

The Memo

News from the City of Maribyrnong

Spring 2026 ————— maribyrnong.vic.gov.au

Alice in wonderland: a story of creativity and culture

A fresh new look for Maribyrnong

First look at Creative West



City of
Maribyrnong

Message from the Mayor

Welcome to the Spring edition of *The Memo*.

As we move into a new season, I want to thank everyone who has taken the time to share their ideas, feedback and hopes for our City. Whether you have contributed to the Budget, the reimagining of Footscray Park, or our Children, Young People and Families Strategy, your voice helps shape the decisions we make as a Council.

In this edition, you can read about key highlights from Council's Budget, which was endorsed in June. It reflects the priorities our community has told us matter most, from local infrastructure and open space to services that support people across every stage of life.

We also received more than 800 pieces of feedback on the reimagined Footscray Park, and will present the draft Master Plan for further community feedback in the second half of this year.

Our consultation on the Children, Young People and Families Strategy received a similar response, showing how strongly our community cares about creating a City where children and young people feel safe, supported and proud of who they are.

That spirit of pride is also reflected in Council's fresh new look, which you will start to see over the coming months. After research, consultation and design work, the refreshed identity better reflects our City's industrial heritage, working-class roots and the vibrant, creative community we are today. You can read more about this on page 3.

Finally, as I come to the end of my term as Mayor, I want to say thank you. It has been an honour to serve this community, to listen to your stories and to advocate for the place we all call home. I look forward to continuing that advocacy in the future.



Councillor
Mohamed Semra

Mayor of the City of Maribyrnong

Contents

- | | |
|---|--|
| 3 A fresh look for Maribyrnong | 11 Garage Sale Trail returns |
| 4 Alice in wonderland: a story of creativity and culture | 12 Encounter our City in a new light |
| 6 How we are spending the 2026/27 Budget for the community | 13 Strengthening our response to homelessness |
| 7 Discover Maidstone | 14 RecWest and Shorten update |
| 8 First look at Creative West | 16 New business: Mr Baxter's |
| 10 Supporting local ideas through grants | |

Council meeting dates



September

Tuesday 15 September, 6.30pm

October

Tuesday 20 October, 6.30pm

November

Tuesday 17 November, 6.30pm

Wednesday 18 November, 6.30pm
(Election of the Mayor)

A fresh look for Maribyrnong

You may notice Council looking a little different over the coming months.



You'll start to see a refreshed Council look over the coming months.

The refreshed identity will make Council information feel clearer, warmer and easier to recognise. The services you use and the support you receive will stay the same.

You'll see brighter colours and more photos that showcase the people, places and stories that make our City unique.

A new saw-tooth design element will also feature throughout our communications.

Inspired by the rooftops of the factories and warehouses that helped shape our municipality, it celebrates Maribyrnong's proud industrial heritage, hardworking spirit and blue-collar roots.

You'll be able to recognise Council information more easily and find what you need faster.

Thank you to everyone who completed our communications postcard survey.

The results confirmed that **62 per cent** of respondents feel they hear from Council about the right amount, while **46 per cent** prefer to receive information by email and **61 per cent** by letterbox delivery. The topics people value most are local events

and activities, Council decisions and roadworks. We also heard requests for more information about seniors' services and Council spending.

The good news is we're already putting your feedback into action.

In this and future editions of *The Memo*, you'll see a stronger focus on the information you've told us matters most, along with other improvements to help keep you informed and connected.

A photograph of Alice Pung, a woman with long dark hair, smiling and sitting at a desk in a library. Bookshelves filled with books are visible in the background. The text 'Alice in wonderland: a story of creativity and culture' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Alice in wonderland: a story of creativity and culture

A local woman through-and-through, Alice Pung has made her indelible mark on the western suburbs by putting her truth into words for others to read.

Born in Footscray a month after her parents arrived in Melbourne from Cambodia as refugees, Alice exemplifies what makes this area extraordinary.

Given the name Alice because her father thought Australia was like a wonderland, she was raised by a family who always wanted better for their children.

Her primary school years were spent at Dinjerra Primary School — back then known as Tottenham North Primary School. In her high school years, she attended five different high schools, as her parents were always looking for the best opportunity for their children.

“My father had a business in Footscray and when it was starting out, it was very small, but the better his business became, the more he wanted us to achieve educationally,” Alice said.

This consideration for his family’s future is evident even in Alice’s name. Named as such because after surviving Cambodia’s Killing Fields — this place was like a wonderland.

