

Merri-bek  
**Labor**

# **Merri-bek Labor**

## **Policy Platform 2024-2028**

**For a better community**



**[merri-beklabor.com.au](https://merri-beklabor.com.au)**

# 2024 Council Team

**Djirri-Djirri Ward**  
Preveen Kumar

**Box Forest Ward**  
Chris Miles

**Bababi Djinanang Ward**  
Hassaan Gul

**Westbreen Ward**  
Katerine Theodosis

**Harmony Park Ward**  
Helen Politis

**Pascoe Vale South Ward**  
Corey Perkins

**Pentridge Ward**  
Suzan Saka

**Brunswick West Ward**  
Cr. Lambros Tapinos

**Bulleke-bek Ward**  
Helen Breier

**Randazzo Ward**  
Thomas Nash

**Warrk-Warrk Ward**  
Jennifer Perlstein

## **Introduction**

Merri-bek Labor is endorsing a group of candidates passionate about the community in which we live. We are brought together by our shared values of fairness, justice, and equality for all. We are driven by our desire to make the Merri-bek a better place to live, work and raise a family.

Local government is the level of government closest to the community and is critical because of Council's vast range of social and cultural services and infrastructure, which promote social cohesion.

These include:

- Community services- including childcare, family, young people, aged and home care;
- Arts and culture;
- Roads, cycling paths, footpaths, parking;
- Environmental management, waste management, energy and climate responses;
- Community infrastructure including sports grounds, swimming pools, libraries, local parks, and community centres.
- Urban planning, economic development and emergency services;
- Honouring and respecting the First Nations the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people on whose land we occupy and honouring Treaty.


Labor will continuously improve local community services and infrastructure. Labor will help local government innovate in the management of services and in the construction of community infrastructure to deliver benefits and opportunities for our local communities. Where appropriate Labor will support partnerships with State and Federal governments to further improve and deliver Council services and facilities.

## **Good Governance**

Good governance is about the good processes for making and implementing decisions. Having responsive councillors and good processes generally leads to better outcomes for local governments and their communities.

Good decision-making processes, and therefore good governance, share several characteristics. All have a positive effect on various aspects of local government including consultation policies and practices, meeting procedures, service quality protocols, councillor conduct, role clarification and good working relationships.

## **Labor in Merri-bek will**

- Ensure Labor councillors adhere to good governance protocols going beyond code of conduct responsibilities to ensure public confidence in the Office of Councillor.
  - Ensure that councillors have a city-wide approach not just focused on their wards, and expected to participate in workshops, forums, committees and briefings with an expectation of being informed and voting on all matters before the council.
  - Ensure Council and Committee Meetings are open to public scrutiny.
  - Improve community consultation including participatory democracy.
  - Improve access to information for residents, including newly arrived and non-English speaking communities.
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## **Democratic Government**

- Labor in Merri-bek will ensure that our local administration is accountable and will support a full time Mayor and collaboration with non-Labor elected councillors in direction setting and decision making.
- The use of online technology to ensure Council meetings are open and question time is expanded while access to Council documents are more widely available and use of Council's website and social media accounts is more effective.
- We will review councillors' portfolios and project responsibilities in order to provide the best possible governance model.
- Labor in Merri-bek is committed to improving community consultation including participatory budgeting.

## **Council and committee meetings**

- Labor in Merri-bek will ensure that an absolute minimum of items will be dealt with in closed sessions of Council. Opportunities for community observation and input into decision making will be maximised. This will include open and interactive Council and Committee Meetings and Live Stream on social media and Facebook.

## **Communications**

- Labor in Merri-bek will increase communication through newsletters, social media, online platforms like Conversations Merri-bek, community radio, and renewed effort will be made to obtain improved coverage of Merri-bek items through metropolitan newspapers and the non- English media. Merri-bek's main community languages will be used at least in part to communicate key messages to the community.

## **Community Advisory Committees**

- Labor in Merri-bek will use community advisory committees as a means of providing policy advice to the Council. A review will be undertaken of all existing advisory committees. Additional committees will be established where required and promoted to the Merri-bek community.

