

Figure 10: Q4 Status of Council resolutions



Due to the complexity of some of the resolutions, they may span multiple years and can be superseded or updated as the initiatives progress.

The status of actions arising from Council resolutions in Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4 is shown in the table below:

2023-24	In Progress	Completed	Total
Q1 (July – Sept 2023)	22	10	32
Q2 (Oct – Dec 2023)	30	15	45
Q3 (Jan-March 2024)	27	21	48
Q4 (April – June 2024)	24	14	38
<b>Total YTD</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>163</b>

**Procurement update**

Council’s Social and Sustainable Procurement Policy Principles continue to drive:

- Value for money is more than price paid.
- More opportunities for the local business community, in particular our social enterprises, to increase their capacity and capability to become suppliers to Council.
- Increased opportunities for local businesses and social enterprises to create capacity for local job seekers, especially those who are marginalised, disadvantaged and under-represented in the work force.
- Working to reduce our negative impact on the environment, support our climate emergency goals and move towards our aim of carbon neutral through purchasing behaviours.
- Lead procurement governance practices of integrity, probity and accountability while building organisational capability and expertise.
- Achieving equity, inclusion, and diversity outcomes.

**Corporate Social Responsibility results to date**

The following table below provides information of supplier and contract activities for Q4 period ending June 2024, which address our S&SP policy objectives in delivering local, social and sustainable benefits.

**2. Local Economy**

Supplier payments – local businesses identified by postcode within Darebin (includes contracted and adhoc payments)						
Q4 Results Supplier payments	Transacted all Suppliers	Transacted Local Suppliers	%Transacted Suppliers	\$Total aggregated payments all Suppliers	\$Local Suppliers aggregated payments	\$\$Local Suppliers payments
Payment to suppliers (excludes statutory payments)	531	124	23%	\$7.93M	\$1.40M	18%
FULL YEAR RESULTS FY23/24YTD	3460	844	24%	\$71.09M	\$10.53M	14.80%
Expenditure will continue to be monitored. Practices include sourcing and inviting local suppliers to register and provide quotes and pricing.						
Contracts awarded by Category – formal contracts ranging from one to five year term.						
Q4 Results Awarded by Category	No of contracts awarded	No of contracted awarded locally	\$Total aggregated contract sum	Contract sum awarded locally	% \$awarded locally	YTD Local Aggregated FY
Works		-		-	-	0
Services	2	-	\$10.17M	-	-	0
Consultancy	2		\$14IK			
Information Tech	5	-	\$1.34M	-	-	0
Goods & Plant	3	-	\$1.35M	-	-	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$13.00M</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>0</b>
Contract awarding will continue to move due to timing of retiring, new or renewal of capital and operational needs. Local businesses may not always be able to fulfill our requirements thus needing to source outside of						

Darebin. The consequences are less funds going back into the community. Social objectives is a mandatory 25% weighted criteria priority and continue to be promoted in improving local economy and achieving social objectives. Continued education of educate staff, promoting local business registration and sourcing activities continues to target local businesses.

**3. Social Opportunities – resulting from contracting**

Q4 Results S&SP Objective	Awarded that identify supporting people	Contract total value	Aligned benefits (% or actual no).
Indigenous & Torres Strait staff	8	\$2.63M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan</li> <li>• Policy and commitment to recruiting indigenous and torrs strait staff</li> </ul>
Disadvantaged & local apprentices or trainees	8	\$1.91M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills development program</li> <li>• Diversity Inclusion policies</li> <li>• Employ 2 FT staff</li> </ul>
Evidence of Local (15-25yo) Young 10% dividend	6	\$1.25M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11% of workforce are under 25YO.</li> <li>• Student placement program</li> </ul>
Gender Equity	11	\$3.80M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30% staff employed</li> <li>• EEO Policy</li> <li>• Gender equity policies</li> <li>• 1200% sub-contractor are gender neutral</li> </ul>
Social or Charitable Enterprises engaged through contracting	4	\$1.58M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bridge Sparge</li> <li>• Suppotive charities</li> </ul>

Our Social procurement ensures that purchasing decisions always include equity, inclusion and diversity that will collectively achieve a more holistic community result, delivering maximum value for our community. Results continue to move as tendering dependencies are driven by new or renewing procurement events.

Mandatory selection criteria and overall weighting of 25% is applied to:

- Local businesses at 5%
- Social at 5%
- Sustainability at 5% and
- Remaining 10% aligned to either category according to the procurement type or activity.

**4. Sustainability**

Q4 Results S&SP Objective	No. contracts awarded that address environmental sustainable procurement objectives
Environmental policies and initiatives in reducing environmental impacts	10 Contracts evidence and practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waste strategie</li> <li>• Recycling policies</li> <li>• Greehhouse actions policy</li> <li>• B Corp certification</li> <li>• 80% truck/plant are Euro 5 compliant</li> <li>• Food rescue programs</li> </ul>
Environmental Management System	

## 5. Procurement Conformance

Effective 1 October 2021, the Social & Sustainable Procurement Policy 2021-2025 (SS&P) contains specific procurement activities as either exempt from the publicly advertised tendering requirements or are specifically exempt for Council from normal sourcing processes.

In addition, where procurement activities are non-compliant with policy and/or legislation, they will also be reported to Audit and Risk Committee.

There were 3 instances throughout the June 2024 period, relating to both compliant and non-compliant exemptions in accordance with Policy. Refer Table below for summary information.

	Division	Exemption type	Activity	Justification	\$Value (incl. GST)
June	Infrastructure, Operations & Finance	Compliant, council specific	Budget System and Performance Reporting	This preferred supplier is recommended through a competitive tender process undertaken by MAV ICT Professional & Leasing Services for the implementation of a budget system. MAGIQ provides the full system and implementation.	\$ 140,305.00 (includes Y1 one of implementation costs of \$83,655)
June	Infrastructure, Operations & Finance	Compliant, council specific	Maintenance and Support of Procurement / Contract software	Open Windows is a current service provider to Council and is also a recommended provider of the MAV ICT Professional & Leasing Services. Market testing would be within scope of ERP implementation however an interim market testing would not be cost effective.	\$ 31,842.00
June	Community	Non-compliant, Policy	Migration Public Artwork 2024	Staff have delivered this project to the best of their abilities within a very challenging political context and extremely restrictive timeframe which created barriers to traditional procurement compliance	\$ 160,000.00

## CONSIDERATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (2020) PRINCIPLES

### Financial Management

The 2023-24 Q4 Performance Report (non-financial) is scheduled to be presented to Council on 26 August 2024.

### Community Engagement

The preparation of the 2023-24 Q4 Performance Report was supported by and involved detailed discussions with all senior leaders, project managers and relevant responsible officers.

The preparation of the Q4 Procurement Update was supported by and involved detailed discussions with all senior leaders, project managers and relevant responsible officers.



**Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles**

- (i) the transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.
- (g) the ongoing financial viability of the Council is to be ensured;

**Public Transparency Principles**

- (b) Council information must be publicly available unless (i) the information is confidential by virtue of this Act or any other Act; or (ii) public availability of the information would be contrary to the public interest;

**Strategic Planning Principles**

- (e) strategic planning must provide for ongoing monitoring of progress and regular reviews to identify and address changing circumstances;

**Service Performance Principles**

- (d) a Council should seek to continuously improve service delivery to the municipal community in response to performance monitoring;

**COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS****Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)**

No Environmental Sustainability Considerations for the 2023-24 Q4 Performance Report.

**Equity, Inclusion, Wellbeing and Human Rights Considerations:**

This report is based on performance across multiple areas. Equity, Inclusion, Wellbeing and Human Rights considerations are applied within the multiple areas, rather than this report.

**Economic Development and Cultural Considerations**

This report is based on performance across multiple areas. Economic Development and Cultural Considerations are applied within the multiple areas, rather than this report.

**Operational Impacts**

Operational impacts are considered when understanding performance trends.

**Legal and Risk Implications**

The reporting of progress toward the Council Plan Action Plan fulfils Council's legislative obligations in accordance with the principles of the *Local Government Act 2020* and its accountability to the community.


**IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

2023-24 Q4 Performance Report (non-financial) will be uploaded to the Council public website and included in the Darebin statutory annual report.

**RELATED DOCUMENTS**

- 2041 Darebin Community Vision
- Revised 2021-25 Council Plan (incorporating Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan)
- 2023-24 Council Plan Action Plan
- Annual Budget 2023-24
- Financial Plan 2023-24 to 2032-33
- *Local Government Act 2020*
- Social and Sustainability Procurement Policy December 2021
- 10-year Capital Works Plan

**Attachments**

- Appendix A - Q4 2023-24 Performance Report 26 August 2024 (**Appendix A**) [↓](#) 

**DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST**

Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires members of Council staff and persons engaged under contract to provide advice to Council to disclose any conflicts of interest in a matter to which the advice relates.

The Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

# COUNCIL PLAN ACTION PLAN 2023-2024 PROGRESS REPORT Q4



the place  
to live



# INTRODUCTION

## Welcome

Guiding the way Council delivers its services and plans for the future is the 2021–25 Council Plan. This plan was developed following the most recent election and revised in 2023-24. The plan outlines the objectives and aims of Council over its four-year term. Development of the plan included significant community consultation at community forums and social media.

Council has committed to four directions that will guide our actions and resources for a period of four years:

1. Vibrant, Respectful and Connected – making sure our community is one where all our people are valued, and no one is left behind
2. Prosperous, Liveable and Flourishing – building on Darebin’s strengths in relation to business, services and industry, and creating a city where all services and facilities to support a balanced, healthy life are easily accessible to our residents
3. Climate, Green and Sustainable – ensuring Darebin is a leader in responding to the climate emergency, and our natural environment is protected and enhanced
4. Responsible, Transparent and Responsive – recognising we are here to serve our community, in all its diversity, and that we govern transparently and accountably.

For more detail on the Council Plan, go to [www.darebin.vic.gov.au/About-Council/Council-structure-and-performance/Council-plan](http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/About-Council/Council-structure-and-performance/Council-plan)

Supporting the Council Plan is an annual Action Plan which sets out our work for the financial year to ensure that the objectives of the Council Plan are implemented.

We invite you to read on to see what we’ve done to implement the Council Plan in the fourth quarter of the 2023-24 financial year.

## INTRODUCTION

### How to Read This Report

This document outlines our progress in completing the 2023-24 Council Plan Action Plan.

There are four sections to this report:

Section one provides an overview of the 10 Big Action themes.

Section two provides the quarter four action commentary and progress status for the 80 actions from the 2023-24 Council Plan Action Plan. The actions are arranged by Council Plan strategic direction/objective and have commentary that outlines the progress against that action as at 30 June 2024.

Section three is the Capital Works Portfolio Status Report for Quarter Four which provides the status and progress of all programs and major projects.

Section four is the status of Council Resolutions report which provides a summary of the organisation's progress in implementing Council's decisions for the 2023-24 financial year.

### Darebin at a Glance

The City of Darebin is located between five and fifteen kilometres north of Melbourne's central business district.

It has been home to the Wurundjeri people for many thousands of years.

Our city covers 53 square kilometres of land stretching from the inner northern suburbs of Northcote and Fairfield to Reservoir and Bundoora.

In 2023, our city's estimated population was 155,683 people, and this is forecast to increase to 216,417 by 2046.