It’s a connection that was carried through to Alice’s first book *Unpolished Gem*, a memoir of life and family in Footscray — which is this year celebrating its 20th anniversary.

Originally created from a short story, *Unpolished Gem* was written at Footscray Library when she was aged 19-24.

“I was born in Australia, and a lot of the books I was reading at the time were about young women like me, who look like me and were culturally very similar to me, but were born overseas. They survived communism in China, or the war in Vietnam, or terrible things and they followed a very particular narrative,” Alice said.

And not to say those narratives of migrant success weren’t important, but it wasn’t her story.

“I was more drawn to telling a story that was distinctly telling a story set in Australia, because that’s my upbringing. My parents survived war and famine and genocide — but I didn’t.

“I grew up very much like my Australian friends. The very first sentence of *Unpolished Gem* is ‘This story does not begin on a boat’, and looking back in retrospect, there were things happening politically at the time, where we had a government that was really adverse to “boat people”, so it was stigma that you were a refugee.

“19-year-old me wanted to assert an identity that was not based on being a refugee forever, because once you come to Australia and you’re accepted, we’re not refugees, we’re arrivals.”

And even in the first few pages of *Unpolished Gem*, it paints a very clear picture of Footscray as a suburb where language doesn’t matter to be understood. Of a safe life of community and togetherness in a vibrant pocket of Melbourne.

The book after *Unpolished Gem* was a memoir called *Her Father’s Daughter*, about her father’s experiences in Cambodia. Alice said, originally, she wanted to write this story first but didn’t have the life experience.

These two are just the earliest among Alice’s extensive library of 15 books. In addition to these memoirs, she’s written essays, novels and children’s books.

Her book *Laurinda* also won the Ethel Turner Prize at the 2016 NSW Premier’s Literary Awards, and her latest book *One Hundred Days*, was shortlisted for the 2022 Miles Franklin Award and has been optioned into a film, with a screenplay written that was funded by Screen Australia and has a producer tied to the project.

Alice was also recognised for her services to literature in 2022, when she was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia.

She studied an Arts Law degree at Melbourne University, and her endeavours extend beyond her literary works. She is a mother, and has worked for the Fair Work Commission for 20 years.

Reflecting on her 20 years in the workforce, and as a published author, Alice said she looks back on Footscray Library as “such a special place to me”.

“I practically grew up there, it’s where we would go to socialise and meet boys and stuff like that.”

It was a match made in heaven then, for Alice to be able to launch the 20th anniversary of *Unpolished Gem* in July at Footscray Library, as part of the Creative West design announcement. Creative West, she said is a project close to her heart, considering her love of the library.

“So much thought has gone into the design of the space, they really have thought about everyone.”



Learn more about the vision for Creative West on [page 8-9](#).

Learn more about Alice at alicepung.net

“

One of the ones I’m really proud of is my book *Laurinda*, which has been turned into a Melbourne Theatre Company production”

Alice Pung, Author



Our budget

How we are spending the 2026/27 Budget for the community

The 2026/27 Annual Budget includes \$245.25 million for the services, projects and infrastructure you use across Maribyrnong. It is Council's largest Budget investment to date.



You'll see

\$153.8m

\$153.8 million go towards essential services and community initiatives over the next financial year.

\$91.4m

\$91.45 million invested in capital works to build and maintain the infrastructure our community needs.

More than

1,700

1,700 community responses helped shape the Budget. You told us local infrastructure, open space, safer streets and community services matter most.

Community wanted



Local infrastructure and amenity improvement, so we're providing:

\$22.4m

For RecWest and Shorten Reserve

\$13m+

For Maribyrnong Aquatic Centre Splash Park



Open space, so we have:

\$1.1m

On parks and gardens upgrades in Wattle Ward

Environment and sustainability, so we are investing in:

\$1m+

On tree planting City-wide



Cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, so we're allocating:

\$15.18m

For Roads Infrastructure (including Bike Infrastructure) and footpath renewal program.

Which includes:

- > **\$4.5 million** for Summerhill Road renewal
- > **\$1.95 million** for the municipal-wide Road Resheet Program
- > **\$1.5 million** for Barkly Street road resurfacing
- > **\$500,000** for Bunbury Street upgrades

Other highlights:

\$6 million for Footscray CBD upgrades

\$7 million for Creative West

\$1.5 million for Nicholson Street footpath upgrades

\$700,000 for Maribyrnong River Children's Centre building works

\$665,000 for Maidstone Child and Family Centre site investigation and outdoor place space works

\$435,000 Joseph Road and Hopkins Street bridge interface construction

\$320,000 for Maribyrnong River Trail Lighting

\$286,000 for Braybrook Library Makers space design and construction



Find out more at maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/budget

Discover Maidstone

Delicious food to suit every taste

If you're looking for your next local meal, set your sights on Maidstone. This evolving suburb has local favourites, international flavours and sweet treats all within easy reach.

