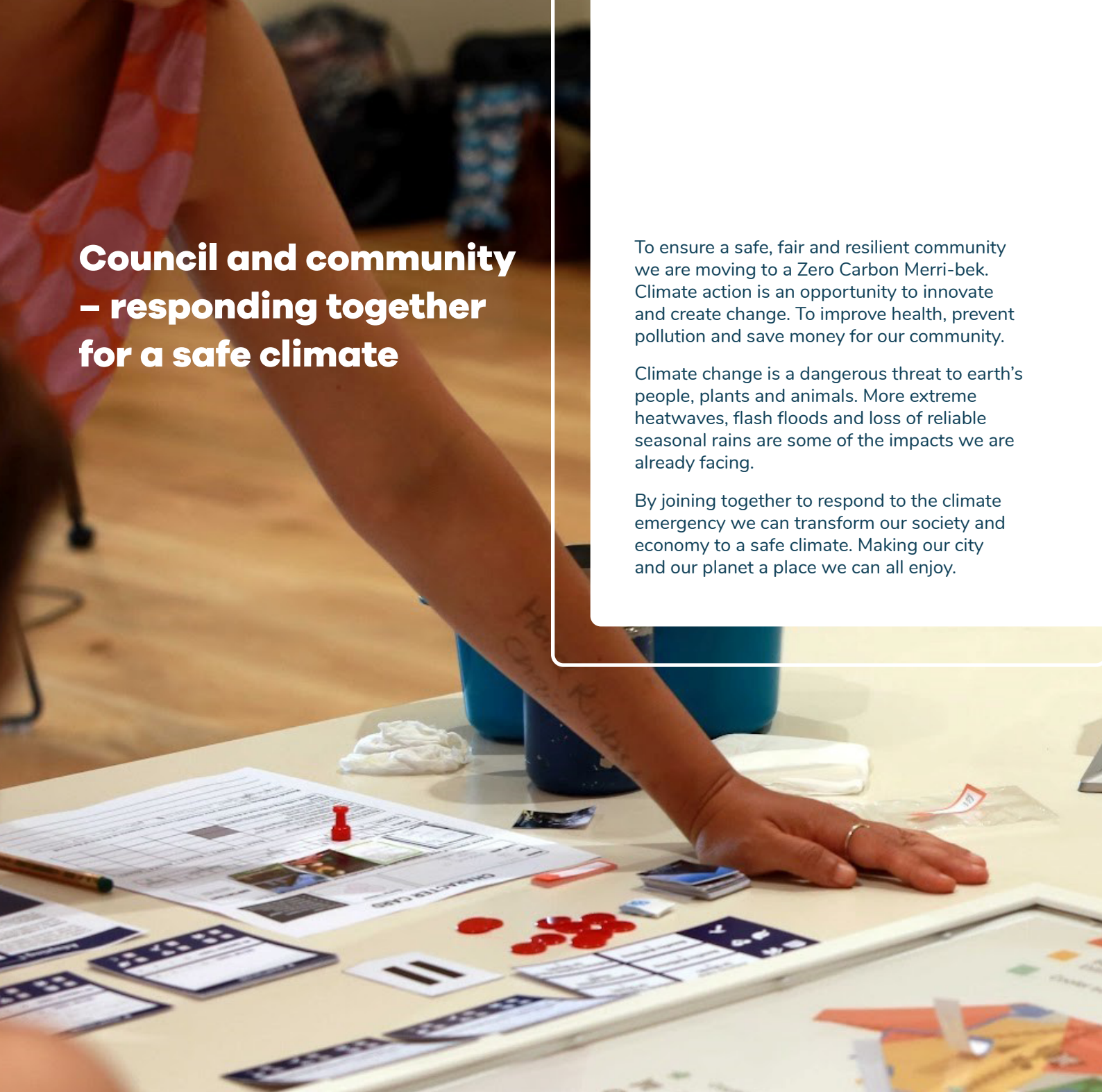


Merri-bek
City Council

Zero Carbon Merri-bek Action Plan

2020-25 Outcomes





Council and community – responding together for a safe climate

To ensure a safe, fair and resilient community we are moving to a Zero Carbon Merri-bek. Climate action is an opportunity to innovate and create change. To improve health, prevent pollution and save money for our community.