We are home to one of Victoria's largest and most diverse communities in the realms of culture, language, religion, socioeconomic background, employment status, occupation and housing need. In 2021, 46,688 of our residents were born overseas; 18 per cent had arrived in Australia in the five years prior.

We have a diverse mix of properties – with 68,081 residential properties, 4,661 business properties and 531 mixed-use properties. Our largest industries are education and training, retail, manufacturing, health care and social assistance.

As a Council, we are responsible for a large part of our city's infrastructure and natural habitat. We own, manage, or maintain 333 buildings, 790 hectares of open space, 27 sports reserves, seven natural reserves, 57 playing fields/sports grounds, 130 playgrounds, 29 wetlands, 84,300 trees, 530 km of roads, 30 km of shared paths, 1,045 km of sealed footpaths, 66 road and foot bridges, 628 km of stormwater pipes, 23,194 stormwater pits, and 30 gross pollutant traps (structures that trap solid waste such as litter).

While our city's social and economic prosperity is changing, with more of our residents earning higher incomes, we still have many of our residents experiencing disadvantage.

The Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) score ranks areas based on indicators that contribute to disadvantage (including unemployment and income). In 2021, Darebin's SEIFA disadvantage score was 1018, which is the same as for Greater Melbourne.

In December 2023, our job seeker rate was 4.3 per cent. This is 0.5 percentage points higher than the unemployment rate for Greater Melbourne (3.8 per cent), and Victoria overall (also 3.8 per cent).

## 10 BIG ACTIONS

Big Action Number	Council Plan Strategic Action Numbers	Big Action Description
BA1	(None in 2023-24)	<b>Build Infrastructure for the future</b> by developing Northcote Aquatic and Recreation Centre, redeveloping BT Connor Pavilion in Reservoir, and building Darebin Intercultural Centre in Preston.
BA2	2-2 2-3 2-6	<b>Plan infrastructure for decades to come</b> by redeveloping Reservoir Leisure Centre, activating Edwardes Lake Boat House in Reservoir, building new kindergarten facilities, and undertaking a feasibility study for a Global Learning Hub in Preston.
BA3	2-15 2-16 3-1 3-2 3-18	<b>Continue to lead with our response to the climate emergency</b> by updating our Climate Emergency Plan to set out how to best achieve zero greenhouse gas emissions for Darebin by 2030, offering solar installations and energy retrofits to pensioners and vulnerable communities, delivering new business and community power purchase partnerships, supporting a shift to a circular economy and programs aimed to improve safety for people cycling, walking and wheeling, increasing active travel which will also reduce transport emissions.
BA4	1-1 1-2 1-3 1-4	<b>Deepen our commitment to truth and justice for First Nations communities</b> in partnership with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples who live and work in Darebin.
BA5	2-40	<b>Support vulnerable members of our community</b> by providing support with COVID-19 recovery, expanding our Homelessness Assertive Outreach program, and supporting community-led programs in East Reservoir and East Preston, to achieve greater physical and mental health, and wellbeing for all.

## 10 BIG ACTIONS



Big Action Number	Council Plan Strategic Action Numbers	Big Action Description
BA6	2-49 2-52	<b>Champion local business and creative industries</b> by providing support with COVID-19 recovery, facilitating the establishment of a Darebin Chamber of Commerce, and improving the lighting and safety of our retail precincts and business activity centres.
BA7	1-6 1-7 1-10 1-12 1-13 1-14 1-19 1-35	<b>Build a more inclusive community for all</b> by supporting Darebin's multicultural communities, reducing racism and discrimination, increasing access to our Council's services and sporting assets by groups who are under-represented, developing our Disability Action Plan, to improve access for all to our services and infrastructure, and achieving Rainbow Tick accreditation (best practice in LGBTQIA+ inclusion) for our services and activities.
BA8	2-33 2-62	<b>Improve the quality of development</b> and work to protect all that we love about Darebin by pursuing protections for Preston Market, conducting a Planning Scheme review informed by in-depth community consultation, and reviewing to amend our Parking Permit Policy.
BA9	3-11	<b>Protect our natural environment and biodiversity</b> by significantly improving water quality in Edwardes Lake, increasing tree canopy coverage in our parks, residential areas and retail precincts, and enhancing understorey planting.
BA10	1-20 2-6	<b>Expand our delivery of quality universal services</b> across the lifespan by providing more three-year old kindergarten places, continuing to deliver our flagship Age Friendly Darebin Project, expanding aged care direct services, and registering to become a home care package provider.


# COUNCIL PLAN

## Council Plan

### 1.0: Vibrant, Respectful and Connected




1.1: We will prioritise and respect the voices and aspirations of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Darebin




H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[1-1] In consultation with the Traditional Owners, Darebin Aboriginal Advisory Committee and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities develop and commence implementation of a three-year Aboriginal Action Plan Key elements of this Plan, in addition to items mentioned in the Council Plan, to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop partnerships with local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to enhance our work towards mutual goals</li> <li>A meaningful and comprehensive response to the six key requests of DAAC's Our Black Lives Matter statement to Council</li> <li>Continue to implement and expand our Aboriginal Employment Strategy and Aboriginal Action Plan</li> <li>Begin discussions with Traditional Owners to understand</li> </ul>	In consultation with the Traditional Owners, Darebin Aboriginal Advisory Committee and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities develop and commence implementation of a three-year Aboriginal Action Plan. Key elements of this Plan, in addition to items mentioned in the Council Plan, to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop partnerships with local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to enhance our work towards mutual goals</li> <li>A meaningful and comprehensive response to the six key requests of DAAC's Our Black Lives Matter statement to Council</li> <li>Continue to implement and expand our Aboriginal Employment</li> </ul>	The development of the Aboriginal Action Plan is continuing. This quarter the focus was on consultation with members of the Darebin Aboriginal Advisory Committee. Internal stakeholder consultation is currently in progress, along with preparation and scheduling of external consultation with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. This action will continue in 24/25.		Not Completed

 Completed  Not Completed  Deferred





# COUNCIL PLAN




H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	the feasibility and resources required for Council to hand back land and responsibility for land management	Strategy and Aboriginal Action Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin discussions with Traditional Owners to understand the feasibility and resources required for Council to hand back land and responsibility for land management</li> </ul>			
	[1-2] Progress a partnership with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and continue to progress “decolonising” Bundoora Park	Progress a partnership with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and continue to progress “decolonising” Bundoora Park	This work has continued, in particular the delivery of the Wurundjeri Garden at Bundoora Park. Given the complexity of the work, this is an ongoing action.		Not Completed
	[1-3] Deliver initiatives that support truth telling, and provide opportunities for culturally diverse communities, and our broader Darebin community, to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history	Deliver initiatives that support truth telling, and provide opportunities for culturally diverse communities, and our broader Darebin community, to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history	The second stage truth telling space at Bundoora Farm has progressed. Throughout the process Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders have been consulted. This work will continue and will support the 7th annual School Yarning Conference scheduled for late 2024.		Completed
	[1-4] Increase support to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations by incorporating a specific funding stream into our Community Grants Program	Establish an appropriate grant stream, subject to guidance from the Darebin Aboriginal Advisory Committee	A new grant stream was created after consultation with Aboriginal Organisations and Darebin Aboriginal Advisory Committee in 2023. This grant round was launched on March 4 and closes on April 30, 2024. <a href="https://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/About-Council/Darebin-grants/Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-Grants">https://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/About-Council/Darebin-grants/Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-Grants</a>		Completed

 Completed
  Not Completed
  Deferred





# COUNCIL PLAN




1.2: We will develop partnerships with organisations from across our city, to value and include people from multicultural and diverse backgrounds

H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[1-6] Support and promote a significant increase in participation in Darebin's sports clubs, in particular, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, women, girls, people of all abilities, and multicultural and diverse communities	Support and promote a significant increase in participation in Darebin's sports clubs, in particular, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, women, girls, people of all abilities, and multicultural and diverse communities	Total of 11,017 participants registered in sporting clubs during the 23-24 Financial year registering an increase of 5.45% over 22-23 financial year numbers. Participation of girls and women increased by 4.9% (3043). There was a 15.4% (276) increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation. Participation also included 2098 from CALD backgrounds, 647 all abilities and 1156 from low socio-economic backgrounds. Council is supporting a range of events to increase participation by communities at risk of exclusion, including programs catering specially for Aboriginal and First Nations People, like Mums and Dads swimming, Gym sessions, Men's Golf and Elders line dancing. Also, approximately 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and 1450 from CALD backgrounds participated in casually organised events.		Completed

 Completed  Not Completed  Deferred





# COUNCIL PLAN




H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[1-7] Encourage and reward sporting and leisure groups/sporting teams that use Council's recreation spaces, by reducing user fees to those that demonstrate inclusion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples, women, girls, people of all abilities, and multicultural and diverse communities	Encourage and reward sporting and leisure groups/sporting teams that use Council's recreation spaces, by reducing user fees to those that demonstrate inclusion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples, women, girls, people of all abilities, and multicultural and diverse communities	Formal evaluation of Council's Performance Subsidy Program has commenced including benchmarking and a club survey. The current program incentivises participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, women, girls, people of all abilities, and those from a diverse and multicultural background. Forty clubs applied to the program in 2023-24 with 18 clubs achieving Gold status, seven 7 Silver and 9 Bronze which results in various discounts applied to their fees.		Completed
	[1-9] Partner with Bowel Cancer Screening, Cancer Council Victoria and local community organisations to increase awareness of bowel cancer and improve community understanding, including for Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, of the benefits of screening, with a particular focus on underrepresented groups undertaking bowel cancer screening	Partner with Bowel Cancer Screening, Cancer Council Victoria and local community organisations to increase awareness of bowel cancer and improve community understanding, including for Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, of the benefits of screening, with a particular focus on underrepresented groups undertaking bowel cancer screening	In partnership with the Cancer Council, key messages were conveyed through key communications channels and a social media campaign was held in January and May to raise awareness of Bowel Cancer in the community.		Completed

 Completed
  Not Completed
  Deferred



# COUNCIL PLAN

1.3: We will help to build an inclusive and empowered community, where social cohesion and community harmony are fostered

H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[1-10] Develop the Disability Action Plan to improve access to services and infrastructure for our residents and visitors	Develop an implementation plan for the Disability Action Plan to improve access to services and infrastructure for our residents and visitors	The Disability Action Plan 2023 - 2025 continues to be implemented by teams from across the organisation. This year there is a strong focus on accessible and inclusive communications. Some excellent access and inclusion outcomes have recently been achieved including a number of disability events taking place in Darebin Libraries, consultations for a new disability category in the Darebin Community Awards, and the endorsement of a new Outdoor Dining and Trading Policy with improved accessibility requirements. The planning of activities for community and staff to celebrate the International Day of People with Disability are progressing well, with a new partnership with Darebin Libraries increasing available funding for groups.		Completed
	[1-12] Develop and deliver a program to support middle years students (later primary school, and early secondary school-aged) from Darebin schools to connect with each other, and take action on systemic racism issues together, to support student voices	Evaluate the completed pilot program to support middle years students to connect with each other, and take action on systemic racism issues together, to support student voices and provide findings to Department of Education and Training for consideration in any future programs they may choose to run	Survey results have been obtained from Victoria University (Darebin + Merri-Bek cluster) and base line data has been established. Anti-racism focus groups and a Community Forum were delivered. The evaluation of the pilot program included recommended actions for implementation by the Education Department.		Completed