At the heart of Maidstone's dining culture is the popular strip around Mitchell Street and Churchill Avenue.

Here, Jack B. Nimble continues to draw crowds with its specialty coffee, creative brunch menu and relaxed atmosphere. A few steps away, Good Good Burgers has earned a reputation for serving some of the area's most satisfying burgers, with juicy patties, crispy fried chicken and flavour-packed sides making it a go-to destination for casual dining.

For a taste of the Mediterranean, Naughty Greek brings authentic Greek street food to the neighbourhood. Known for its traditional gyros, souvlaki wraps and fresh ingredients, it's a popular stop for those seeking bold flavours and generous portions.

Adding to Maidstone's multicultural appeal is Hủ Tiếu Gõ Ông Mập, a standout Vietnamese restaurant inspired by the bustling street-food culture of Saigon. Its signature noodle soups, seafood dishes and traditional specialties have quickly made it a favourite among diners from across Melbourne.

Banh Me Drive Thru also serves Vietnamese bánh mì filled with crisp vegetables, herbs and savoury meats. It's a popular grab-and-go option.

Finish your food tour with something sweet at Scoopys, where you'll find ice creams, gelato and treats that are especially popular during the warmer spring months.

With leafy streets, local parks and a welcoming community, Maidstone shows that great food experiences are not limited to the inner city.



This spring, discover why Melbourne's west is a great place to eat, explore and support local businesses.



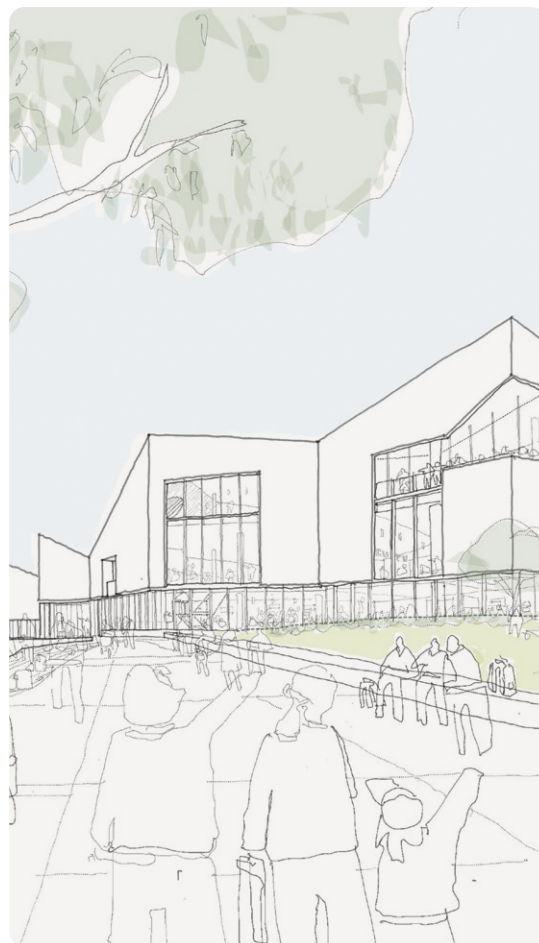
Community engagement update

Creative West

First look at Creative West, a new cultural hub for Melbourne's west

Creative West is one step closer, with Council unveiling the first concept designs for a new creative precinct in Footscray. The project will bring new spaces for learning, performance, community events and creative industries.

At Creative West, you'll be able to read, learn, attend performances, enjoy community events and spend time in a new town park on the current Footscray Library site and nearby car park.



Designed with community

Your feedback, along with co-design with community members and Wurundjeri Elders, shaped the concept design. This input brought local knowledge, creative ideas and cultural stories into the project.

Over 1,100 community responses helped test and refine the concept design so it reflects community needs, aspirations and Footscray's multicultural richness.

Design snapshot



A contemporary library to replace the existing ageing Footscray Library



A large, welcoming foyer at the heart of the building



An adaptable 500-plus seat theatre



A new town park with shade



Improved connections between indoor and outdoor spaces

The design and planning phase of Creative West received \$5 million from the Federal Government under the Urban Precincts and Partnerships Program, with funding matched by Council.