Climate change is a dangerous threat to earth's people, plants and animals. More extreme heatwaves, flash floods and loss of reliable seasonal rains are some of the impacts we are already facing.

By joining together to respond to the climate emergency we can transform our society and economy to a safe climate. Making our city and our planet a place we can all enjoy.

Action plan snapshot

Community 2025 goals

Achieved 5

Partially achieved/ongoing 4

Council 2025 targets

Achieved 5

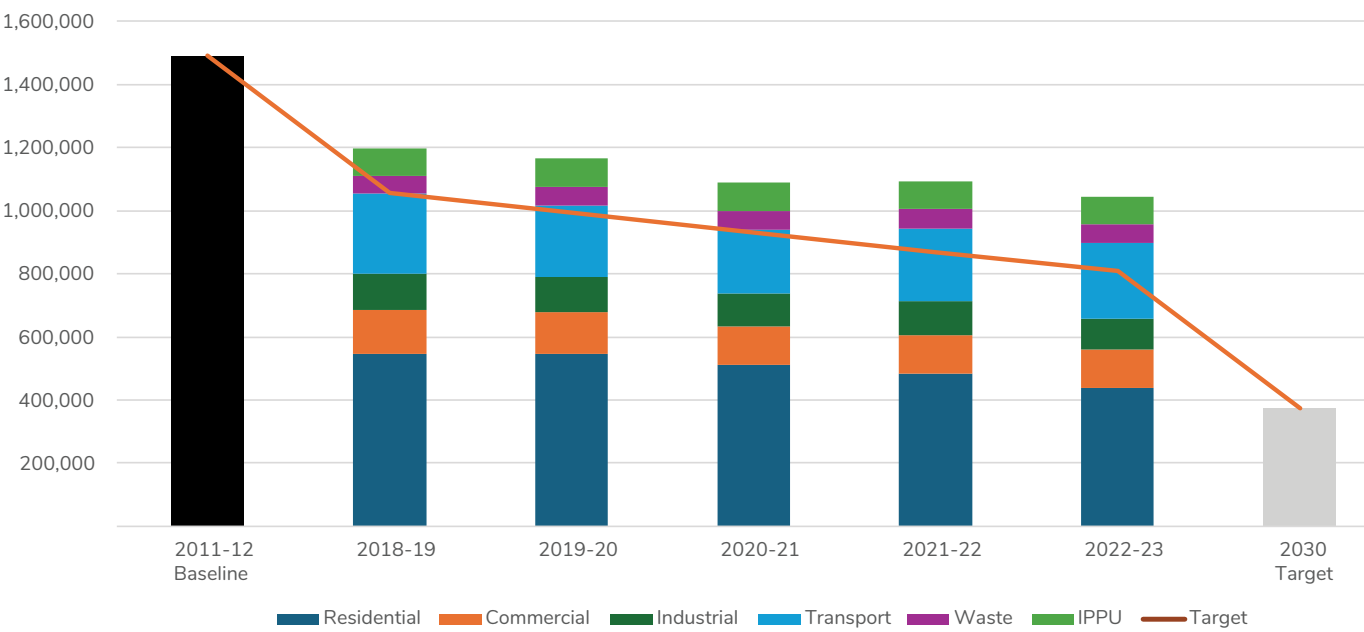
Partially achieved/ongoing 7

Council and Community taking action together

It is Council’s goal for Merri-bek to achieve 75% emissions reduction in the community by 2030, net zero by 2035, and drawdown (‘negative emissions’) by 2040, all compared with a 2011-12 baseline. By 2022-23, community emissions had reduced by 30%.



Merri-bek Community Emissions Profile over time - by source tCO2-e



Things to note

- Most reduction due to more renewables (and less coal) in electricity grid
- Most electricity and gas use are used in homes
- Transport emissions are increasing
- IPPU – Industrial Process and Product Use such as gas leaks in refrigeration and air-conditioning equipment.



Community Skills for Climate Action

Run in collaboration with the cities of Darebin and Yarra, our Community Skills for Climate Action program inspired 28 community-led events focused on local climate action.