 Completed  Not Completed  Deferred





# COUNCIL PLAN




H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[1-13] Develop a Cultural Diversity Action Plan to improve access, participation and engagement of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds including:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to venues and encourage participation in Council services where participation is low</li> <li>• Work with our sporting and recreation clubs to increase participation</li> <li>• Identify creative opportunities to reflect Darebin's different cultures in the built environment across our city</li> <li>• Work with our local organisations to create an active Community Leader network comprising community leaders from our culturally diverse communities</li> </ul>	Develop a Cultural Diversity Action Plan to improve access, participation and engagement of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds including:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to venues and encourage participation in Council services where participation is low</li> <li>• Work with our sporting and recreation clubs to increase participation</li> <li>• Identify creative opportunities to reflect Darebin's different cultures in the built environment across our city</li> <li>• Work with our local organisations to create an active Community Leader network comprising community leaders from our culturally diverse communities</li> </ul>	The development of the Cultural Diversity Action Plan continued. This quarter a workshop with councillors was delivered by the Interational Organisation of Migration and the Victorian Multicultural Commission on terminology and concepts. A requested report on the sociodemographic profiles of Darebin's migrant community commenced. This work continued to be delayed given the complexity in addition to other unplanned work and service delivery priorities that have arisen during this year. This action will continue in 24/25.		Not Completed

● Completed   
 ● Not Completed   
 ● Deferred

# COUNCIL PLAN





1.4: We will embrace diversity and ensure everyone is included in our society, and no one is left behind - by combating discrimination, and championing equity, inclusivity and diversity




H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[1-14] Continue to become more LGBTIQ+ inclusive across Council's services and activities including work towards Rainbow Tick accreditation for several services	Continue to become more LGBTIQ+ inclusive across Council's services and activities including work towards Rainbow Tick accreditation for several services	Evidence to meet the Rainbow Tick Accreditation across six standards was submitted on 13 June. Preparation for an on-site assessment team to visit in-scope sites in early July is underway and will include interviews with staff, volunteers, consumers, and stakeholders. The findings of the Accreditation will be received in 24/25 and progress will continue on this action in the coming financial year.		Not Completed
	[1-19] Develop a Sexuality, Sex and Gender Diversity Action Plan to support the inclusion, rights and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ communities and work to combat homophobia, biphobia and transphobia	Develop a Sexuality, Sex and Gender Diversity Action Plan to support the inclusion, rights, and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ communities and work to combat homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia	The focus this quarter has been on finalising documentation for Rainbow Tick accreditation. Improvements from the accreditation will help to inform the development of the LGBTIQ+ Action Plan. The Community Engagement Findings Report has been completed. The Plan will be developed and presented to Council for endorsement in FY2024-25.		Not Completed

 Completed  Not Completed  Deferred



# COUNCIL PLAN




## 1.5: We will increase social connection to reduce isolation and loneliness, and support positive mental health

H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[1-20] Deliver Age Friendly Darebin and implement aged care reforms	Deliver Age Friendly Darebin and implement aged care reforms	<p>Deliver Age Friendly Darebin: Embedding an age friendly lens across the organisation remains a priority with older people including the Active and Healthy Ageing Advisory Committee providing input into the Council projects, services, and initiatives.</p> <p>Aged care reforms: Project continuing to progress preparation for aged care reforms. Current work focused on preparing for introduction of new Aged Care Standards and Aged Care Act as of July 1, 2025. Delays by the Commonwealth, including constant changes to Age Care Reform timelines, have impacted the capacity to meet project timelines.</p>		Not Completed
	[1-22] Review opportunities through Council services, and in partnership with others, to address the digital divide for public housing and high-risk accommodation residents, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and other excluded groups	Review opportunities through Council services, and in partnership with others, to address the digital divide for public housing and high-risk accommodation residents, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and other excluded groups	<p>East Preston Community Centre continued to deliver weekly digital support sessions and a 'computers for older adults' course. These sessions provide one-on-one digital support to help connect residents to services, friends, and family. These sessions have also provided a space to connect, share information and support one another face-to-face, thereby addressing social isolation. We were also able to run a six-week digital safety course for the local community. Topics included how to create and manage passwords and how to identify online threats.</p>		Completed

 Completed  Not Completed  Deferred

# COUNCIL PLAN




H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[1-23] Provide grants, and deliver and facilitate programs, services, and events that address loneliness, through supporting social connectedness and positive mental health	Provide grants, and deliver and facilitate programs, services, and events that address loneliness, through supporting social connectedness and positive mental health	There were 116 community grants awarded in 2023-24. 102 (87%) focused on activities supporting events that address loneliness through supporting social connectedness and positive mental health.		Completed




 Completed
  Not Completed
  Deferred



# COUNCIL PLAN

1.6: We will ensure our festivals, events and functions are inclusive and respond equitably to, and value the diverse needs and aspirations of, our community




H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[1-28] Deliver an annual cultural diversity and social cohesion oration as part of the FUSE festival	Deliver a new annual cultural diversity and social cohesion oration	The IC Oration was delivered on 21 May and featured renowned author and journalist George Megalogenis and Anthea Hancocks, CEO of the Scanlon Foundation. Over 100 people attended the talk presented by George Megalogenis, which focused on his research on cultural diversity and social cohesion. In his talk, he traversed the national and regional to the urban and local demographics of the City of Darebin. Music by Gamelan Dananda and refreshments followed and gave the audience an opportunity to mingle and discuss the contents of the Oration.		Completed
	[1-29] Deliver a signature cultural event as part of the FUSE festival in and around the grounds of the Bundoora Homestead Art Centre that showcases culturally diverse artists, music, food, participatory workshops and performances.	Deliver a signature cultural event as part of the FUSE festival in and around the grounds of the Bundoora Homestead Art Centre that showcases culturally diverse artists, music, food, participatory workshops and performances	A one-day festival event called 'Meet the Makers Picnic' was delivered in Q3.		Completed

 Completed  Not Completed  Deferred

# COUNCIL PLAN

1.7: We will continue to be a local government leader in the prevention of violence against women, and gender equity




H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[1-30] Implement and extend our Gender Equality and Preventing Violence Against Women Action Plan, using an intersectional approach	Implement and extend our Gender Equality and Preventing Violence Against Women Action Plan, using an intersectional approach	Council continued to implement the Gender Equality and Preventing Violence Against Women Action Plan, using an intersectional approach. The focus this quarter has been the design of the Free From Violence (FFV) grant program, including undertaking a baseline Health Check activity with 25 teams across Council to commence the FFV program Health Check activity, and the recruitment of a Free From Violence Cultural Inclusion Officer.		Completed

 Completed     Not Completed     Deferred





# COUNCIL PLAN




1.8: We will work towards a discrimination-free, and systemic racism-free Darebin, and reduce the impact of poverty and disadvantage

H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[1-34] Address inequities in the distribution of resources, and ensure the needs of our most vulnerable people are prioritised by implementing our Towards Equality Framework	Address inequities in the distribution of resources, and ensure the needs of our most vulnerable people are prioritised by implementing our Towards Equality Framework	The Towards Equality Framework has continued to be implemented mostly through the application of the Equity Impact Assessment (EIA), incorporating the legally mandated Gender Impact Assessment (GIA). In this fourth quarter, eight EIAs were undertaken on a range of plans, including the Cultural Diversity Action Plan, Darebin Housing Strategy, and the Corporate Writing Style Guide. The Equity Impact Assessment Panel provided support and advice on an additional seven pieces of work that contributed towards Council implementation of the Towards Equality Framework.		Completed
	[1-35] Work with the Darebin Ethnic Communities Council, our community, and local organisations, to foster respect and address systemic racism	Work with the Darebin Ethnic Communities Council, our community, and local organisations, to foster respect and address systemic racism	Council is working towards a renewed Memorandum of Understanding with the Darebin Ethnic Communities Council (DECC). A draft version has been shared with DECC. A forum which brought together community members and stakeholders to share lived experiences of racism was delivered and officers supported community activities to foster respect and address racism.		Completed

 Completed  Not Completed  Deferred

# COUNCIL PLAN




H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[1-36] Continue to implement the Welcoming Cities Standard, with the aim of becoming a 'Mentoring' level Council	Continue to implement the Welcoming Cities Standard, with the aim of becoming a 'Mentoring' level Council	The Council's submission to Excelling level accreditation with Welcoming Cities Standards has been completed, including all the evidence across Council's business area that showcases Council's response to 60 indicators of the 6 categories of the Standards at each of policy, internal and external levels. A final step to complete the accreditation process is a Focus Group session by the Welcoming Cities Assessors with selected internal and community stakeholders. This focus group is an opportunity that will further support the evidence submitted.		Completed
	[1-38] Mitigate the impacts of climate change on the health and wellbeing of our disadvantaged communities	Through the development and implementation of the Climate Emergency Plan mitigate the impacts of climate change on the health and wellbeing of our disadvantaged communities	There are many actions in the draft Climate Emergency Plan that support community members experiencing disadvantage. Consultation on the draft Plan was designed to reach our diverse community, including people living with a disability, Aboriginal people, and community groups across Darebin, including people from Vietnamese, Greek, Italian and Chinese communities. The final new Climate Emergency Plan will be complete in July 2024.		Not Completed




 Completed  Not Completed  Deferred

# COUNCIL PLAN

## 2.0: Prosperous, Liveable and Flourishing




### 2.1: We will deliver equitable and accessible infrastructure to provide opportunities for our community to live well

H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[2-2] Redevelop Reservoir Leisure Centre, incorporating opportunities to enhance health, wellbeing and socioeconomic outcomes	Undertake minor renewal works while commencing scoping for the longer-term options for the redevelopment and rebuilding of the centre to enhance health, wellbeing, and socioeconomic outcomes	<p>The roof renewal works were completed by end of May 2024.</p> <p>RLC Scoping Study procurement activities are complete, and governance established. Kick-off meetings will commence in July 2024 and continue in 24/25.</p>		Not Completed
	[2-3] Invest in the Edwardes Lake Boathouse in Reservoir to support a long-term lease arrangement	Continue to advocate to the descendants of the original owner to remove the restrictive covenants so appropriate renewal works of the boat house can occur	A process is underway to have this restriction amended or removed (via UK lawyers). This process is continuing and will take some time. Irrespective of whether this is completed in time, Council plans to seek a tenant for the site via an Expression of Interest process in early 2025.		Not Completed





 Completed
  Not Completed
  Deferred




# COUNCIL PLAN

H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[2-6] Expand funded 3-year-old kindergarten	Expand funded 3-year-old kindergarten	Council and the Department of Education signed a Building Blocks Partnership Memorandum of Understanding in April 2024, outlining a joint commitment to invest in the expansion of kindergarten capacity in Darebin over coming years. Two projects are included in the initial agreement - the expansion of Merri Community Child Care and Kindergarten (commenced June 2024, expected to be complete September 2024) and the expansion of Maryborough Avenue Kindergarten (expected to commence January 2025, subject to confirmation of Council budget allocation). The expansion of funded three-year-old kindergarten is an ongoing Council priority, with funding allocated in Council's Capital Works Plan over the next three financial years to continue delivery of this priority.		Completed
	[2-9] Redevelop KP Hardiman Pavilion in Kingsbury	Continue pavilion design and commence construction	We received the CHMP draft report, revised cost plan, and resubmitted the ESD to the Council ESD officer. An ongoing PCG meeting was held, and procurement provided the CT number. KP Hardiman has two years of construction remaining		Not Completed