2025/26
engagement
at a glance



66,601

Visits to
yourcityyourvoice.com.au
Up 22%

45,514

Individual visitors
Up 18%



Building the case for investment

Your support will help Council advocate to the State and Federal governments to deliver the \$148 million project.

Show your support

Residents are invited to continue showing their support through the Creative West Dream Wall initiative. Each dream shared will become part of a growing public installation at Footscray Library, demonstrating strong local support for a cultural precinct shaped by our community.



To view the concept designs and share your dream for Creative West, visit the Creative West project page or drop into Footscray Library.



yourcityyourvoice.com.au/cw

Maribyrnong's "how-to" for community engagement

Key features include:

- 1 Our first community engagement definition
- 2 Clear engagement commitments to explain how the Policy will be applied in practice
- 3 Making it clear when we engage or when we may engage less
- 4 Committing to providing relevant and timely information to support meaningful engagement

You'll have more opportunities to help shape Council decisions under the updated Community Engagement Policy 2026-29, endorsed at the June 2026 Council meeting.

The updated Policy will make it easier for more people to have their say, especially people who are harder to reach. You'll also hear more clearly what we heard and what happens next.

Learn more at



yourcityyourvoice.com.au/engagement

Of the 32 projects posted on Your City Your Voice in 2025/26, we had:



5,637

Contributions
Up 42%

3,481

Contributors

2,593

People engaged at
62 in-person events
Up 68%

Supporting local ideas through grants

Have an idea for your business, community group or creative project? Council grants can help you bring it to life.

If you run a CBD business, you may be able to apply for up to \$3,000 through the new Footscray Revitalisation Grants Program to make small shopfront improvements and help create a more welcoming city centre.

If you're part of a community group, you may be able to apply for support through the Community Grants Program, which has an extra \$55,000 for community-led projects that build connection, inclusion, wellbeing and resilience.

Council is also continuing to invest in arts, culture and heritage organisations that help make Maribyrnong a creative and vibrant place to live.

The Triennial Arts Partner Funding program has increased by \$100,000 bringing the total annual investment to \$495,500, providing multi-year support to established local organisations to deliver high-quality creative and cultural experiences for the community.

Other grants support local festivals, events, neighbourhood activations, business precincts, and arts, cultural and heritage organisations.

Community groups, businesses, schools and individuals can also use Council's Grant Search tool to find funding from government, philanthropic and corporate funders across Australia.

Check opening and closing dates, eligibility requirements and how to apply at



maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/grants

Garage Sale Trail returns

Make money from unwanted items

Turn unwanted items into extra cash through the nationwide Garage Sale Trail. You can sell pre-loved items, reduce waste and connect with neighbours over two weekends in November.

Last year, local sellers hosted 144 garage sales and attracted 5,284 shoppers. Together, participants gave 12,171 items a second life and helped divert 36 per cent of goods from landfill.

It can also help your household budget. Local sellers collectively earned \$103,617, while shoppers saved an estimated \$156,000 by buying second-hand instead of new items.

Expressions of interest are now open for individuals, households, schools and community groups. You can host a small driveway sale or join forces with your street.



Find out more at maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/GarageSaleTrail

Weekend 1

Sat 7 + Sun 8 November, 2026

Weekend 2

Sat 14 + Sun 15 November, 2026

Give your clothing another chance



01
September
2026

13
October
2026

Make money from unwanted items

You can give unwanted clothing another chance and help reduce the more than 200,000 tonnes of textiles sent to landfill in Australia each year.

From 1 September to 13 October, you can take part in a six-week clothing collection trial run by Green Collect and Council.

Footscray Library will host a drop-off hub for wearable and worn-out clothing. You can bring clothes that are still in good condition, as well as items that can no longer be worn.

To protect community health and safety, donated items must be clean and unsoiled. They must be free from paint, glue, chemicals, pests, signs of infestation and biohazard stains.

Shoes and underwear cannot be recycled through this trial.

For more information, visit



maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/clothes

Encounter our City in a new light: a free art exhibition at Civic Precinct

Step inside Encounters, a free art exhibition at Civic Precinct, inviting viewers into a space of curiosity, discovery and imagination.

Explore multiple rooms at Civic Precinct and discover artworks, objects and civic treasures from the City of Maribyrnong's Art and Heritage Collection.