## **Advocacy**

- Labor in Merri-bek will develop a strategic advocacy plan to increase advocacy efforts to the State and Federal on matters impacting the Merri-bek community, especially to fund key infrastructure, services and working with other councils and different levels of government on issues such as planning, health, education, transport and housing.

## **Council workforce**

- Labor in Merri-bek believes that productivity and service quality are best achieved as a partnership between employees, trade unions and the community - we will encourage employees to become members of the appropriate union.
- Provide a safe workplace and quality work environment with secure employment and good wages and conditions.
- Provide adequate training, re-training and professional development opportunities to ensure a skilled, innovative and resourceful workforce.
- Commit to keeping and delivering services through the council directly, not through outside providers.
- Implement diversity, gender equality, equal opportunity, Indigenous employment programs and ensure fair, open and equitable selection processes.



## **Rates & Financial Management**

- Labor in Merri-bek will keep rates to CPI levels as determined by the Minister.
- Labor in Merri-bek will advocate for an increase to the pensioner rebate and develop a Hardship Policy that enables residents to defer rates or enter payment plans in time of hardship.
- Labor in Merri-bek will support the long-term Financial Plans according to the following principles:
  1. Infrastructure must be renewed - adequate funding will be allocated to existing Merri-bek infrastructure.
  2. Revenue collection must remain equitable and in accordance with the community's capacity to pay.
  3. Spending will also be allocated in an equitable manner – spending will be effectively targeted, sustainable and produce clear service delivery outcomes.
  4. User charges will only be imposed where necessary and they will be set within a range that reflects the social, cultural and economic make-up of Merri-bek.

## **Community Wellbeing**

### **Public Health**

- Labor in Merri-bek will promote wellbeing. We are committed to the implementation of the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan including preparing emergency plans and providing more community health services, especially addressing isolation and social cohesion.
- Labor in Merri-bek will deliver the Coburg Health Precinct creating more jobs in Coburg and essential health services including age care, maternal child health services, disability services, mental health and other allied health services.

### **Aged Care**

- Labor in Merri-bek supports home and community care and will lobby the Federal Government to increase funding to Local Government to continue to run these services.
- Labor in Merri-bek will implement the Living and Ageing Well Strategy that promotes strategies to combat social isolation and create a more engaged community. Labor will continue to support meals on wheels, community transport, seniors outdoor help, and other assistance to support seniors in the community and at home.
- Labor in Merri-bek will invest in senior's clubs and facilities, support U3A and develop partnerships with organisations supporting seniors in the community.
- Labor in Merri-bek will ensure that seniors from non-English speaking backgrounds have access to information, feedback opportunities, and able to participate in council consultations.

### **Maternal & Child Services**

- Labor in Merri-bek will support families to provide an environment where children can develop to their fullest potential. To achieve this Labor will increase parenting programs, support high quality Maternal and Child Help Services, be guided by the principles of the Victorian Child-Friendly Cities and Communities Charter, and improve access for all families with young children to the support they need.

### **Child Care & Children Services**

- Labor will support an expansion of children services including supporting more community childcare places and expanding Council's own family day care scheme.
- Labor will work to upgrade childcare facilities and develop Early Years Centres across the municipality.

## **Differently Abled**

- Labor will promote an inclusive Merri-bek community that provides access and equity to people who are differently abled with disability, their families and carers.
- Labor will implement the goals of the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan Vic 2021-2025 which includes improving the physical environment, so it is safe, accessible and inclusive for all and increasing employment and economic participation for people with a disability in the Merri-bek community.

## **Young People**

- Labor in Merri-bek will support the expansion of services at the Oxygen Youth Centre and implement first point of contact for young people and community, health programs, research and advocacy to address issues around youth employment and education.
- Labor in Merri-bek will create playgrounds, sports and recreation facilities for all children and young people to enjoy.

## **Human Rights**

- Labor in Merri-bek commits to the Merri-bek Human Rights Policy, which gives us a common framework for all and ensures equitable access to services.