 Completed
  Not Completed
  Deferred





## COUNCIL PLAN




H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[2-10] Redevelop the Northcote Aquatic and Recreation Centre	Complete construction of the Northcote Aquatic and Recreation Centre	The redevelopment of the Northcote Aquatic and Recreation Centre is complete for practical purposes. The Centre was officially re-opened in November 2023 and is now fully accessible to the public. Minor defects are being rectified during this current stage with 100% completion to be achieved at the end of the defects period		Completed
	[2-11] Develop an Integrated Families, Youth and Children Strategy	Develop an Integrated Families, Youth and Children Strategy	Council approved the draft Families, Youth and Children Strategy to go to Stage 2 Community Engagement in May 2024. Stage 2 Community Engagement ran from 29 May to 23 June to give the Darebin community the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft strategy and help Council finalise the Strategy. After consideration of this feedback, the strategy will be put to Council in August 2024. Following adoption of the strategy, a two-year action plan will be developed to lay out how Council and our partners will work together to deliver the strategy and improve outcomes for children, young people, and their families.		Not Completed
	[2-13] Plan for the redevelopment of John Hall pavilion and public toilet in Kingsbury	Continue pavilion design and commence construction	The redevelopment of John Hall Reserve Pavilion is on schedule and within adopted budget. Council adopted the recommendation to appoint a contractor at the April 2024 meeting. The contract is currently in the process of being executed. Works are scheduled to commence early in the new financial year.		Completed

 Completed  Not Completed  Deferred

# COUNCIL PLAN





2.2: We will design and create public spaces where our people feel safe, welcome, and respected, including improving lighting and safety for people walking, wheeling, cycling and driving




H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[2-15] Improve road safety, and the cycling, walking and wheeling network, by constructing high priority improvements	Improve road safety, and the cycling, walking and wheeling network, by constructing high priority improvements	Detailed engineering designs have been completed for all projects, which will be built in July and August. Delays were experienced because more time was needed to ensure the design outcome was fit for purpose, and diversion routes for buses were possible to allow nearby major repair works at the intersection of Massey Avenue and Amery Street. The Projects are a signalised pedestrian crossing of Miller Street at Devon Street in Thornbury, road safety treatments along Radford Road between MacKenzie Street and Amery Street, and a raised crossing on Davidson Street, both in Reservoir.		Not Completed
	[2-16] Investigate and prioritise road safety, accessibility, cycling, walking and wheeling improvements across Darebin by using a Local Area Placemaking approach - where one third of the city is reviewed, with community involvement, each year	Investigate and prioritise road safety, accessibility, cycling, walking, and wheeling improvements across Darebin by using a Local Area Placemaking approach - where one third of the city is reviewed, with community involvement, each year	Council endorsed the priority list of projects, including area speed reductions, in June 2024. This completes the Your Street, Your Say project for Group B (Alphington, Bundoora, Fairfield, Macleod, Northcote East, and Thornbury East). These projects will now be considered for delivery funding through Council's annual budget cycle.		Completed

 Completed     Not Completed     Deferred










# COUNCIL PLAN

H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[2-17] Develop and implement a Community Safety Framework	Develop a Community Safety Framework	Council has continued to develop a Community Safety Framework, and work will continue in 24/25. This work was delayed given the complexity of the work in addition to other unplanned work and service delivery priorities that have arisen during this period. In this quarter, a review of Councils policies and responses to community safety activities was undertaken.		Not Completed
	[2-19] With State Government approval, reduce the speed limit in more local streets across our city	With State Government approval, reduce the speed limit in more local streets across our city	The Department of Transport and Planning has approved two speed limit reductions applications. They are, the extension of the existing 40 km/h speed limit on Gilbert Road to Kendall Street and the area bordered by Gilbert Road, Bell Street, Murray Road & Elizabeth Street. The speed limit changes at these locations will be made in July.		Not Completed

 Completed
  Not Completed
  Deferred




# COUNCIL PLAN

H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[2-21] Develop a Community Infrastructure Plan to inform Council's decision making on the future of our assets, based on service needs across our city for the next 10 years	Continue to develop a Community Infrastructure Plan, including an implementation plan	Council continued to develop a draft of the Community Infrastructure Plan throughout the year. This included a high-level assessment of community infrastructure needs over the next 10 years, as well an audit tool to gather information about the use and configuration of existing Council facilities and whether they are fit-for-purpose given projected community needs. Audits of existing Council facilities are continuing, as is the development of a set of principles to guide community infrastructure provision. A draft of the community infrastructure plan, and associated implementation plan is anticipated for completion by April 2025.		Completed
	[2-23] Update flood risk assessments across Darebin, and incorporate them into our Darebin Planning Scheme	Commence work on planning scheme amendment to introduce updated flood levels into Darebin Planning Scheme	The new flood mapping is being finalised by Melbourne Water, In the meantime, Council has progressed background work for the preparation of draft planning scheme provisions.		Not Completed
	[2-24] Continue our Traffic Blackspot Design and Construction Program	Continue our Traffic Blackspot Design and Construction Program	Construction completed at Belgrove & Ovando intersection. Design is continuing for future Blackspot projects. The Mitchell/Victoria design is being updated and awaiting DTP approval following the scope change.		Not Completed
	[2-27] Actively participate in the Reservoir Revitalisation Board to improve outcomes for the Reservoir community	Actively participate in the Reservoir Revitalisation Board to improve outcomes for the Reservoir community	The Rezza Rocks On & Ramp Up Reservoir final acquittal reports to be finalised. Reservoir Revitalisation Board held their final meeting on June 24.		Completed

 Completed  Not Completed  Deferred

# COUNCIL PLAN




H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[2-30] Undertake a review of the General Local law	Undertake a review of the General Local law	A strategic assessment has been completed, including an assessment of requirements, strengths and areas for improvements, alignment to Council policies and goals, and mega-trends that regulatory services may need to respond to. Community engagement is planned for early 2025.		Not Completed

 Completed
  Not Completed
  Deferred



# COUNCIL PLAN




## 2.3: We will facilitate more affordable, social and public housing in Darebin, to meet our community’s needs

H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[2-31] Enable and facilitate more affordable and social housing across our city	Facilitate more crisis, affordable and social housing across our city through development of the Property Strategy and the Advocacy Strategy	Council has several sites currently leased for temporary and/or community housing purposes. Council is testing feasibility of a site with a view to offering it for temporary housing via an Expression of Interest process in early 2025. Council's Property Strategy (currently in development) and Council's Strategic Property Plan will identify longer term opportunities for redevelopment of land for housing.		Not Completed

 Completed
  Not Completed
  Deferred

# COUNCIL PLAN




H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[2-32] Partner with the State Government to ensure its social and public housing investment meets our community's needs, and creates liveable, connected communities through appropriate design and construction	Partner with the State Government to ensure its crisis, housing first, social and public housing, and its consideration of private development, meets our community's needs and creates liveable, connected communities through design and construction	As a result of the Victorian Government's Housing Statement, developments that will be assessed via the Development Facilitation Program are required to include a 10% affordable housing contribution. Council will work with the Victorian Government and developers to facilitate the provision of this housing. Council also successfully advocated for the inclusion of a mandatory affordable housing contribution as part of the Preston Market controls introduced by the Minister for Planning. Council is advocating for significant social housing to be achieved through the Preston Central activity centre. A draft of a new housing supply strategy has been prepared and is scheduled for consultation in August 2024. In line with its resolution of February 2024, Council has written to the Minister for Housing calling for a range of actions to address the housing crisis.		Completed

 Completed
  Not Completed
  Deferred

# COUNCIL PLAN

2.4: We will foster local urban streetscapes and activity centres that connect our community, support economic recovery, and encourage people to live, work and play locally




H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[2-33] Review to amend the Parking Permit Policy to: (i) to improve access for people with special needs (ii) to allow owners of single lot dwellings that exist on their own Torrens title, the option to have an additional residential parking permit at the same price as current parking permits (iii) to allow single lot dwellings built after December 2004 that are greater than 300sqm property with three or more bedrooms and that exist on their own Torrens title (even if the property was previously subdivided), to have the same entitlements to parking permits as dwellings built before December 2004 (iv) to ensure that renovations of a property that is still a single lot on its own Torrens title and is greater than 300sqm with three or more bedrooms are still entitled to parking permits	Finalise the new Parking Permit Policy	A new Parking Permit Policy was adopted by Council on 27 November 2023.		Not Completed
	[2-36] Develop a policy setting the basis for how Council may permit commercial or private Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure on our public streets	Run an Expression of Interest process to identify potential EV charging partners	An expression of interest (EOI) process is underway to identify Electric Vehicle charging partners to expand the public charging network in Darebin, The EOI will be open until 5 July 2024.		Not Completed

 Completed  Not Completed  Deferred

# COUNCIL PLAN



2.5: We will invest in services and the built environment to improve access for our residents and visitors




H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[2-39] Create additional accessible car parking spaces in our city	Create additional accessible car parking spaces in our city	Design almost complete for second space near Penders Park. Will be completed by end of June. Construction early next financial year subject to funding. There is no dedicated CW number for this action, design or works in 23/24.		Completed

 Completed
  Not Completed
  Deferred

# COUNCIL PLAN

## 2.6: We will support the human rights, housing and wellbeing needs of our people experiencing homelessness

H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[2-40] Deliver programs that support people sleeping rough and experiencing homelessness including Assertive Outreach and advocate for funding for Towards Zero	Advocate for funding to initiate the Towards Zero approach to support people sleeping rough and experiencing homelessness	During the period officers continued exploring ways to progress the project in 2024/25 and discussed options with Councillors as part of the development of the 2024/25 Council Plan and Budget. This work was delayed given the complexity of the work in addition to other unplanned work and service delivery priorities that have arisen during this period.		Completed




 Completed
  Not Completed
  Deferred



# COUNCIL PLAN


2.8: We will advocate to reduce the harm associated with electronic machine gambling, alcohol, and tobacco




H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[2-47] Support partner and local community organisations, groups, and clubs, to deliver initiatives that encourage the cessation of vaping and smoking	Support partner and local community organisations, groups, and clubs, to deliver initiatives that encourage the cessation of vaping and smoking	In partnership with Banyule Council, Merri-bek Council, Whittlesea Council and Your Community Health, Darebin made an application for the VicHealth vaping prevention grant. The project aims to encourage cessation of vaping and smoking among young people. Outcome of the successful grant recipients is yet to announced.		Completed

 Completed
  Not Completed
  Deferred

# COUNCIL PLAN




2.9: We will leverage investment, partnerships, and advocacy to drive Darebin’s growth and sustainability and ensure Darebin is a great place to do business

H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[2-49] Invest in economic reactivation and recovery initiatives to support existing and new industries, to ensure Darebin's economy is robust and resilient	Invest in economic reactivation and recovery initiatives to support existing and new industries, to ensure Darebin's economy is robust and resilient	The sustainable business initiatives (Light\$mart, Energy\$mart, Solar Saver, Sustainable Leaders Program) continue to support the recovery of Darebin's Business community through investing in energy efficiency, renewable energy, and waste avoidance to reduce energy and waste bills. The Greening our Business tool - a cross-Council and NAGA (Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action) project - is progressing and is on track. A new wave of sustainable business videos has been completed and added to Council's YouTube Sustainability Playlist. A Sustainability Matters event was held in Thornbury Theatre on 4 June with good community attendance.		Completed