Keen volunteers contributed 1,444 hours of their time, engaging 1,853 people in the wide variety of events. A huge 79% of participants said that they made new partnerships.

“The program has greatly supported me in clarifying my role in the climate action movement and within the local community. It also provided me with tools to transform ideas into actions.”

- Merri-bek participant.

The Adaptation Game – A Merri-bek Climate Drill

We developed [The Adaptation Game](#) with researchers and creatives as an inclusive story-telling experience. It scales climate change and disaster preparedness down from overwhelming global fears to local risks. Diverse groups of locals have played the game at council halls, neighbourhood houses, and pubs across Merri-bek, and it's now being played in 17 councils across Australia – and counting.

“I feel empowered on a local level to help protect my community. Before, I just felt overwhelmed by the inadequate measures being taken on a global scale.”

– Merri-bek resident and Adaptation Game player



Sustainability in Early Learning Centres

We subsidised 23 Merri-bek early learning centres to become ResourceSmart. The ResourceSmart for Early Years program helps centres to embed sustainability practices. Actions include minimising waste, saving water and energy, promoting biodiversity and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We also provided subsidised waste education incursions to 61 early learning centres to help children connect with nature and learn how to care for it.

Energy transition

We are supporting our households, businesses and community groups to become energy-efficient and powered by 100% renewable energy.

The major sources of our community's carbon emissions are electricity (36%) and gas (26%).

Solar target

Installed

77MW

Target

44MW



Energy upgrades subsidy program

We have helped over 385 low-income households to save money on their energy bills and stay safe during climate extremes. Through the subsidised home insulation or rooftop solar, these households are collectively saving around \$216,000 a year on their energy bills and lifetime savings of \$3.7 million.

“The difference it has made it is much more comfortable, especially in summer...Just have it done.”

– Maria, Pascoe Vale resident.



Solar households and businesses

As a community we have already far exceeded our goal to double the amount of rooftop solar PV across Merri-bek to 44MW by 2025. By December 2024, there was already 51.1MW of solar across 10,300 homes, plus 26.6MW of solar across 606 non-residential properties. The total is an enormous 77.57MW, which is around 220,000 solar panels.

Seven local businesses got Council help to access Environmental Upgrade Finance. This enabled them to install a total of 432kW of solar and is saving them \$2.1 million in energy bills.

“Solar is where the world is heading. You can get a low interest loan and if you know you’re going to be around 5+ years, it’s a no brainer.”

– Terra Madre co-owner Ryan O'Connor installed a 139kW solar system with Environmental Upgrade Finance.



Electrify Merri-bek

Established an evidence-based ‘Electrify Everything’ communications campaign to promote the health, safety and environmental benefits of switching appliances to electric.

Through outdoor and online advertising showcasing Merri-bek residents, events and Go Electric Planner have reached over 4600 people over 3 years.

Waste and consumption

We're focused on creating a circular economy in Merri-bek, with more local repair, reuse and recycling and as close as possible to zero waste.



Weekly food and garden organics (FOGO) collections across Merri-bek

Greenhouse gases from organic materials breaking down in landfill accounts for 6% of our community emissions. To combat this, in July 2023 we introduced weekly collections of food and garden organics (FOGO) for all Merri-bek households as part of our new four-bin service. In the first year, we saw a 7.5% decrease in waste sent to landfill - around 2,151 tonnes - and saved an estimated 7,240 tonnes of climate pollution by diverting food waste from landfill.

Our FOGO creates compost for Victorian farmers. We've also delivered more than 243 cubic metres of compost to over a dozen community gardens across Merri-bek

“Your food and garden waste is helping community gardens grow and flourish, providing healthy, low-cost food to local residents.”

– Mulberry Garden volunteers, Glenroy.



Increase in waste saved from landfill. 12,797 tonnes reduction carbon emissions



Booked hard waste

After a successful trial we have changed from a municipal-wide 'blanket collection' to a booked or 'at-call' hard waste collection service for bulky household items that cannot be recycled or disposed of via the kerbside bins. This has saved thousands of tonnes of hard waste from being sent to landfill each year. In 2023/24 the booked service collected 62% less hard waste than the final blanket collection in 2022.