## **Refugees, Harmony & Diversity**

- Labor in Merri-bek will celebrate our diversity by providing programs and activities that promote harmony and understanding between all citizens of Merri-bek.
- Labor in Merri-bek will continue to explore new and innovative means of displaying and celebrating the cultural diversity of Merri-bek.
- Labor In Merri-bek will prioritise events, programs and policies to enhance social cohesion including racism awareness programs, conflict resolution; affirmative consent programs aimed at men of all ages and further links with community connector program.
- Labor in Merri-bek recognises that wars and conflict abroad have a direct impact on local communities in Merri-bek, who have family and friends affected back home. Labor will support refugees and new arrivals from conflict zones and work with the Federal Government towards peaceful resolution of international disputes and an end to military conflict and violence in war zones like Gaza and Ukraine.

## **Interfaith Network**

- We will encourage and support all the many and diverse expressions of faith and spirituality which are dear to the heart of many Merri-bek residents, especially when they are caring for and serving the marginalised members of our community. The Merri-bek Interfaith Network will be supported in its efforts to nurture harmony, peace and understanding, according to the Social Cohesion Policy.

## **First Peoples**

- Labor will ensure respectful and inclusive recognition of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waterways in Merri-bek and respect for all First People's. Labor in Merri-bek will embed First Peoples cultural values, voices, knowledge, and rights, perspectives and participation in local council processes with a whole-of-council approach and early involvement of the First Peoples Advisory group in the development of policies.
- Labor will support public recognition of the Wurundjeri peoples as the Traditional Owners of the land that makes up Merri-bek including through dual naming, identifying places of historical and cultural significance and interpretative signage in public places.



- Labor will continue to implement the Statement of Commitment to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People and First Peoples. We will negotiate with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung for a local treaty and implement the principle of self-determination.
- Labor will protect First Peoples cultural heritage and continuing to protect the First Peoples history, including protecting waterways and interpreting landscapes, through bringing cultural values and cultural practices to natural resource management.
- Labor in Merri-bek will advance racism awareness and cultural competence programs, implement First Nations Employment, Business and Economic strategies through partnership with First Nations Traditional Owners, First Peoples organisations and prioritise First Nations businesses in procurement policies.
- Labor will continue the support of Ballert Mooroop site in Glenroy. Labor will advocate to the State Government to transfer the title of the Ballert Mooroop site to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage First Peoples Corporation and provide First Nations with a place of cultural traditions, values, and customs. It would provide community, health, education, cultural, and open space facilities for First Nations.

### **LGBTIQA+ Communities**

- Labor in Merri-bek will develop a plan to support and engage our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer Diversity and Inclusion communities.
- Labor in Merri-bek will increase engagement and consultation with LGBTIQA+ people to address and prevent discrimination, promote safety and wellbeing, health and community services, and greater advocacy on LGBTIQA+ issues.
- Labor in Merri-bek will fly the rainbow flag and participate in Midsummer Festival, Melbourne Pride and run LGBTIQA+ community events and festivals.

### **Gender Equity**

- Gender equality is achieved when all people have equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. Achieving gender equality will create a thriving and healthy community, help prevent violence against women and girls and contribute to economic prosperity for all.
- Labor in Merri-bek believes everyone has the right to be safe in our community and their home. Labor will continue to support the full implementation of the Merri-bek Gender Equality Action Plan as a model workplace and ensure equality through all Council policies and programs. We will support local welfare groups with initiatives to respond to and prevent family and gender-based violence in Merri-bek.
- Labor in Merri-bek will implement in conjunction with relevant expertise, Affirmative Consent Education programs for the community especially men.
- Labor in Merri-bek will support the Vicki Cleary Day to grow as part of engaging men in the anti-violence campaign and explore new initiatives in the community to raise awareness of gender-based violence involving people with lived experience and evidence-based approaches.
- Promote awareness and relevant policy of growing population of solo households especially older women (including homelessness risk) and solo childless women.

### **Community Safety**

- Labor will work with Victoria Police to ensure a safer community including hosting more police forums and support preventative programs.
- Labor will support crime prevention programs and infrastructure including CCTV cameras, more lighting in public spaces.

## **Gambling**

- Labor in Merri-bek will support the Gambling in Merri-bek Strategy to Reduce the Harm from Gambling.
- Labor in Merri-bek will continue to develop programs to mitigate the harm caused by problem gambling and support alternative social outlets like Libraries After Dark program that provides to gambling.

