



MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

HELD ON

MONDAY, 20 APRIL 2009

RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC ON THURSDAY 23 APRIL 2009

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**MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF THE
DAREBIN CITY COUNCIL HELD AT DAREBIN CIVIC CENTRE,
350 HIGH ST, PRESTON ON MONDAY 20 APRIL 2009**

THE MEETING OPENED AT 7.02 P.M

1. PRESENT

Councillors

Cr. Diana Asmar (Mayor)
Cr. Stanley Chiang
Cr. Vince Fontana
Cr. Gaetano Greco
Cr. Nick Katsis
Cr. Tim Laurence
Cr. Ben Morgan
Cr. Trent McCarthy
Cr. Steven Tsitas

Council Officers

Michael Ulbrick – Chief Executive Officer
Bruce Dobson – General Manager Corporate Services
Kevin Breen – General Manager City Development
Jan Black – General Manager Communities and Culture
Geoff Glynn – General Manager Community Assets and Leisure
Libby Hynes – General Manager Environment and Amenity
Jeff Saker – General Manager City Services
Ray McQuillen – Manager Customer and Civic Services
Michael Ballock – Manager Urban Development
Ron Downes – Council Business Coordinator

In opening the meeting, The Mayor, Cr. Asmar, welcomed former Darebin Councillor and Mayor, Rae Perry, to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

Nil.

3. DISCLOSURES OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Mayor, Cr Asmar, disclosed conflicts of interest in:

- Question 8 and subsequent questions (Public Question Time) in relation to Amendment C81 and Amendment C92 proposals – see Page 5.
- Report No. 7.5 (Submissions to Amendment C81 – Northcote Structure Plan) – see Page 25.
- Report No. 7.6 (Consideration of Submissions to Amendment C92 – Arthurton ROW (Australian Horizons Site) – see Page 38.

4. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETINGS

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr. V. Fontana
SECONDED: Cr. G. Greco

THAT the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Council held on 6 April 2009 be confirmed as a correct record of business transacted.

CARRIED

5. REPORTS BY MAYOR AND COUNCILLORS

MINUTE NO. 134

5.1 REPORT OF CR. BEN MORGAN

Cr. Morgan reported on his attendance at the following functions/activities:

- Discussions with local residents regarding the proposed development at 30-32 St Georges Road Preston.
- Discussions relating to the Tram Route 86 Corridor Project.
- Meetings with residents regarding various local issues.

5.2 REPORT OF GAETANO GRECO

Cr. Greco reported on his attendance at the following functions/activities:

- Information Session relating to the Tram Route 86 Corridor Project.
- Consultation Forum – Darebin Ethnic Communities Council.
- Forum at Aboriginal Advancement League.
- Various discussions with Council Officers in relation to financial matters, housing issues involving international students, proposed new Intercultural Centre.

5.3 REPORT OF TRENT MCCARTHY

Cr. McCarthy reported on his attendance at the following functions/activities:

- Discussions with residents and traders in relation to the Tram Route 86 Corridor Project.
- Discussions, including on site meetings, regarding a number of planning issues.
- Performed in the production of “Mo the Plumber” at Northcote Town Hall.
- Discussions with residents regarding Amendments C81 (Northcote Structure Plan) and Amendment C92 (Arthurton ROW – Australian Horizons Site).
- Meetings/discussions with residents and traders regarding various local issues.

5.4 REPORT OF CR. STANLEY CHIANG

Cr. Chiang reported on his attendance at the following function/activity:

- Official opening of Photography Competition – Reservoir ‘Love Living Local’ Project.

5.5 REPORT OF CR. STEVEN TSITAS

Cr. Tsitas reported on his attendance at the following functions/activities:

- Discussions with residents regarding various issues, including the Tram Route 86 Corridor Project.

5.6 REPORT OF CR. TIM LAURENCE

Cr. Laurence reported on his attendance at the following functions/activities:

- Consultation with residents and other stakeholders regarding the use of residential streets in Reservoir by B-Double trucks.
- Discussions with the Mayor of Liverpool, Sydney NSW regarding their new recycling plant.

5.7 REPORT OF CR. VINCE FONTANA

Cr. Fontana reported on his attendance at the following functions/activities:

- Preston Business Association meeting.
- Discussions relating to the Tram Route 86 Corridor Project.