Plastic Free Sydney Rd

Before the statewide ban on some items came in, Plastic Free Sydney Road supported 29 hospitality businesses along this busy strip to reduce their use of seven single-use plastic packaging and serving items like drinking straws and cutlery. The program ran for 14 months. Six businesses eliminated all seven targeted items, and there was a reduction of over 370,000 pieces of plastic used across all the 29 businesses.

Sustainable transport

The petrol and diesel used for transport accounts for 23% of our community's carbon emissions.

We're encouraging active travel like walking, cycling and scooting, along with the switch to zero-emissions vehicles.

10.1 km

New gravel paths

8.4 km

New disability-compliant concrete footpaths



Electric Vehicle Charging

Council's network of electric vehicle (EV) chargers has grown to a total of 24 public chargers, with 95,683 charging sessions over the past five years. We're proud to have installed our first accessible EV charger, with extra space around the charging bays to support users with a disability.

All electricity from Council's chargers is backed by renewable energy certificates from the Crowlands Wind Farm.



Wheel Sisters

Wheel Sisters gives women the skills needed to ride bikes confidently and independently, fostering community at the same time. More than 40 women from multicultural and multifaieth backgrounds have learned to ride, and have established monthly group rides.

“I am very grateful to Wheel Sisters and Merri-bek Council for arranging this cycling course for women. It was my dream to ride, and you fulfilled it. Thank you to everyone in the community who helped me achieve this.”

– Afrin, Wheel Sisters participant



Ride & Stride

Our Ride & Stride behaviour-change program got more kids walking, riding and scooting to school. Sixteen local primary schools have joined Ride & Stride, offering their school communities gamification technology for kids to TagOn when they walk or ride to school, e-cargo bike subsidies, bike education and bike repairs.

As part of Ride & Stride, we pioneered the idea of Open Streets. During drop off and pick up times, we open the street outside the school gates to pedestrians and cyclists, without cars. So far, we've held over 30 Open Streets days at 11 schools.

"It's been a joy volunteering to make Open Streets happen each month at my kids' school, being outdoors with happy children in a playful, quiet street. Seeing children riding, scooting and enjoying the Open Street makes volunteering more than worth it!"

– Parent at Coburg North Primary School.

69%

average active
travel rate
on Open
Street days

18%

average
increase
in active
travel rate

93%

of parents and
residents want
Open Streets
more often

Reducing Council's emissions



At Merri-bek Council, we have an ambitious goal to reduce our own corporate operational emissions by between 80% and 100% by 2030, against our 2011-12 baseline and not including carbon offsets. We have already reduced our emissions by 63%.

Each year since 2012, we have been certified as 'carbon neutral' (or 'net zero') under the Australian Government's Climate Active scheme, in which we purchase carbon offsets for all our remaining emissions.



Plastic Wise policy

Since the 2019 adoption of our Plastic Wise policy, we've run 24 flagship Merri-bek festivals 'Plastic Free'. The aim of the amendment was to introduce no plastic cups, plates, bowls, straws, bags, balloons, or plastic-bottled drinks. After several successful trials, our annual Glenroy and Fawkner Festivals now offer a reusable crockery and coffee cup service. We also equipped Brunswick and Coburg Town Halls with reusable crockery that's available for free to hall users, reducing the amount of single-use plastic used at community and private events.