 Completed     Not Completed     Deferred




# COUNCIL PLAN

H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[2-50] Continue to implement our Social and Sustainable Procurement Policy to increase the engagement of Aboriginal-led businesses, and focus on job creation for culturally and linguistically diverse peoples, and young people	Host supplier forums, connecting with Aboriginal-led businesses in the Darebin community at least every two months to provide tailored information regarding upcoming procurement	<p>Council has renewed its Platinum Partnership Agreement with Kinaway Chamber of Commerce until March 2025. Ongoing meetings and discussion with the dedicated relationship manager provides a pipeline of forecast and preliminary awareness of procurement and Indigenous supplier opportunities. Recent contract for the redevelopment of John Hall pavilion resulted in the principal contractor engaging local Indigenous sub-contractors and suppliers.</p> <p>As we commence planning for new procurements in 2024/25FY, new opportunities will be promoted including networking and inviting Kinaway relationship manager to promote and connect with contract managers and suppliers.</p>		Completed
	[2-51] Build partnerships across all levels of government and the private sector, to attract new industries and investment into Darebin, to support its future growth	Build partnerships across government and the private sector, to attract new industries and investment into Darebin, to support its future growth	<p>A Draft Northern Innovation and Sustainability Precinct investment opportunity statement document has recently been finalised. This document was prepared in partnership with Banyule Council, La Trobe Uni and Northlink. Planning has commenced for a launch event in August 2024. Banyule is commencing work on the collaborative grant application with the support of Darebin staff. Planning for Darebin advocacy with local MPs will be undertaken in July 24/25.</p>		Completed

 Completed
  Not Completed
  Deferred


# COUNCIL PLAN




H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[2-52] Undertake consultation with industry and other key stakeholders to help inform the future development of an Economic Development Strategy and interest in partnering with Council on ways industry and business can connect, network and influence for the benefit of the Darebin community	Undertake consultation with industry and other key stakeholders to help inform the future development of an Economic Development Strategy and interest in partnering with Council on ways industry and business can connect, network and influence for the benefit of the Darebin community	The Economic Summit series was delivered successfully during October and November. Over 240 people, representing 14 different business sectors within the Darebin business community, participated in six Round Table engagement forums and one large-scale Economic Summit conference event. High level statistics include: 6 Round Tables, 1 Summit conference, 7 Darebin venues, 793 individual comments gathered, 1108 votes cast, and multiple new partnerships established between business community members. This valuable feedback pool provides a robust engagement knowledge-base to underpin Economic Strategy development.		Completed
	[2-53] Catalyse new jobs at scale in Darebin with businesses, new industry attraction and our partners - including Jobs Victoria Advocates - focusing on jobseekers facing multiple employment barriers including culturally and linguistically diverse peoples, young people, women, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	Catalyse new jobs in Darebin with businesses, new industry attraction and our partners - including Jobs Victoria Advocates - focusing on jobseekers facing multiple employment barriers including culturally and linguistically diverse peoples, young people, women, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	Action has been on hold due to the reallocation of resources to Economic Framework development and Notice of Motion reports. This action will continue in 23/24.		Completed

 Completed  Not Completed  Deferred

# COUNCIL PLAN


## 2.10: We will ensure major changes in our city achieve significant improvements in our City




H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[2-62] Protect Preston Market, including advocating Council's position to the State Government during its planning consultation process, and working with our community to advocate for the strongest possible planning controls and Protections	Continue efforts to protect the Preston Market through participating in the strategic and statutory planning processes and supporting traders through existing programs	Council welcomed the news that Preston Market traders will have their leases extended for five years from January 2024, providing much needed security. This news comes after more than five years of advocacy that Council is proud to have been a part of alongside our passionate community. This included working alongside community groups to gather over 30,000 petition signatures and writing on multiple occasions to the Minister for Planning, calling for the protection of the Preston Market, and advocating strongly to the Standing Advisory Committee for stronger planning controls. This advocacy culminated in approval by the Minister for Planning of Amendment C182dare in August 2023.		Completed

 Completed
  Not Completed
  Deferred


# COUNCIL PLAN




## 2.11: We will improve the sustainability, accessibility, and design of development on private land in our city

H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[2-65] Complete major planning reform work to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce an open space levy to fund open spaces in our city</li> <li>Introduce a Developer Contributions Scheme to help fund infrastructure for our growing population</li> <li>Establish Heidelberg Road Corridor controls</li> <li>Establish Thornbury Park Heritage Estate controls</li> </ul>	Progress a planning scheme amendment to deliver an interim 5% Open Space Levy	Planning Scheme Amendment C210dare was exhibited from 22 February to 22 March. The amendment proposes to enable up to 5% open space contributions from subdivision, in place of the existing sliding scale which limits contributions to 2, 3 or 4% for subdivisions creating less than 5 additional lots. Council will consider all submissions received as the amendment further progresses in 2024-25.		Completed

 Completed
  Not Completed
  Deferred

# COUNCIL PLAN







H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[2-66] Complete our Central Preston Structure Plan	Complete our Central Preston Structure Plan	<p>Council adopted the draft Preston Structure Plan and Activity Centre Zone schedules at its meeting on 18 December 2023 and requested that the Minister for Planning authorise the preparation and exhibition of Amendment C218dare to the Darebin Planning Scheme to implement the new provisions. This effectively completed the Council-led component of planning for Central Preston.</p> <p>In line with the Victorian Government's Housing Statement, the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) and the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) are now responsible for planning the Preston (High Street) Activity Centre under their Activity Centres Program. They are conducting technical assessments with support from Council officers. A Community Reference Group (CRG) was established, chaired by the State MP for Preston, and deputised by Darebin's Mayor. Council is continuing to support the VPA and DTP in delivering this program.</p>		Completed


 Completed
  Not Completed
  Deferred

# COUNCIL PLAN

## 3.0: Climate, Green and Sustainable

3.1: We will adapt to climate change and build the resilience of our community, infrastructure, and the built environment, with a focus on our vulnerable communities at risk of fuel poverty, and flooding


H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[3-1] Through our Solar Saver 4-year program, support solar installation and energy efficiency retrofits for our vulnerable households, including public and social housing, and renters	Install up to 150 systems and undertake a service review to inform future directions	There were 99 solar systems installed using a special charge. A further 89 solar systems were installed through Council's Bulk Buy contract. The Solar Saver program service review was approved at Council in June, which increased the household income eligibility, maximum system cost and introduced hot water heat pumps to the list of products available.		Completed
	[3-2] Review our Climate Emergency Plan, including in- depth engagement with our community	Finalise the Climate Emergency Plan and consider the options for future actions that accelerate progress toward net zero, including options for reducing household and business reliance on gas and options for the future of the solar saver program	The second round of community consultation on the Climate Emergency Plan was completed in April and the final Plan will be considered by Council in July 2024.		Not Completed
	[3-3] Support our community members experiencing fuel poverty, to prevent heating and freezing	Incorporate fuel poverty into the development and implementation of the new Climate Emergency Plan	Fuel poverty is considered in the draft Climate Emergency Plan where there is a focus on supporting people experiencing disadvantage. The draft Plan includes actions that could reduce energy bills, improve home safety in extreme weather events and establishing a renewed approach that focuses on active travel for mobility. The Plan will be finalised by July 2024.		Not Completed




 Completed  Not Completed  Deferred



# COUNCIL PLAN


3.2: Aim to achieve 12% canopy cover on Council owned and managed land by 2025, prioritising catchment biodiversity and shopping areas




H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[3-8] Acquire land to create new parks	Finalise the acquisition of the three parcels of land at Clements Reserve	Council is continuing to work towards this; however, the order of work has been adjusted with remediation works now planned to occur prior to acquisition. The Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) which is currently owner of a major parcel of land to be acquired by Council are currently working on a land contamination survey of the site. Following that remediation works are expected to be undertaken and Council would then complete the purchase of the three properties.		Deferred

 Completed
  Not Completed
  Deferred

# COUNCIL PLAN

3.3: We will drive significant improvements in water quality and biodiversity across Darebin, designating Edwardes Lake as a flagship project to demonstrate water recreation (in the long term)




H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[3-11] Establish and adequately resource the Edwardes Lake Taskforce to significantly improve the water quality and amenity of Edwardes Lake in Reservoir	Continue to monitor the health of the lake and invest in activities that improve water quality (as recommended by the taskforce)	<p>Monthly monitoring has occurred each month by members of the Edgars Creek and Edwardes Lake Task Force in April, May, and June. Data has been collected at 10 different monitoring location along the Edgars Creek and at the Lake. The last of the monitoring for the financial year was carried out on 9 June.</p> <p>The Edgars Creek and Edwardes Lake Task met in May to continue to work on water quality projects including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* revegetation of the creek corridor</li> <li>* renaturalisation of the old GPT on Edgars Creek</li> <li>* pollution prevention programs</li> </ul>		Completed

 Completed     Not Completed     Deferred

# COUNCIL PLAN

3.5: We will reduce waste and stimulate a local circular economy, where waste resources are re-used rather than discarded

H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[3-16] Develop a plan to respond to new State Government requirements for contaminated land	Finalise and implement the Contaminated Land Framework	The Contaminated Land Management Framework project is progressing. The project is likely to be completed later in 2024.		Not Completed
	[3-18] Undertake waste reform and take action towards establishing a circular economy	Undertake community engagement to inform future kerbside waste services for residents	Community consultation about future kerbside waste services was completed between 7 August and 11 September 2023.		Completed




 Completed
  Not Completed
  Deferred

# COUNCIL PLAN


## 4.0: Responsible, Transparent and Responsive

4.1: We will ensure balanced and responsible financial decision making that meets the needs of our community now and into the future

H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[4-2] Develop and implement an Advocacy Framework and four year Advocacy Plan, informed by our Council Plan priorities, aimed at influencing public policy change and attracting support and funding for our priorities including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investment in early intervention and tertiary mental health services</li> <li>Dedicated sexual and reproductive health service in the Northern region</li> <li>Key transport priorities</li> <li>Increased funding for road safety infrastructure, driver behaviour and law enforcement</li> <li>Towards Zero approach to address homelessness</li> <li>Local Economic Development priorities</li> <li>Protection of Strathallan as public land</li> <li>Community and business use of energy efficiency initiatives</li> <li>Higher and mandatory Environmentally Sensitive Design (ESD) standards in building and planning controls</li> </ul>	Develop and implement an annual statement of advocacy priorities including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investment in early intervention and tertiary mental health services</li> <li>Dedicated sexual and reproductive health service in the Northern region</li> <li>Key transport priorities</li> <li>Increased funding for road safety infrastructure, driver behaviour and law enforcement</li> <li>Towards Zero approach to address homelessness</li> <li>Local Economic Development priorities</li> <li>Protection of Strathallan as public land</li> <li>Community and business use of energy efficiency initiatives</li> <li>Higher and mandatory Environmentally Sensitive Design (ESD) standards in building and planning controls</li> </ul>	A first draft of advocacy priorities was completed, and feedback has been received. Consultation across the various Council business units, such as Transport, Sports, Climate and Environment, City Futures and Economic Development, has been completed.		Not Completed



 Completed
  Not Completed
  Deferred

# COUNCIL PLAN






H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[4-4] Review our 10-year Financial Plan to ensure a level of revenue and expenditure that maintains a balance between service delivery, asset maintenance and renewal, and provides a strong, sustainable base for the future	Implement the action plan provided to the Minister for Local Government in response to the Monitor's Report	Actions contained in the Good Governance Action Plan have been completed.		Completed