5.8 REPORT OF CR. NICK KATSIS

Cr. Katsis reported on his attendance at the following functions/activities:

- Attendance at the production of “Mo the Plumber” at the Northcote Town Hall.
- Darebin Ethnic Communities Council meeting.
- Discussions with residents regarding various matters, including the proposed development at 30-32 St Georges Road Preston and the Tram Route 86 Corridor Project.

5.9 REPORT OF THE MAYOR, CR. DIANA ASMAR

The Mayor, Cr. Asmar, reported on her attendance at the following functions/activities:

- Official opening of Photography Competition – Reservoir ‘Love Living Local’ Project.
- Debutante Ball involving Santa Maria College in Northcote.
- Meeting of the Croxton branch of the Australian Labor Party.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

MINUTE NO. 135

The Mayor, Cr. Asmar, invited questions from members of the public gallery.

The following questions were submitted:

- Harry Nash of Northcote asked a question about overhanging branches and shrubs protruding from private property onto adjacent footpaths. The question was responded to by the General Manager Environment and Amenity, Libby Hynes.
- Pat Croker of Preston asked a question about building implications associated with the proposed development at 30-32 St Georges Road Preston. The question was responded to by the General Manager City Development, Kevin Breen.
- John De Bono of Preston asked a question about the statutory consultation process undertaken and traffic issues in relation to the proposed development at 30-32 St Georges Road Preston. The question was responded to by the Mayor, Cr. Asmar, and the General Manager City Development, Kevin Breen.
- Annabel Warmington of Preston asked a question about assessment of traffic impacts and statutory consultation undertaken in relation to the proposed development at 30-32 St Georges Road Preston. The question was responded to by the Mayor, Cr. Asmar, and the General Manager City Development, Kevin Breen, who indicated that a reply would be forwarded in writing.
- Darren Hill of Bundoora asked a question about a response to a question asked at the previous Council meeting regarding planning enforcement issues involving the Lancaster Gate Estate, and he also raised additional examples of alleged contraventions. The question was responded to by the Mayor, Cr. Asmar, who indicated that a written response would be forwarded in writing.
- Dennis Brumby of Preston asked a question about inspection by Councillors of the development site at 30-32 St Georges Road Preston, and the extent of statutory consultation undertaken. The question was responded to by the Mayor, Cr. Asmar, who indicated that a reply would be forwarded in writing.
- Pat Croker of Preston asked a question about the period of time involved processing the planning permit application in relation to the proposed development at 30-32 St Georges Road Preston. The question was responded to by the General Manager, City Development, Kevin Breen.
- A Northcote resident asked a question about the nature of rezoning proposals associated with Amendment C81 (Northcote Structure Plan) and Amendment C92 (Arthurton ROW – Australian Horizons Site).

The Mayor, Cr. Asmar, disclosed a conflict of interest in relation to Amendment C81 (Northcote Structure Plan) classifying the type of interest as an indirect interest by close association and describing the nature of the interest as that a relative owns and lives in property in Elm Street Northcote and another relative owns and lives in property in Hawthorn Road Northcote both affected by the project.

The Mayor, Cr. Asmar, disclosed a conflict of interest in relation to Amendment C92 (Arthurton ROW – Australian Horizons Site) classifying the type of interest as an indirect interest by close association and describing the nature of the interest as that a relative owns and lives in property in Elm Street Northcote affected by the project.

The Mayor, Cr. Asmar left the meeting prior to consideration of the matter 7.38pm.

Appointment of Acting Chairperson

In the absence of the Mayor, Cr. Asmar, the Chief Executive Officer, Michael Ulbrick, called for nominations for the position of Acting Chairperson of the meeting.

Cr. Fontana was nominated by Cr. Laurence and there being no further nominations was elected Acting Chairperson of the meeting..

Cr. Fontana assumed the Chair.

The question was responded to by the Manager Urban Development, Michael Ballock, and the Acting Chairperson Cr. Fontana.

- A Northcote resident asked a question about the specific impact on his property of rezoning proposals associated with Amendment C81 (Northcote Structure Plan). The question was responded to by the Manager Urban Development, Michael Ballock, who undertook to confer with the questioner directly.

The Mayor, Cr. Asmar, returned to the meeting at 7.45pm and resumed the Chair.