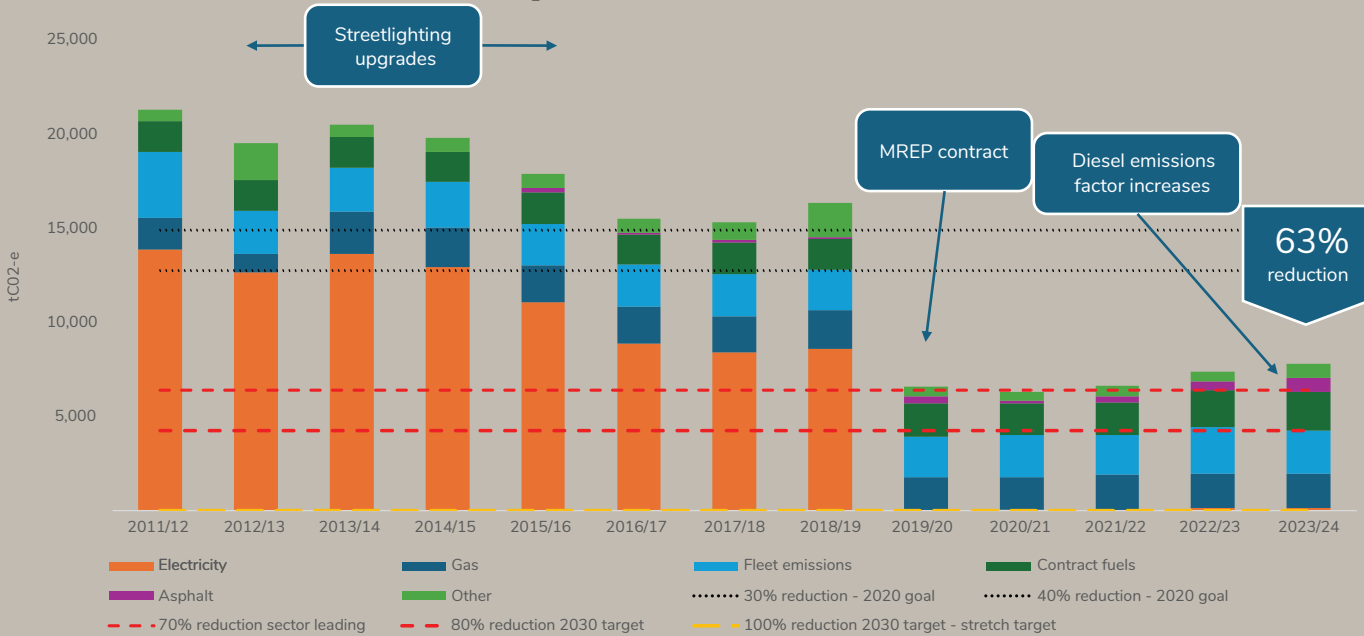


Switching our fleet to electric vehicles

Council's vehicle fleet includes 30 fully electric and 16 hybrid cars, 3 electric vans, 2 electric trucks, 1 electric street-sweeper and 1 electric ride-on mower.

When it comes to passenger transport fully electric vehicles make up 56% of our fleet, the largest proportion in Victoria. All electricity from Council's chargers is backed by renewable certificates from the Crowlands Wind Farm.

Merri-bek City Council - Corporate Emissions Profile over time - by sector tCO2-e



Things to note

- At Merri-bek Council, we have an ambitious goal to reduce our operational emissions by between 80% and 100% by 2030, not including carbon offsets. We have already reduced our emissions by 63%.
- Each year since 2012, we have been certified as 'carbon neutral' (or 'net zero') under the Australian Government's Climate Active scheme, in which we purchase carbon offsets for all our remaining emissions.

Increase in emissions in 21/22-23/24 due to:

- COVID artificially lowering emissions across 19/20-21/22 due to facility closures
- Diesel 'emissions factor' increased in recent years – actual diesel use is unchanged
- Some additions to emissions coverage over time (Scope 3 – asphalt, IT, arborist)
- Most remaining emissions are fossil gas (predominantly used in aquatic centres) and diesel (mostly used by Council and contractor waste trucks)