## 4.2: We will ensure our assets are optimised for the benefit of our community

H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[4-5] Review our Asset Portfolio, to ensure maximum benefit for our community is being realised, including the occupancy of unused and under-utilised Council buildings	Establish a Lease and Licensing Policy, with consideration to the inputs provided through deliberative engagement to inform the Council Plan.	Council has consulted on a draft Leasing and Licensing Policy. Strong community feedback was received in relation to a couple of key issues and Council has made a decision to establish a key policy principle in relation to this matter. There was limited community feedback received on other aspects of the Policy and Council will need to consider if further community engagement should be undertaken. Currently work on the draft Policy is continuing.		Not Completed
		Establish the Property Strategy	This work has been delayed, however foundational data has been collected including completion of Building Asset data collection, Community Infrastructure needs analysis and verification of Council's property register and map.		Not Completed



 Completed  Not Completed  Deferred




# COUNCIL PLAN

H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[4-6] Explore opportunities for Council owned and managed land (including airspace) to be used as temporary housing for people at risk or who are experiencing homelessness	Incorporate the consideration of temporary housing opportunities for people at risk or who are experiencing homelessness into the development of the Property Strategy for Council owned land	Council already has several sites leased for temporary and/or community housing purposes. Council's Property Strategy (currently in development) and Property Plan (to be developed) will incorporate opportunities to facilitate more affordable social and public housing within Council's existing property portfolio.		Not Completed
	[4-8] Improve delivery of our services to our community by developing an Asset Management Plan for Open Space, establishing a level of service for each class of our assets, and collecting data on our drainage assets	Undertake drainage asset condition inspections to support the early detection of damage and deterioration and to inform the Drainage Asset Management Plan	The condition survey of 5% of the drainage network has been completed as planned. Work to assess the full drainage network is planned over several years and will continue.		Completed
		Complete the review of the Drainage Asset Management Plan	The first draft Drainage Asset Management Plan is currently under review by internal stakeholders. This first draft substantively compelled the action and provides much needed data and analysis for forward planning of maintenance and renewal work.		Completed
		Complete the review of the ICT Asset Management Plan	Asset renewal data is in hand and has been used for Council asset renewal planning. This data and analysis is sufficient for completing development of the Asset Plan for the whole of Council which is required in the 2024-25 year. As such, a formal Information and Communications Technology (ICT) asset management plan is not planned.		Completed

 Completed  Not Completed  Deferred

# COUNCIL PLAN




H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
		Complete the establishment of the Arts and Cultural Collection Asset Management Plan	The Art and Cultural Collection Asset Management Plan (AMP) has been completed.		Completed
		Complete the review of the Plant and Fleet Asset Management Plan	The Plant and Fleet asset management plan has been completed.		Completed

 Completed
  Not Completed
  Deferred

# COUNCIL PLAN



4.3: We will transform our services and service delivery models to ensure they meet the current, emerging, and future needs of our community




H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[4-10] Transform our models of service delivery through the development of service profiles and conduct service reviews, to improve and ensure accessibility, inclusivity for under-represented groups and consistency of our customer experience	Transform our models of service delivery through the development of service profiles and conduct service reviews, to improve and ensure accessibility, inclusivity for under-represented groups and consistency of our customer experience	The program for 2023/2024 has finished one significant review and is close to completing two additional major reviews. One major review is on hold. Over 15 smaller process improvements have also been concluded. Outcomes include improved customer access, faster and more efficient processing times. The major reviews have focused on addressing impediments to diversity and inclusion and improved environmental outcomes. The prioritisation approach for 24/25 reviews is being prepared for roll out.		Completed
	[4-12] Develop and implement a new 4 year Organisational Strategy to deliver on Council Plan Strategic Direction 4 and other organisational improvement priorities in an integrated and efficient way	Through the development of an Organisational Strategy the following will be integrated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer Service, Technology, and Innovation</li> <li>• Engagement, Governance and Risk</li> <li>• Long Term Financial Sustainability, Asset Management and Project Delivery</li> <li>• Leadership, People and Culture</li> </ul>	Implementation of the four-year program has occurred, with many actions crossing multiple years. Review of Governance model is under way. Programs are building momentum with key Project Control Groups (PCGs) in place, reporting monthly and key changes and variations being managed. Review of the 24/25 action plan has been completed.		Completed
	[4-13] Establish a long-term investment in IT systems to improve our customer experience, enable our people and deliver effective governance, compliance,	Progress Council approval of this investment in 2023-24.	Council adopted an Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and Digital Strategy, including the investment in Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), in March 2024.		Completed

 Completed  Not Completed  Deferred



# COUNCIL PLAN


H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	improved data and cyber risk management	Integrate this work with our Customer Experience strategy and our People and Culture Plan	An Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and Digital strategy and a People Strategy have been developed with extensive engagement and consultation across all departments, including the Customer Experience area. The strategy was endorsed and adopted by Council on 25 March 2024.		Completed
		Develop detailed business requirements for systems replacement and test the open market for available options	This action has been deferred to commence in the next financial year.		Deferred
		Develop a detailed Benefits Realisation Plan	<p>The first iteration of the detailed Benefits Realisation Plan for the Enterprise Resource Plan (ERP) solution has been completed. This plan incorporates sector best practice and was developed through engagement with all key stakeholder departments.</p> <p>This plan will be reviewed and updated once the technology partner and delivery partner are identified in the first stage (procurement) of the ERP project.</p>		Completed




 Completed
  Not Completed
  Deferred

# COUNCIL PLAN

H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
		Develop and incorporate a Governance Platform and standards into the overall ICT Governance Framework and Architecture	Council's ICT Governance Framework, including project governance, has been developed and is currently under review by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and the Audit and Risk Committee for formal adoption. The incorporation of a Governance Platform and standards is a crucial part of this framework, aimed at ensuring robust and consistent governance across all ICT activities.		Not Completed




#### 4.4: We will improve the effective governance and public accountability of Council

H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
	[4-14] Improve effective governance and accountability of Council	Deliver a professional development program for Councillors and continue to promote external professional development opportunities available to Councillors	Professional development continues to be provided through the Good Governance Action Plan. Some Councillors are either enrolled in or have completed a Company Directors course. Professional development will continue to be offered to all councillors.		Completed

 Completed
  Not Completed
  Deferred

# COUNCIL PLAN

H&W	Strategic Action	Action	Comments	Status	Status Explanation
		Provide regular reporting to Council to improve transparency on matters including: the status of Council resolutions, the number of Notices of Motion, training undertaken by Councillors, the number of complaints received - customer complaints and complaints about Councillors, matters referred to or received from integrity agencies and the cost of Councillor Conduct matters.	All reports referred to are in place and are reported as required.		Completed
		Promote the 2024 Council election to raise awareness for potential Councillor candidates across the municipality	The 2024 Election Project Plan is progressing, and information has begun being published for candidates including social media posts regarding the MAV Stand for Council program. Further communications will be published in due course. As the 2024 local government elections will be held in October 2024, this action will continue over into 24/25 as a new action.		Completed

 Completed
  Not Completed
  Deferred

## CAPITAL WORKS

Project by Asset Class	Delivery Due Date	Status	Project Status Comments
<b>Buildings</b>			
John Hall Pavilion Design	Multi-year Project	●	The John Hall Reserve Pavilion design has been completed. Construction will start in the financial year 2024-25.
Northcote Aquatic and Recreation Centre	30-Sep-23	●	Project is completed.
Workplace office accommodation	30-Jun-24	●	Project is completed.
DRRC asset renewal	Multi-year Project	●	Project design is completed. Construction will start in the financial year 2024-25
Funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten	Multi-year Program	●	A number of projects site within the Funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten Program includes: Feasibility study for future expansion at JS Grey completed. Feasibility study for four other sites commenced. Raleigh Street Kindergarten Compliance Works in progress. Merri Community Child Care & Kindergarten expansion design completed and works commenced.
Building Renewal Program	Multi-year Program	●	The majority of the projects allocated within the Building Renewal Program (BRP) were delivered throughout the 2023-24 financial year. Key projects included various security related access control and alarm system upgrades, air conditioning improvements, electrical supply upgrades, roof renewals and gas appliance changeovers to electric power at various sites across council. The remaining projects within this program will be completed within the 2024 calendar year.
<b>Drainage</b>			
Drainage System Renewal and Upgrade Program including WSUD and Reactive Works and stormwater pipe relining	30-Jun-24	●	Except one all projects within the program are completed. The remaining work will be completed within first quarter of the financial year 2024-25.
Sportsground Sub-Surface Drainage	30-Jun-24	●	This project was merged with the WH Robinson Oval Renewal project to deliver better outcomes for the overall use and functionality of the reserve - Including irrigation upgrades and improved sub-surface drainage.
Pit lid renewal program	30-Jun-24	●	Project is completed.

● Completed ● Not Completed ● At Risk ● On hold/deferred ● Discontinued

## CAPITAL WORKS

Project by Asset Class	Delivery Due Date	Status	Project Status Comments
<b>Buildings</b>			
Footpath Renewal Program	30-Jun-24	●	All projects within the program are completed.
Transport Safety Projects Design	30-Jun-24	●	Transport safety design projects that were progressed this year include: Boldrewood/McMahon intersection changes to remove the roundabout and install a raised intersection with zebra crossings, Regent Station Car Park entry raised crossing at Robinson Road, including a zebra crossing on Robinson Road. Davidson Street in Reservoir, raised zebra crossing, Radford Road speed humps between McKenzie Street and Amery Street and functional design for road safety improvements at the Broadhurst and Massey Avenue intersection.
Transport Safety Projects Construct	Multi-year Project	●	A number of projects were completed including the Davidson Street Reservoir Raised Safety Platform and the Belgrove Ovando Intersection upgrades. The remaining work will be completed within first quarter of the financial year 2024-25.
<b>Computers &amp; Telecommunications</b>			
IT Improvement Program	30-Jun-24	●	All planned projects under IT improvement Program are completed.
IT Infrastructure Upgrade Program	30-Jun-24	●	All projects within the program are completed except hardware replacement program.
<b>Land</b>			
Land Acquisition to Create New Parks	30-Jun-24	●	Project is on hold. Council has endorsed a resolution to proceed with the purchase of three parcels of land at Clements Reserve. However, progress has been delayed due to a recent Environmental Action Notice issued by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) to the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) on a major parcel of land to be acquired by Council.
Contaminated Land Remediation	Multi-year Project	●	Work was completed to investigate options for remediation at Darebin Parklands and feasibility study of fuel tank operations.
Irrigation Upgrades and Renewals Program	30-Jun-24	●	All projects within the program are completed.
Oval and Sportsground Renewal and Upgrade Program	30-Jun-24	●	Project is completed.
Synthetic Cricket Wicket Installation	30-Nov-23	●	Project is completed.