## **Economic Development**

### **Jobs**

- Labor will support the strategies of the Economic Development Strategy to revitalise our local economy and create local jobs.
- Labor will support our local traders and business community with regular programs, network events, promotion of local economy, business development, increased investment and new businesses including shared spaces and amenities
- Labor remains focused on the provision of council services while working with businesses to support enterprise and to develop the skills of the local workforce.
- Labor will support centres of innovation, including promoting clusters for creative arts, science and innovation, health and bio-med, and information technologies.
- Labor will develop strategies and precinct plans to rejuvenate local activity centres investing in the public realm to improve beautification, street furniture, tree planting opportunities, better transport options including active transport cycling and walking.

### **Sydney Road & Local Shopping Centres**

- Sydney Road is the major activity and shopping centre of the municipality. Merri-bek Labor will work with the State Government, local traders and the community to invest in Sydney Road as a destination for Melbourne.
- Labor in Merri-bek commits to the beautification of Sydney Road, Lygon Street and other activity centres by supporting them to protect and restore heritage facades and shopfronts.
- Labor commits to the beautification and greening of Sydney Road, Lygon Street, Grantham Street, Pascoe Vale Road (Glenroy) and other activity centres including the planting of trees, more street furniture, lights, recycling bins, public arts and green spaces.

### **Arts & Cultural**

- Labor in Merri-bek commits to strengthening the significant creative sector in Merri-bek and enhancing its standing as a destination for the arts.
- Labor in Merri-bek will finish building the Balam Balam Arts Place in Brunswick as a significant regional arts precinct. The new arts hub will be supported to grow and be a success for Merri-bek supporting new and emerging artists with affordable and peppercorn rents, artists incubation and support creative industries.
- Labor in Merri-bek will support the Counihan Gallery to grow as a regional contemporary exhibition space and develop the Brunswick Town Hall into an arts and culture center with an permanent exhibition of the arts collections with a focus on local artists and the history of Brunswick.
- The Mechanics Institute will be maintained as a performing arts place and include a local component in its program. Labor will develop strategies to encourage creative industries to establish in Merri-bek.





- Labor in Merri-bek will seek to develop arts infrastructure in the northern areas of the municipality to ensure that all residents in the municipality have access to the arts and that art and drama groups have appropriate spaces for performance and local expansion.
- Labor in Merri-bek will coordinate a range of engaging cultural and artistic events, exhibitions and performances throughout the year. Labor will celebrate Christmas with Christmas decorations in activity centres and Carols by the Lake, and celebrate Easter, Ramadan, Diwali and other religious festivals celebrated in our community.
- Labor commits to supporting Merri-bek festivals including the Brunswick Music Festival and Street Party, Coburg Night market, Glenroy, Fawkner and other community festivals.

## **Environment & Climate Action**

- Labor in Merri-bek has a strong record of protecting our local environment and taking strong action on climate change including establishing and supporting CERES Environment Park and becoming one of the first council's to be carbon neutral.

### **Creeks & Waterways**

- Labor will protect our local environment and support our creek corridors and ecosystems, investing in water catchment systems to prevent litter from entering our river systems. Small and affordable changes that can have big impacts, effective drain catchers and time and salary support for rubbish collectors to clean up bin spills during collections.
- Merri-bek's waterways are a scarce and wonderful resource and their improvement has been instrumental in bringing back native flora and fauna to the area. Labor in Merri-bek will protect our creeks and waterways and create more open space along our creeks and wetlands for native wildlife to return to the creeks.
- Labor in Merri-bek will support the consolidation of open space corridors and advocate for all state-owned land along the creek corridors to be gifted to council to be permanently rezoned for open space.
- Labor in Merri-bek will complete the Edgers Creek Conservation and development plan and continue to revitalise the Moonee Ponds Creek.
- Labor in Merri-bek will continue to work with the Creeks Friends groups, believing that the most effective way of improving the creeks is to involve residents.