- Pino Cozzo of Preston asked a question about the impacts associated with a planning permit being granted for the proposed development at 30-32 St Georges Road Preston. The question was responded to by the Mayor, Cr. Asmar.
- Juliette Keam of Preston asked a question about when written replies could be expected to be received to questions raised at the previous Council meeting about the proposed development at 30-32 St Georges Road Preston. The question was responded to by the Mayor, Cr. Asmar.

After Public Question Time had concluded, three further questions were submitted in writing.

7. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

7.1 FINANCIAL REPORT – 9 MONTHS ENDED 31 MARCH 2009

MINUTE NO. 136

AUTHOR: Group Coordinator Accounting, Payroll and Purchasing –
Michael O’Riordan

MANAGER: General Manager Corporate Services – Bruce Dobson

BUDGET

IMPLICATIONS: Year to date operating surplus of \$24.3 million and capital works expenditure of \$16.9 million.

SUMMARY:

A comprehensive financial review has been undertaken for the nine months ended 31 March 2009 to assess the financial performance of Council year-to-date (YTD). The outcome of the review indicates that Council has achieved a YTD operating surplus of \$24.3 million and capital works expenditure of \$16.9 million. All material variations have been explained in the report.

CONSULTATION:

Managers and Coordinators.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr. V. Fontana
SECONDED: Cr. N. Katsis

THAT the contents of the “Financial Report for the nine months ended 31 March 2009” included as **Appendix A** to this report be received and the year-to-date actual and budget operating and capital results be noted.

CARRIED

REPORT

BACKGROUND

Under the Local Government Act 1989, at least every three months the Chief Executive Officer is required to present to the Council a statement comparing the budgeted with the actual revenues and expenses for the financial year to date. In complying with the Act, the attached report (see **Appendix A**) compares the actual and budgeted operating revenues and expenses and the actual and budgeted capital revenues and expenses for the nine months ended 31 March 2009. It also compares the actual and budgeted movements in the Balance Sheet and Cash Flow Statement for that period.

CORE ISSUES***Operating Performance***

The Operating Performance for the nine months ended 31 March 2009 is an operating surplus before capital revenue and other items of \$21.4 million, which is \$4.1 million ahead of budget. The main items contributing to this favorable variance are user fees, operating grants, capital grants, other income, employee benefits, bad and doubtful debts, depreciation and other expenses. These have been partially off set by an unfavorable variance in materials and services expenses. After capital and other items, the operating surplus is \$24.3 million, which is \$4.8 million ahead of budget.

Capital Performance

The Capital Performance for the nine months ended 31 March 2009 shows that a total of \$16.9 million has been expended on the capital works program, which is \$3.9 million behind the budget. The variance is due mainly to timing differences on the completion of roads projects, open space projects and plant and equipment.

Financial Position

The Financial Position as at 31 March 2009 shows a cash balance of \$26.8 million which is \$11.7 million ahead of budget. The variance is due mainly to timing differences in the receipt of rates and user fees, payments to suppliers and employee, government receipts and payments for property, plant & equipment. The net current asset position is \$29.5 million which is \$9.6 million more than budget. The variance is due mainly to the higher cash position compared with budget offset by higher trade and other payables. The net asset position is \$809.9 million, which is \$5.2 million ahead of budget.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS***Environmental Sustainability***

Nil.

Social Inclusion and Diversity

Nil.

Other

Nil.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Financial Report for the nine months ended 31 March 2009 shows that Council's YTD operating result is a surplus of \$24.3 million and \$16.9 million has been expended on capital works.

FUTURE ACTIONS

A further financial report will be presented to Council for the 10 months ending 30 April 2009.

7.2 PENSIONER RATE REBATE IMPLEMENTATION**MINUTE NO. 137****AUTHOR:** General Manager Corporate Services - Bruce Dobson**MANAGER:** Chief Executive Officer - Michael Ulbrick**BUDGET****IMPLICATIONS:** Cost of approximately \$291,000 in the 2009/2010 rating year based on application of a \$50 rebate to pensioners receiving the full Commonwealth age pension or a cost of \$598,000 if the rebate is provided to the same group of pensioners as are eligible for the State Government rates concession.**SUMMARY:**

At its meeting on 16 February 2009 Council requested that officers report on an implementation plan to facilitate the introduction of a \$50 pensioner rebate for residential ratepayers receiving the full Commonwealth Age pension.

The report was submitted to the Council meeting on 2 March 2009 and Council deferred the matter pending additional information relating to the pensioner categories eligible for the State Government rates concession and the impact of applying a \$50 rate rebate to this same group.