● Completed ● Not Completed ● At Risk ● On hold/deferred ● Discontinued

## CAPITAL WORKS

Project by Asset Class	Delivery Due Date	Status	Project Status Comments
<b>Buildings</b>			
Library Collections	30-Jun-24	●	Purchasing is completed
<b>Parks, Open Space &amp; Streetscapes</b>			
John Cain Memorial Park and Preston City Oval Lighting Design	30-Jun-24	●	Project is completed.
Preston City Oval Cricket Nets	30-Jun-24	●	Project is completed.
Park Asset Renewal Program including drinking fountains and swing at Susan Walsh	01-May-24	●	All projects within the program are completed.
Street lighting safety renewal program -High St Preston and Gillies St car park	30-Jun-24	●	Project is completed.
Street Furniture and Equipment Renewal Program	24-May-24	●	All projects within the program are completed.
McDonnell Precinct Upgrades	Multi-year Project	●	Stage 1 works are completed, and Stage 2 work has commenced.
Street Lighting BT Connor surrounding - Scope	30-Jun-24	●	Project is completed.
Play Space Renewal Program	30-Jun-24	●	All projects within the program are completed.
Open Space Improvements Program	30-Jun-24	●	All projects within the program are completed.
<b>Plant, Machinery and Equipment</b>			
Replacement of Mobile Garbage, Green Waste and Recycling Bins	30-Jun-24	●	Project is completed.
Vehicular Plant Replacement - Heavy Vehicle	30-Jun-24	●	Project is completed.
Vehicular Plant Replacement - Light Vehicle	30-Jun-24	●	Majority of the program has been delivered. Small component will be completed in the first quarter of the financial year 24-25.

● Completed 
 ● Not Completed 
 ● At Risk 
 ● On hold/deferred 
 ● Discontinued

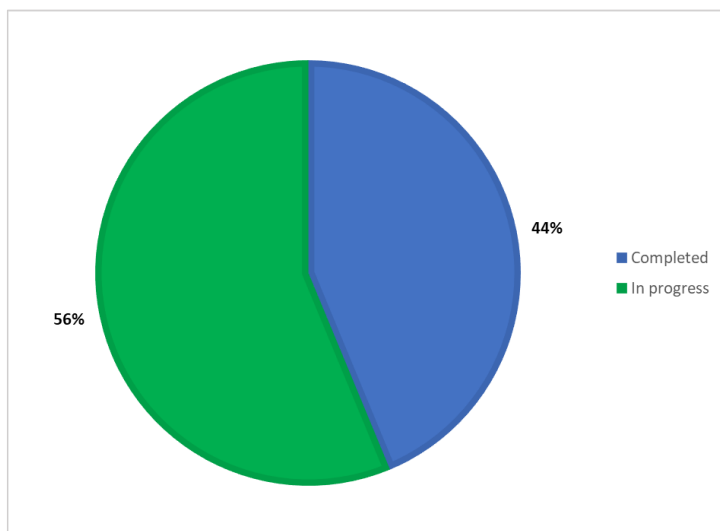
## CAPITAL WORKS

Project by Asset Class	Delivery Due Date	Status	Project Status Comments
<b>Buildings</b>			
Youth Services Asset Renewal Program	30-Jun-24	●	Project is completed.
Art Collection Acquisitions - Bundoora Homestead Art Centre	31-May-24	●	Project is completed.
Reservoir Leisure Centre Gym Equipment and Group Exercise Equipment	30-Jun-24	●	Project is completed.
Darebin Furniture Purchases including libraries	30-Jun-24	●	Project is completed.
Arts Venues Asset and Equipment Renewal	30-Jun-24	●	Project is completed.
Direction signage to country of origin	30-Jun-24	●	There is a requirement to establish a more detailed cultural engagement process that impacts the timeframes for this project. Completion date now planned for November 2024.
Migration Monument - Scope	Multi-year Project	●	Shortlisted applicants are currently working on their artistic concepts and will be presented to Community Reference Group in July 2024.
<b>Recreation, Leisure &amp; Community Facilities</b>			
Reservoir Leisure Centre	30-Jun-24	●	Roof repair work project is completed. Preparation for community consultation is underway for the Reservoir Leisure Centre Scoping Study with engagement activities to be undertaken in 2024-25.
<b>Roads</b>			
Kerb and Channel Renewal Program	30-Jun-24	●	All projects within the program are completed.
Road Resurfacing Program	30-Jun-24	●	All projects within the program are completed.
Asset Management Road Survey		●	Project is funded via Operational budget and therefore discontinued from Capital Works Portfolio.
Road Rehabilitation Design	30-Jun-24	●	Except one all projects within the program are completed. The remaining work will be completed within first quarter of the financial year 2024-25.

● Completed
 ● Not Completed
 ● At Risk
 ● On hold/deferred
 ● Discontinued

# COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS

There were 38 Council resolutions in the fourth quarter of the 2023-24 financial year, 14 have been completed and 24 resolutions are in progress. 26 of these were adopted as per the officer recommendation and 15 were adopted by Council with an alternate resolution. This includes 8 Notices of Motion, 2 Petitions, 0 Notices of Recission and 0 Urgent Business items. Of the 38 resolutions, 2 items were referred to Budget and 5 requested a further report or briefing.



Due to the complexity of some of the resolutions, they may span multiple years and can be superseded or updated as the initiatives progress.

The status of actions arising from Council resolutions in each quarter is shown in the table below.

2023-24	In Progress	Completed	Total
Q1 (July – Sept 2023)	22	10	32
Q2 (Oct – Dec 2023)	30	15	45
Q3 (Jan-March 2024)	27	21	48
Q4 (April – June 2024)	24	14	38
<b>Total YTD</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>163</b>





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**9.10 ADOPTION OF PROVISION OF PROACTIVE TREE MANAGEMENT SERVICES - CT202358****Author:** Coordinator Tree Management**Reviewed By:** General Manager Infrastructure, Operations & Finance

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**PURPOSE**

This report seeks the endorsement of Council to award the Contract CT202358 – Provision of Proactive Tree Management Services.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The City of Darebin is responsible for managing the urban forest consisting of street, park and bushland trees. There are around 75,000 trees (65,000 street trees and close to 10,000 parks trees) that require regular maintenance to ensure ongoing resilience, compliance with regulations and amenity to the community.

Due to the specialised nature, legislation and scale of work, there is a requirement to engage a suitably qualified and experienced contractor who can provide proactive tree management services on behalf of the City of Darebin.

This report outlines the tender recommendation and process used to identify potential contractors and select a preferred. A competitive open tender process was run and a tender evaluation panel has evaluated the tenders and recommends awarding the contract to the preferred tenderer. The proposed contract is a fixed sum contract. Works are programmed to commence in September 2024 for 4 years.

Since the previous contract was awarded in 2020, there has been a significant increase in prices. Council increased its budget by 40% in the 2024/2025 budget, however the price increase is significantly more than that. A shortfall of \$1.4 Million in 2024-25 is now expected. Officers have tested if prices are reasonable and have explored options for service scope adjustments with the aim of minimising cost increases, however this work has not identified ways to reduce this shortfall without incurring high risk. Options for some offsetting budget savings have been identified. These options, along with any other options on a whole of Council basis will be reported to Council as part of the Q1 financial review to consider.

<b>Officer Recommendation</b>
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**That Council:**

- (1) Awards contract CT202358 for the Provision of Proactive Tree Management Services to \_\_\_\_\_ for the contract value of \_\_\_\_\_ (GST inclusive) over the entire 6 year term of the contract (should the extension be exercised).
- (2) Enters into the initial contract term of 4 years commencing 1 September 2024 to 30 June 2028.
- (3) Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to finalise and execute the contract documentation on behalf of the Council.
- (4) Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to approve the contract extension term of one (2) year option, subject to performance reviews.

- (5) Notes the 2024-25 cost of this contract is expected to be greater than the adopted budget and notes that the higher costs will be included in the Quarter 1 financial report to Council for consideration. This Report will outline options for managing the financial impact of this higher cost including potential offsetting savings Council could consider.

## BACKGROUND / KEY INFORMATION

### Darebin's Responsibilities

Darebin boasts an extensive urban forest which includes over 75,000 individual trees within streetscapes and parks (including 65,000 street trees). Council is responsible for and has clear strategic direction to extend and maintain a healthy and safe urban forest as directed in the Darebin Urban Forest Strategy 2013-2028.

Council is required to meet legislative requirements and manage the health and safety risks of urban trees as follows:

**Legislation:** Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2020 (ESR) in Victoria imposes clear requirements on councils to manage vegetation near electrical lines to ensure:

- Community safety
- Reliability of electricity supply
- Compliance with standards

Proactive compliance with the Regulation enables Council to mitigate risks, optimise costs, and fulfill their responsibilities to the community and regulatory authorities. Failure to comply with these regulations poses a significant public safety risk as well as significant fines (up to \$36,348 per tree) for non-compliance.

**Public Safety and Liability:** Poorly managed trees pose hazards such as falling branches or unstable root systems, potentially endangering public safety. Proactive management in this contract includes regular inspections, pruning, and maintenance along the shared trails of the Merri and Darebin Creek to mitigate such risks, reducing liability for the council and ensuring the safety of pedestrians and cyclists.

As a result of the Royal Commission into the catastrophic 'Black Saturday' bush fires of February 2009, in which non-clearance of vegetation away from power lines was attributed as a major contributing cause, the Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2010 were made more stringent, increasing clearance distance of trees from power lines.

There are more than 65,000 street trees, with approximately 27,000 of these trees under power lines. These trees require regular maintenance to ensure ongoing resilience, provide essential canopy and amenity to the community and compliance with regulations. Councils are required by law to maintain the clearance space around these power lines which predominantly involves the pruning of the street trees, including clearance from the road and footpath. There are also selected trees located in parks and bushland that require clearance to ensure the safety of the public and integrity of nearby electrical assets.

Due to the specialised nature and scale of the work, there is a requirement to engage a suitably qualified and experienced contractor to provide proactive tree maintenance services on behalf of the City of Darebin. The tender is a fixed sum price contract, allowing for CPI increases on an annual basis. This gives certainty to short and medium-term budget planning.

### Services provided via this contract

Generally, trees are on a two-year maintenance cycle for all trees, with half the city cleared in one year, then the other half the following year. The components of the contract are:

- **Electrical line clearance** as per Electrical Safety Regulations 2020 is an essential component of tree management. With more stringent regulations and increased presence of the regulator (Energy Safe Victoria), it is essential that a thorough and effective program is in place to manage vegetation clearance. Non-compliance can compromise community safety and result in large fines.
  - To ensure clearance for higher risk electrical assets (trees in proximity to high voltage), an annual program is included in contract for those streets with high voltage assets.
- **Proactive tree maintenance**, including clearance from road and footpath, deadwood removal and formative pruning ensures our Urban Forest is healthy, compliant with relevant road management regulations, and more resilient.

The effects of Climate change, including heat island, with a more resilient Urban Forest. Community safety and amenity is also increased with a healthier Urban Forest.

- **Shared Trail Clearance:** The management of tree risk and improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists a vegetation management program along the Darebin and Merri Creek shared trails is required. This includes clearing sight lines, inspecting and pruning trees.
- **Data collection** for all street trees to inform strategic planting and maintenance programs is also an essential component of tree management. This is a minor element of the contract but provides significant value and the ability to efficiently manage the overall tree assets.

Collection of key tree data, including species, health, and canopy size, assists with the works audit process and provides opportunities to refine tree management and tree planting process.

**Procurement process and evaluation**

Request for Tender

The Request for Tender (RFT) for the Provision of Proactive Tree Management Services was advertised in ‘The Age’ newspaper on 11 May 2024. The tender was opened for 19 days as per Council’s Procurement Policy. A non-mandatory Tender Briefing Session was held on 23 May 2024 to provide tenderers with an opportunity to familiarise with the site and the project. The RFT closed on Thursday 6 June 2024.