### **Recycling & Circular Economy**

- Labor in Merri-bek supports the concept of circular economy and the reuse of materials and encourages residents to reduce waste aiming for zero waste to be sent to landfill. Labor in Merri-bek will encourage more recycling and reuse of materials in developments and councils infrastructure and investigate the recycling of textiles, hard waste and promote food organics.

### **Climate Action**

- Labor in Merri-bek has always provided leadership on climate change, making council carbon neutral and supporting innovative projects to mitigate against climate change. We will continue to provide strong leadership advocating for more renewable energy, and actions to mitigate against climate change.
- Labor in Merri-bek will expand initiatives to reduce community emissions that are embracing of many approaches and inclusionary and not exclusionary. Carbon footprints can be measured across a range of activities- not transport alone.

- Labor in Merri-bek will support Electric Vehicles and install more electric charging stations in public spaces. Labor in Merri-bek will investigate options for EV charging by those with without off street parking to access charging stations.
- Labor in Merri-bek will invest in climate action programs, renewable energy and community batteries that support the State Governments objectives and climate targets.
- Labor in Merri-bek will support developer contributions, where developers contribute more to open space and essential infrastructure. We will also investigate mobility hubs, where developers contribute to the cost of providing car parking in public spaces.

## City Development

### Urban Planning

- Labor in Merri-bek supports a planning system that encourages sustainable and appropriate development that respects neighbourhood character, diversity in housing choice, and sensitive to the capacity of local infrastructure, traffic congestion and parking, complies with design guidelines and local height limits.
- Labor in Merri-bek supports development that provides appropriate car parking and active transport plans, linking to public transport network. Labor in Merri-bek supports development that provides appropriate car parking, especially as the use of EV's increases, and active transport plans, linking to public transport network. Merri-bek Labor will ensure parking for those where car transport is their main accessible transport i.e. the aged, differently abled, carers of these groups and carers of children and those with a car essential for employment.
- Labor in Merri-bek will protect our industrial and commercial zoned land for employment activities and job creation.
- Labor in Merri-bek will support the incorporation of heritage protection into the planning scheme of further buildings of importance to the community.
- Labor in Merri-bek will encourage good quality design, environmentally sensitive designs, and compliance with State guidelines that encourage good development.
- Labor on Merri-bek will seek to expand community consultation, third-party notification and appeal rights in the planning scheme.

### Tree Planting

- Labor in Merri-bek will plant and maintain more trees with large canopy to mitigate against the heat island affect and cool our city in the summer months with sensible and maintainable green plantings that produce shade and habitat that works.
- Labor in Merri-bek will implement the actions of the Urban Forest Strategy, encourage more plantings in difficult places and investigate planting food-producing trees in selected parkland and support community gardens.

### Affordable Housing

- Labor in Merri-bek will pursue community partnerships with housing providers to develop and encourage affordable housing that meets the needs of our community.
- Labor in Merri-bek will support the Merri-bek Affordable Housing Ltd (MAH) in its efforts to address the lack of secure and affordable housing options available to residents across Merri-bek.



- Labor in Merri-bek will advocate for more inclusionary zoning, where developers are required to supply a percentage of affordable and social homes in each development.
- Labor in Merri-bek will work with other levels of Government and Community Housing Associations to build more social and affordable housing in Merri-bek.

## Transport

- Labor in Merri-bek will encourage more sustainable modes of transport including walking, cycling, and public transport. We will support 'Streets for People' projects after extensive consultation and involving the community in the decision-making and co-design process of street interventions to make our streets safer for pedestrians, cyclists and the wider community.

### Infrastructure

- Labor in Merri-bek will adequately maintain and improve our roads, paths and associated infrastructure and will continue to use 5-year forward-looking plans to ensure adequate funding is provided for the maintenance of our road networks.
- Labor in Merri-bek will continue to ensure that where road reconstructions are planned, notice is given to all affected parties and that residents are given a chance to provide input into the design.
- Labor in Merri-bek will support the campaign to lower speed limits in local neighbourhood streets, stopping rat-running and to assist with traffic calming measures.
- Labor in Merri-bek will investigate closing rat-runs, closing suburban roads and supporting active transport interventions.