This report provides an update to Council and information on the implementation of a pensioner rate rebate in the 2009/2010 rating year.

CONSULTATION:

Executive Management Team
Group Coordinator Revenue and Valuations

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council note the process set out in this report for implementation of a pensioner rebate in the 2009/2010 rating year for residential ratepayers.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr. T. Laurence
SECONDED: Cr. G. Greco

THAT Council:

- (1) Note the process set out in the report for implementation of a pensioner rebate in the 2009/2010 rating year for residential ratepayers.
- (2) Introduce a \$50 rate rebate in the 2009/2010 final year for the same categories of pensioners who are eligible for the State Government municipal rate concession and refer the funding of the rebate to the 2009/2010 budget process.

CARRIED

A Division was called for on the Motion.

For

Cr. Laurence
Cr. Fontana
Cr. Katsis
The Mayor, Cr. Asmar
Cr. McCarthy
Cr. Greco

Against

Cr. Tsitas
Cr. Morgan
Cr. Chiang

The Mayor, Cr. Asmar, declared the Motion to be carried.

REPORT**BACKGROUND**

At its meeting on 16 February 2009 Council requested that officers report back in two weeks with an implementation plan to facilitate the introduction of a \$50 pensioner rebate for residential ratepayers receiving the full Commonwealth Age pension.

At the subsequent Council meeting on 2 March 2009 Council determined that consideration of this matter be deferred until April 2009 and requested that the report be updated to include additional information relating to the pensioner categories eligible for the State Government rates concession and the impact of applying a \$50 rate rebate to this same group.

CORE ISSUES

Pensioner categories and potential Council cost

Council currently facilitates the provision of a State Government funded municipal rates concession to eligible pensioners. In the 2008/2009 rating year the municipal rates concession provides a 50% discount off Council rates up to a maximum of \$178.60 to eligible persons for their principal place of residence. The State Government rates concession is shown separately on rate notices as a deduction from the general rate payable.

Just under 12,000 properties with pensioners across a range of different pension categories are eligible for the State Government municipal rates concession. The number of eligible properties for Darebin as at March 2009 is included below:

Pension category	No. eligible
<i>Centrelink pensioner concession card</i>	
Full age	5,817
Part age	3,109
Full disability	1,034
Part disability	365
Full parenting payment single (PPS)	226
Part PPS	94
Full carers	150
Part carers	98
Other	155
<i>Department of Veterans Affairs cards</i>	
Full income support supplement (ISS)	307
Part ISS	27
Full service	192
Part service	103
Other	277
Total eligible	11,954

The most common categories are age pensioners and disability pensioners. Other eligible categories include pensioners relating to parenting payment, carers, and Department of Veterans' Affairs service.

Based on the above information obtained from Centrelink, there are 5,817 properties with pensioners in Darebin currently receiving the full Commonwealth age pension. A Council rebate of \$50 to this category of pensioners would cost Council approximately \$291,000 in the 2009/2010 rating year.

If the Council pension rebate was applied to the same group as is eligible for the State Government rates concession (ie. 11,954 properties), the total cost to Council would be approximately \$598,000 in the 2009/2010 rating year.

The cost to Council of a \$100 rebate would be double the above amounts, that is, \$582,000 if the rebate was provided to pensioners currently receiving the full Commonwealth age pension and \$1,196,000 if the rebate was applied to all pensioners in the above table

Implementation process

In order to implement a pensioner rebate in the 2009/2010 rating year, the following steps are required.

Budget process

The cost of the rebate will need to be included in the proposed 2009/2010 budget which is required to be approved by Council and then made available on exhibition to the public. In accordance with section 223 of the *Local Government Act 1989*, Council will publish a public notice stating that members of the public are able to make submissions to Council in relation to the contents of the proposed 2009/2010 budget, including the pensioner rebate, with the submissions period closing not less than 28 days from the date of the public notice.

Submissions will be received and members of the public can request to speak in support of their submission at a meeting of Council's Hearing of Submissions Committee. After consideration of submissions, Council will make any changes it considers necessary to the proposed budget and will then adopt the final budget and declare rates and charges for the 2009/2010 rating year. The pensioner rate rebate would be specifically included in the Council resolution.

Provision of rebate on rate notice

Once the 2009/2010 budget has been adopted, the rebate will be applied to ratepayers receiving the full age pension. This will be applied to the rate notice for the pensioners' principal place of residence.