Tender Evaluation

Submissions were evaluated by the panel against the evaluation criteria detailed in Table 1 below. The evaluation criteria were established prior to the RFT being advertised and was included in both the Strategic Procurement Plan and the RFT Documentation.

Table 1 – Evaluation Criteria

<b>Evaluation criteria:</b>
<b>Price</b>
<b>Past Performance</b>
<b>Organisational Capacity and Key Personnel</b>
<b>Local Business</b>
<b>Social Initiatives and Practices</b>

<b>Evaluation criteria:</b>
<b>Environment Management / Sustainability</b>
<b>Commercial Viability</b> Quality Management System Including Customer focus Occupational Health and Safety Management Financial Viability Risk Management Tender Compliance

### Evaluation Criteria and Methodology

Tenderers were assessed using the evaluation criteria as detailed in the above table.

Lump sum rates for the price component were collected and compared for services offered. Using the combination of weighted scores from the above table, a spreadsheet was used to compare lump sum rates for services to select a preferred tenderer.

Risk, Insurance and OH&S were assessed as part of the tender evaluation process. Tenders that failed to meet any of these criteria were excluded from the assessment process.

Reference Checks have also been carried out for the successful contractor.

The evaluation matrix can be found in confidential **Appendix D**.

### Probity

Council's Procurement Policy mandates that a probity advisor be engaged for all the projects valued at \$1,000,000 or greater. An independent Probity Advisor was engaged to provide an overview of the probity tasks and findings in relation to the evaluation process. The Probity Advisor engaged for this project will provide a report to be included in the Council report 26 August 2024. No probity concerns have been raised to date. See confidential **Appendix B**.

### **Previous Council Resolution**

This matter is not the subject of a previous Council resolution.

### **ALIGNMENT TO 2041 DAREBIN COMMUNITY VISION**

Strategic Direction 3: Climate, Green and Sustainable

### **ALIGNMENT TO 2021-25 COUNCIL PLAN**

Strategic Direction 3: Climate, Green and Sustainable

### **ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

3.2 Aim to achieve 12% canopy cover on Council owned and managed land by 2025, prioritising catchment biodiversity and shopping areas

Correct management of Council's tree population, as per the components of this contract will ensure a healthy and resilient urban forest that provides shade and key amenity value for the community. Key monitoring and data collection allows for review and improvement in managing our urban forest, increasing canopy and mitigating the effects of climate change.

## DISCUSSION

The Officer Recommendation is to award the contract to the successful tenderer to deliver a high level of conformance to regulations, ensure community safety, act as long term stewards of the urban forest to ensure its health and longevity, and to ensure good data about this important living asset.

### Cost management – options explored

Officers have explored several options in regard to service scope and procurement to understand if there are options that could minimise cost. Despite this work, no alternative options are recommended for consideration – they were all found to have high risk OR not to be cost effective. Options explored included:

1. **Scope as per tendered contract (Officer recommendation)**

This is the recommended option given the high-risk of electrical line safety, essential services to provide clearance from road and footpath to ensure safe accessibility and risk management of urban trees. Additionally, there is increasing scrutiny from Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) regarding Electrical Line Clearance. Cost savings can be found across the organisation during the quarterly financial review process to fund the shortfall in budget. Some possibilities for cost savings have already been identified as discussed in the Financial Management section of this report.

2. **Rescope the contract to extend the proactive pruning cycle for streets and shared trails to three or four years instead of every two years (not recommended)**

This would initially reduce expenditure but would essentially shift cost to the reactive budget and create a higher level of risk due to lack of maintenance. If this option was selected Council would be required to re-tender, this would add further delays in awarding the contract, increasing the risk of non-compliance and safety due to the lack of tree management services in place over the growth period. There would be a significant risk of being fined by ESV. Perhaps surprisingly, a three year cycle would be more costly because it would require a separate visit to each block. This option has not been assessed as a cost effective option considering the expected 'reactive' costs and the risk of substantial fines.

3. **Do nothing (not recommended)**

Non-compliance, heightened safety concerns, customer satisfaction and amenity declines with lack of effective maintenance of Councils trees. Regulations could be breached, creating safety issues for the community, possible damage to electrical assets and substantial fines for breach of electrical safety regulations.

4. **Consider an inhouse operating model (not recommended).**

Detailed investigation hasn't been undertaken, however it would not be able to be achieved in time to meet service needs and it would be a costly option considering the following:

- Establishment costs to set up a high risk function like this.
- Associated assurance and insurance costs that would fall to Council (rather than a contractor).

- Inability to benefit from economies of scale and to flexibly manage a specialist workforce.
- Costs of specialist IT system set up.
- Costs of specialised vehicles and plant.
- Need to confirm appropriate registration and approvals from electrical utility firms.

#### **5. Retender for the services (not recommended).**

Benchmarking suggests that the prices are generally consistent with what other Councils are experiencing and therefore Council may not receive a better price. The main drawback with this option is that it would delay contract start and Council would be non-compliant in the meantime which brings high risk.

#### **Value Management**

The following discussion outlines the approach taken to ensure the most value during the tender process.

#### **Scope of works**

When developing the tender brief, officers reviewed the scope of the contract to ensure that it would provide the best opportunities for efficiencies of service delivery. Services were grouped by geographic block rather than itemising each of the services as individual components for the entire municipality, which is operationally much more efficient.

#### **Best and final offers**

During the evaluation phase, contractors were asked for their best and final offers.

#### **Tree management cycles (two-year versus four-year cycles)**

A two-year cycle (the current level of service) ensures branches do not block road, footpath and shared trail clearances to reduce hazards for vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians. Trees that are not regularly inspected and maintained pose a higher risk of failure. This can result in falling limbs or entire trees, potentially causing property damage, injury, or even fatalities. Council currently has a data gap of trees along shared trails. This makes it difficult to understand the risk, the health and the useful life expectancy of trees along the shared trails. A two-year cycle would ensure a management time line to bridge the data gap.

It is not recommended to move to a four-year cycle. The monetary benefit is not large as proactive works can be undertaken when performing line clearance in these areas which is on non-negotiable two-year cycle. The benefits of this option do not outweigh the risks. With a longer pruning cycle there would be an initial reduction in expenditure but it would create a higher level of risk due to lack of maintenance presenting a risk issue with overhanging branches, obstruction of sightlines and accesses not cleared. Council would be required to perform works on a reactive basis, which decreases efficiencies and transfer the costs to the reactive budget.

Furthermore, moving to a four-year cycle, is likely to require retendering, which would add a minimum three months to the timeline. Council would be unlikely to be able to appoint a contractor before November, leaving Council without the ability to do any electrical line clearances for five months. This is high risk particularly going into Spring when there is high vegetation growth plus a higher risk of storms from September – February. The risk of extensive non-compliance and being fined would significantly increase.

Further details are provided in confidential **Appendix A**.

## CONSIDERATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (2020) PRINCIPLES

### Financial Management

Details of financial and resource implications and budget details can be found in confidential **Appendix A**, with a financial breakdown of contract costs detailed in **Appendix C**.

### Community Engagement

No community engagement is required for awarding the contract.

### Communications

A communications plan regarding this contract is not required.

All successful and non-successful tenderers to be advised accordingly before works commence.

### Other Principles for consideration

#### Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles

- (c) the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted;

#### Public Transparency Principles

- (a) Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of this Act or any other Act;

#### Strategic Planning Principles

- (c) Strategic planning must take into account the resources needed for effective implementation;

#### Service Performance Principles

- (c) quality and costs standards for services set by the Council should provide good value to the municipal community;

## COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

### Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)

This contract helps deliver Council's Climate Emergency Plan by ensuring the ongoing resilience of the urban forest to provide essential canopy cover and amenity to the community.

The tender process assessed environmental sustainability as part of all tenderer's quality management procedures.

All tenderers are encouraged to use environmentally sustainable process, including use of recycled products where practicable. The successful tenderer was able to provide evidence of sustainable business practice.



**Equity, Inclusion, Wellbeing and Human Rights Considerations:**

The following considerations have been made as part of this contract:

- Provide opportunities to contractors who conduct business in an ethical and fair manner. The successful tenderer was able to provide evidence of ethical business practice.
- Provide opportunities to business who support youth employment. The successful tenderer was able to provide evidence of youth employment or apprenticeships.
- An assessment was carried out for each tenderer as part of the evaluation process in accordance with Council's procurement policy and guidelines.

**Economic Development and Cultural Considerations**

A local business assessment was carried out for each tenderer as part of the evaluation process in accordance with Council's procurement policy and guideline.

Trees in trees and parks play an important role in supporting local economic development an activation of public spaces for a range of cultural uses. The look and feel of trees in urban area helps attract people to local shopping areas, increases the time people dwell in these areas and in turn can impact footfall and spending in the local economy.

**Operational Impacts**

This contract is required to continue the tree maintenance services. This contract will result in a reduction of reactive tree work requests and in later years in the contract this is expected to also reduce costs.

**Legal and Risk Implications**

This Contract is a key risk control in relation to Council's risks associated with community safety and trees, and in relation to Council's risk arising from compliance obligations. The contract builds in assurance obligations and clauses to allow Council to monitor and resolve any compliance related performance issues.

A Risk Management Plan was prepared as part of the approved Strategic Procurement Plan for the provision of works and services. The risk controls in place identified low residual rating classifications.

Financial and insurance criteria were reviewed as part of the tender process. Failure to achieve compliance in this area results in rejection of the tender bid. A financial check was carried out for the successful tenderer.

Darebin has recently been issued with 3 fines for non-compliance. These non-compliance risk is being assessed and addressed in detail and will be reported to the internal Strategic Risk committee for review as well as ultimately Council's Audit and Risk Committee. Any further delay in awarding this contract is likely to expose Darebin to further attention from the regulator an mean Council would be unable to maintain compliance.

**IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY****Details**

Table 2 – Implementation strategy and timeline

Tasks	Timeline
Council Meeting - Endorsement	Monday 26 August 2024
Award Contract CT202358 to the successful contractor	September 2024
Commence provision of works and services	September 2024
Awarding of option to extend (two years)	July 2028
Conclusion of Contract	June 2030

### Communication

All successful and non-successful tenderers to be advised accordingly before works commence.

### RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Council Plan 2021 -2025
- Darebin Urban Forest Strategy
- Darebin Social and Sustainable Procurement Policy
- CT 201995 – Contract Documentation and Awarding – Provision of Proactive Tree Maintenance Services
- Strategic Procurement Plan
- Probity Plan
- Risk Assessment
- Request for Tender and tender documentation
- Conflict of Interest declarations
- Evaluation Endorsement
- Evaluation Matrix

### Attachments

- CT202358 Contract Award Proactive Tree Management Services (**Appendix A**) Confidential - enclosed under separate cover
- Probity Report (**Appendix B**) Confidential - enclosed under separate cover
- Detailed Contract Cost (**Appendix C**) Confidential - enclosed under separate cover
- Evaluation Matrix (**Appendix D**) Confidential - enclosed under separate cover

### DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires members of Council staff and persons engaged under contract to provide advice to Council to disclose any conflicts of interest in a matter to which the advice relates.

The Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

**10. ITEMS TO BE TABLED**

Nil.

**11. NOTICES OF MOTION**

Nil.

**12. URGENT BUSINESS**

**13. CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS CONSIDERED CONFIDENTIAL**

Nil.


**14. CLOSE OF MEETING**

**CITY OF  
DAREBIN**

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