### Pedestrians

- Labor in Merri-bek will continue to implement innovative programs to encourage more walking trips and to increase pedestrian safety. Labor in Merri-bek will continue to ensure that new or rebuilt roads contain measures to improve pedestrian amenity and safety.
- Labor in Merri-bek will build more wombat and zebra crossing to provide safe avenues for pedestrians to cross suburban roads.
- Labor will aim to separate pedestrians from cyclists on walking and bike paths due to risk of accidents and due to high speed of cyclists, narrow paths, minimal warning of approaching cyclist and risk of pedestrians stepping into cyclists path.

### Bicycles & Micro Mobility

- Labor in Merri-bek will continue to invest in cycling paths and improve the bicycle network in the municipality - this includes extensions to the off-road networks as protected bike lanes keep bike riders separated from motor vehicles and therefore safer and encourage more people to ride bikes and legitimise bike riders in the minds of other road users.
- Labor in Merri-bek will continue to seek financial support for the installation of pedestrian operated signals at busy locations and we will consider co-funding these signals.
- Labor in Merri-bek will continue to ensure that new or rebuilt roads contain measures to improve the safety of cyclists. If this conflicts with the nature of the road, attempts shall be made to provide alternative routes for cyclists.
- Labor in Merri-bek will support the introduction of e-scooters and micro-mobility that provide alternative transport options for small trips. Labor will review the introduction of e-scooters to strengthen safety for riders, pedestrians, cyclists, and regulations pending introduction of new rules.

# Community Facilities & Open Space

## Open Spaces

- Labor in Merri-bek will continue to upgrade and create new public open space. Labor in Merri-bek will work to ensure that all residents have quality, accessible open space within safe walking distance as listed in the Park Close to Home Strategy.
- Labor in Merri-bek will continue to develop parkland along our creek corridors and improve the natural environment so native wildlife can return to the creeks and wetlands.

## Aquatic & Leisure Centres

- Labor in Merri-bek will ensure that Council owned Aquatic and Leisure Centres are adequately funded, facilities and services maintained and expanded.
- Labor in Merri-bek will ensure that the Brunswick YMCA Leisure Centre is able to expand its facilities, especially the gym, which is too small and presents Health and Safety risks due to lack of space.

## Sporting Groups & Facilities

- Labor in Merri-bek will work tirelessly to increase participation amongst a range of people in our community who are less likely to participate – women and girls, people with a disability, LGBTIQ+ communities, low-income earners, single parent families, people from culturally diverse backgrounds, older adults.
- Labor in Merri-bek will upgrade sporting pavilions and change rooms to enable greater access and participation of sports.
- Labor in Merri-bek will investigate sharing arrangements of open space and sporting facilities at local schools, aiming to form partnerships that benefit both the local community and the schools.
- Labor in Merri-bek will build new sporting fields and facilities to encourage greater participation of a variety of sports including footy, soccer, cricket, netball, tennis, basketball, athletics, hockey, cycling, badminton, baseball and the growth of new urban sports.

## Dog Parks & Facilities

- Labor in Merri-bek will build more dog parks and facilities like agility parks and training programs supporting and encouraging responsible pet ownership.

## Libraries

- Labor in Merri-bek is committed to maintaining our libraries' ability to serve the Merri-bek community. Libraries are a key to accessing knowledge and breaking down barriers in society and as such Labor will continue to ensure that the funds for the purchase of new books, audio visual and online books are increased.
- Labor in Merri-bek will support our libraries in providing more activities and programs including rhyme time and story time in different languages for children and families.
- Labor in Merri-bek will continue the libraries after dark program and program more activities in our public libraries.
- Labor in Merri-bek will provide more study spaces, computers, and activity spaces in libraries including developing local history research centres.
- Labor in Merri-bek recognises the importance of the Toy Library and will support its future operations and expansion.



## Neighbourhood House & Facilities

- Labor in Merri-bek will support Neighbourhood Houses with future development and growth plans, providing more services to our community.
- Labor in Merri-bek support vibrant community hubs and co-locating community services, such as Oxygen Youth Center, Glenroy hub, Balam Balam Arts Space and Albert Street Early Centre.



**For a better community,  
vote Labor #1 this  
council election**

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