Inspired by the fifteenth century concept, Wunderkammer, German for 'wonder-rooms' or 'cabinet of curiosities', artworks are exhibited in pairs or groups so visitors can discover the unexpected connections between artworks over time.

Find out more about the exhibition and view the catalogue at



maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/encounters

Key details

Location



Civic Precinct and
Community Hub

61 Napier Street,
Footscray

Viewing times

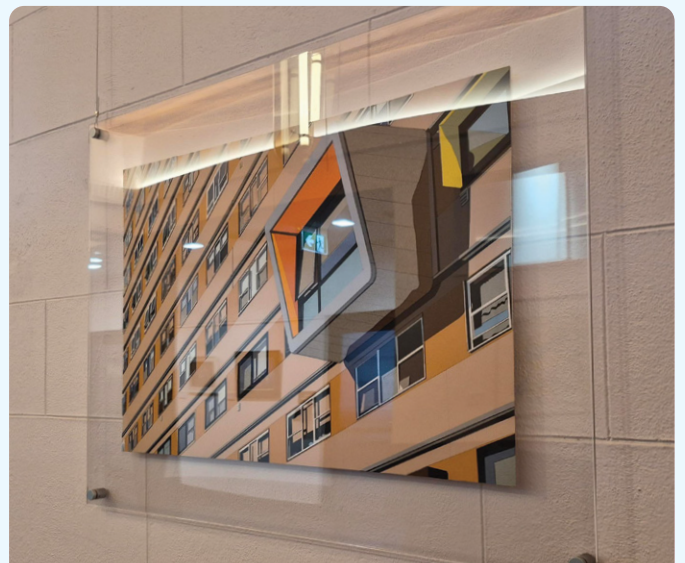


Monday — Friday,
8.30am-5pm,

24 June 2026 —
29 January 2027.

Encounters places civic objects next to recent works, encouraging an exchange between colours, form or ideas in the City's Collection. The exhibition is curated around discovering surprising relationships and encounters, rather than a central theme.

You'll see more than 50 curated pieces, including paintings, watercolours, textiles, ceramics, glass and memorabilia that celebrate local history, connections and significant events.



Join a free monthly curator tour on the first Wednesday of the month, or explore the evolving story of our City at your own pace.



Strengthening our response to homelessness through Maribyrnong Zero

Council has officially launched Maribyrnong Zero, becoming the first council in Melbourne's west to join the nationally recognised Advance to Zero initiative.

If you or someone you know is experiencing homelessness or sleeping rough, Maribyrnong Zero aims to make it easier to connect with coordinated local support.

Homelessness is a complex social and health issue. Through Maribyrnong Zero, people can be connected with support earlier while Council and local organisations coordinate local responses and advocate for the housing and services our community needs.

By working together and using shared data, Maribyrnong Zero aims to reduce rough sleeping and help people get support as early as possible.

Founding partners include Launch Housing, CoHealth, Bolton Clarke, The Salvation Army Melbourne, Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, Melbourne City Mission and South East Community Links. The initiative builds on Council's existing work with local homelessness, health and community service

providers to support people experiencing homelessness and improve access to housing and support services.



Find out more about Maribyrnong Zero at [**maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/homelessness**](https://www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/homelessness)

Infrastructure update

Building our dream Footscray together

You'll see more improvements across Footscray as we work to make the City centre cleaner, safer and easier to enjoy.

Over the past few months, we've stepped up the basics, removing graffiti, increasing cleaning, improving lighting, and repairing roads and footpaths.

Some bigger projects across Footscray include improvements to Nicholson Street, Barkly Street, Byron Plaza, Bunbury Street and more, with funding from Council and the State Government. We're also getting ready to repair the lifts in the Little Saigon Plaza Car Park later this year.

We're making it easier to keep our City clean with new, larger bins in Footscray and Yarraville.

We've also streamlined our reporting — getting your Snap Send Solve requests through to our teams faster.

Great events, like the World Cup Watch Party at Maddern Square, have helped bring the City to life and show people what we love about Footscray.

The new Footscray Welcome Crew will also provide a friendly presence in Footscray. They will help locals, businesses, visitors and vulnerable people navigate the City.

Together, these changes will help more people enjoy Footscray.



Footscray Park Ponds

The Footscray Park Ponds will soon reopen after significant repairs to the heritage Thomson Water Gardens over the last few months.

The leaks have been repaired, and safety benches have been added to the inside of the ponds to make them safer for our community.

There's also a new aeration system and repairs to the harbours, plus plantings to bring the gardens back to life.