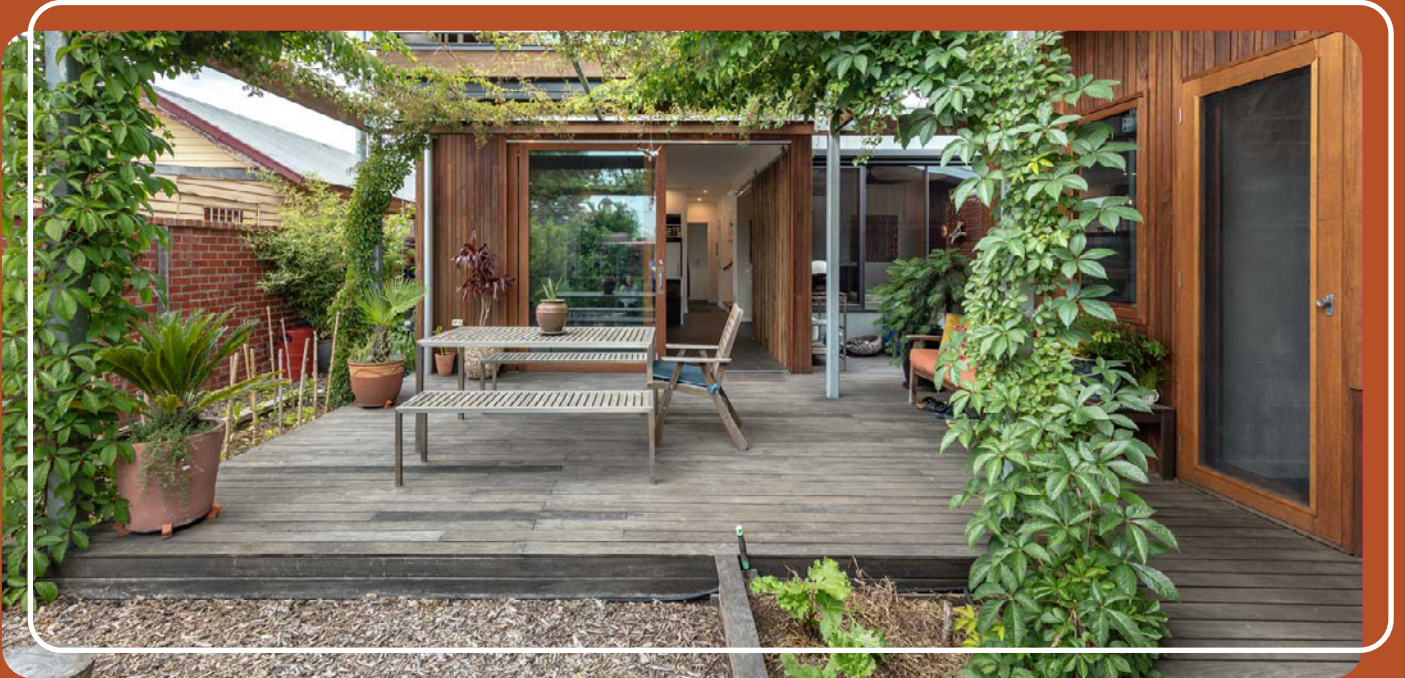


Efficient, solar and electric buildings

We're making great progress with improving the energy efficiency of our buildings. There are now solar panels on 49 Council buildings, and since 2020 all new buildings are all-electric. The multi-award-winning Glenroy Community Hub is Australia's first Passive House-certified public building, successfully meeting the rigorous requirements of this international sustainable design standard. Our redevelopment of Fawkner Leisure Centre will make it Australia's first retrofitted all-electric aquatic centre, eliminating the 5,800MJ of gas used each year to heat the centre's pools and showers.

Leadership and advocacy

We are continually advocating to the state and federal governments for the policy changes we need to achieve a Zero Carbon Merri-bek, and to ensure the transition is fast, fair and affordable.



Advocacy to improve new homes

In 2022, federal and state Building Ministers agreed to increase the minimum energy rating for new homes from 6 to 7 Stars. This will ensure new homes are more comfortable, liveable, accessible and energy-efficient. It was the most significant upgrade to required energy standards for Australian homes in 12 years. We led local government advocacy for these reforms, in partnership with 36 other councils around the country, through Climate Emergency Australia.



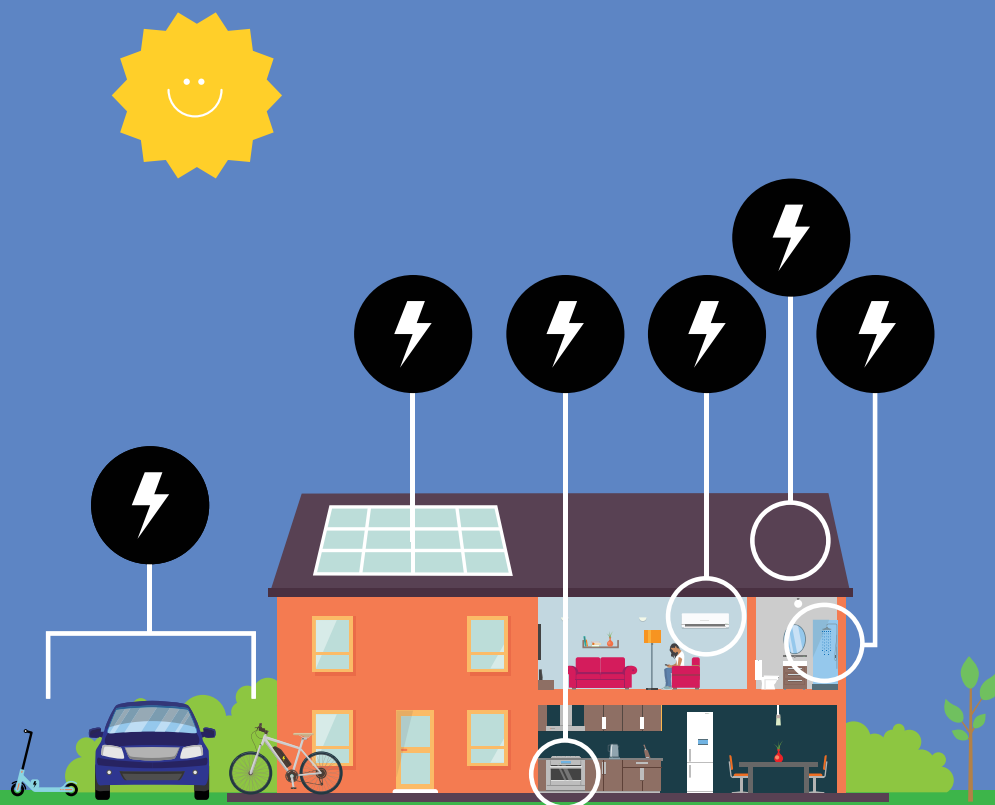
Striving for zero carbon in the planning scheme

In July 2022, Merri-bek was one of 24 councils (representing half the Victorian population) that lodged the Elevating ESD Targets Planning Amendment with the Victorian government. The aim of the amendment is to introduce planning policy that raises sustainability standards for new buildings and encourages a move towards net zero carbon development

Electrify Everything Community of Practice

We established and host an Electrify Everything Community of Practice that involves officers from 95 regional and urban councils across Australia. The group shares resources and information to promote the electrification of homes.

In 2023, participating councils collaborated to develop and deliver an Electrify Everything campaign that reached over 677,000 Australians.



“The support of this Community of Practice has enabled regional councils to leverage the collective wisdom and experience to deliver targeted, high-quality communications – this would not have been possible otherwise.”

- Victorian council officer

Our Zero Carbon Merri-bek mural in Coburg by artists Hayden Dewar. The mural celebrates our local environment and the opportunity for positive change of a zero carbon Merri-bek. The mural is part of Merri-bek's RenuWall program to beautify our public spaces, engage our arts community in meaningful public artwork and address graffiti hotspots in Merri-bek.



Awards

Total number 16 including

- Winner**
Institute of Transport Engineer's Awards
Ride & Stride program
- Winner**
Australasian Fleet Management
Association Awards 2020
Merri-bek Fleet
- Winner**
Cycling Luminaries Awards 2023
Open Streets program
- Winner**
Waste Innovation & Recycling Awards 2023
Merri-bek's Kerbside Waste Reform
- Winner**
Master Builders Victoria Awards 2022
Glenroy Community Hub
- Winner**
Planning Institute Awards 2022
Climate Change & Planning in Victoria
- Winner**
National Resilient Australia Awards 2024
The Adaptation Game
- Finalist**
Cities Power Partnership Awards 2023
Electrify Everything Community of Practice
- Finalist**
Victorian Premier's Sustainability Awards
2023
Unlocking Sustainable Strata
- Highly commended**
Cities Power Partnership Awards 2023
Solar & Thermal Subsidy program

Contact Us

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