Summerhill Road recovery

Significant work has begun on Summerhill Road between Ballarat Road and Essex Street in West Footscray.

The project will make Summerhill Road safer for everyone who walks, rides or drives through the area.

The works will run until January 2027 and include resurfacing, road reconstruction, four raised pedestrian crossings and new no-stopping zones.

There are delays, detours, and changes to parking throughout the works.

Plan ahead where you can and be kind to your neighbours while these essential upgrades are completed.



Read more at:
[maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/Summerhill](https://www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/Summerhill)

RecWest and Shorten Reserve

You'll see work progressing on the new RecWest Footscray, with more than 200 piles installed, a new slab poured, and other foundation works underway.

Shorten Reserve is also halfway through the compaction process and work on the Pavilion upgrade is set to begin later this year.

When complete, you'll have access to two indoor courts, a much-improved field for local clubs and a new plaza that connects the reserves and creates space for community events.

These works are funded by a \$42 million partnership between Council and the State Government.

Read more at:  [maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/shorten](https://www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/shorten)



Mr Baxter

Hot new coffee and bagel spot



Mr Baxter is the passion project of husband-and-wife team Helen Luu and Steve Ew.

Inspired by the role food played in bringing family and friends together, they created a neighbourhood café centred on good food, great coffee and genuine hospitality.

The menu combines familiar favourites with bold flavours,

including the Sunrise Bacon Bagel with miso honey bacon, the Signature Pastrami Bagel with wasabi slaw and yuzu kosho mayo, and the Crispy Fried Sandwich with panko fried chicken on toasted shokupan bread.

From the moment you walk in, Mr Baxter offers a welcoming, relaxed space where good food and good company come together.

Socials:

@mrbaxtermelbourne

Location:

Unit 1/1 Ormond Road, West Footscray

Contact your Councillor



Braybrook Ward

Cr Cuc Lam OAM

E: cr.lam@maribyrnong.vic.gov.au

Ph: 0429 383 099



Bluestone Ward

Cr Pradeep Tiwari

E: cr.tiwari@maribyrnong.vic.gov.au

Ph: 0423 887 493

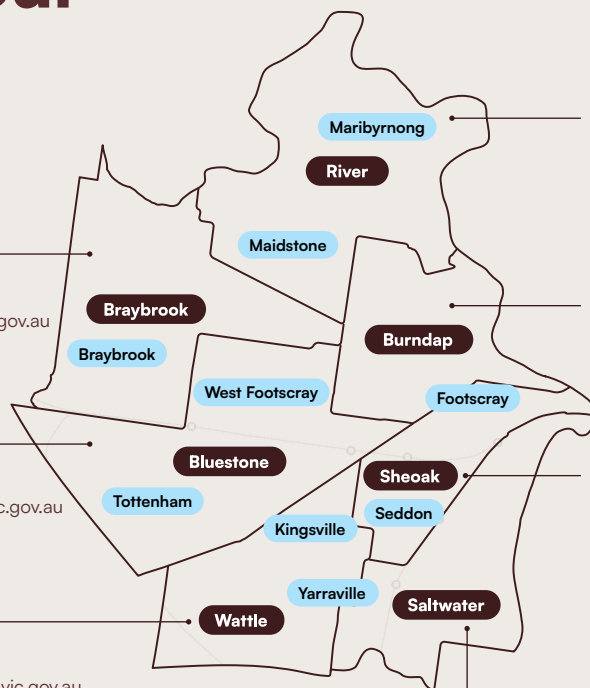


Wattle Ward

Cr Elena Pereyra

E: cr.pereyra@maribyrnong.vic.gov.au

Ph: 0423 836 555



River Ward

Cr Susan Yengi

E: cr.yengi@maribyrnong.vic.gov.au

Ph: 0423 769 995



Burdap Ward

Cr Mohamed Semra

Mayor

E: cr.semra@maribyrnong.vic.gov.au

Ph: 0423 778 507



Sheoak Ward

Cr Bernadette Thomas

E: cr.thomas@maribyrnong.vic.gov.au

Ph: 0407 599 699



Saltwater Ward

Cr Samantha Meredith

Deputy Mayor

E: cr.meredith@maribyrnong.vic.gov.au

Ph: 0423 761 560



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Postal Address: PO Box 58, West Footscray, Victoria 3012

Phone: 9688 0200

Email: email@maribyrnong.vic.gov.au

Website: maribyrnong.vic.gov.au



TIS: 131 450



NRS: 133 677 OR 1300 555 727
www.relayservice.com.au