Council rate notices for the 2009/2010 year will show the full amount of rates applicable to a property and will show separately deductions for the State Government municipal rates concession and the Council pensioner rate rebate. Pensioners receiving the full Commonwealth age pension will then pay their rate instalments based on the rates amount after deducting both the State Government concession and Council rebate. The rate notice will show the applicable quarterly instalment amounts payable.

Identification of eligible pensioners

Centrelink provides data to Council to identify the properties with pensioners who are eligible for the State Government rates concession. Centrelink has also indicated it is able to provide the relevant data to Council to indicate if a pensioner is receiving the full age pension.

In advance of the financial year-end, the information in Council's property rating system is updated based on the latest records from Centrelink. Currently, the State Government rates concession is applied to pensioners based on their eligibility at the start of the rating year. It is proposed that the Council rate rebate would similarly be applied to pensioners' rate notices at the commencement of the rating year, as confirmed by Centrelink.

For residents who become pensioners during the rating year, Council currently has a process whereby the relevant pensioner concession card is presented to a Council Customer Service centre and the State Government rates concession is then reflected on the pensioner's rate notice. This process can similarly be applied to the Council rate rebate.

System changes

Some minor software system changes may be required in order to record the additional pensioner rebate category and display this information on the 2009/2010 rate notices. It is expected these changes can be undertaken within existing budgets.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS**Environmental sustainability**

Nil.

Social inclusion and diversity

The introduction of a rate rebate for pensioners would provide rate relief to eligible pensioners, many of whom are elderly and among the more vulnerable of Darebin's residents.

Other

Nil.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Cost of approximately \$291,000 in the 2009/2010 rating year based on application of a \$50 rebate to pensioners receiving the full Commonwealth age pension or a cost of \$598,000 if the rebate is provided to the same group of pensioners as are eligible for the State Government rates concession.

FUTURE ACTIONS

Inclusion of the Council pensioner rebate in the 2009/2010 Council budget.
Preparation of 2009/2010 rate notices after applying the rebate to full age pensioners.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Council meeting minutes – 16 February 2009
Council meeting minutes – 2 March 2009

7.3 PRODUCTIVE USE OF VACANT SHOPFRONTS AND OTHER COMMERCIAL SPACES**MINUTE NO. 138****AUTHOR:** Manager Economic Development - Sue La Greca**MANAGER:** General Manager City Development - Kevin Breen**BUDGET****IMPLICATIONS:** Dependant on further action, costs to establish a Darebin project estimated at \$20,000 in the first year and \$15,000 per annum thereafter, currently unbudgeted.**SUMMARY:**

At its meeting on 16 February 2009, Council requested *“that Council officers provide a report regarding a new initiative to encourage productive use of vacant shopfronts and other commercial spaces, through negotiated arrangements with real estate agents and commercial property managers. Productive use might include short term occupancy on a rent free basis by local artists and art groups, as has recently been initiated by the City of Newcastle, through the work of the Renew Newcastle organisation, and has previously occurred in other municipalities”*.

This report provides information on the Renew Newcastle project and the Creative Spaces project and outlines the factors that need to be considered if a similar project were to be established in Darebin. It recommends that further information be brought back to Council before any decision on a Darebin project is made.

CONSULTATION:**Internal:**

- Arts and Culture Branch
- Urban Development Branch
- Building Branch
- Transport Management Branch

External:

- Renew Newcastle (a not-for-profit organisation operating the Newcastle Arts project)
- Creative Spaces (a joint initiative of the City of Melbourne and Arts Victoria with support from RMIT and The Committee for Melbourne)
- Fairfield Trader Association
- Northcote Business Association

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr. T. McCarthy
SECONDED: Cr. V. Fontana

THAT Council:

- (1) Note this report on possible models for the productive use of vacant shopfronts and other commercial spaces.
- (2) Liaise with *Creative Spaces* to see how Darebin artists and property owners could make more use of this existing service.
- (3) Gauge the level of interest from Darebin real estate agents in a possible local project to use vacant properties as art exhibition spaces.
- (4) Receive a further report after liaising with *Creative Spaces* and local real estate agents.

CARRIED

REPORT**BACKGROUND**

At its meeting on 16 February 2009, Council requested “*that Council officers provide a report regarding a new initiative to encourage productive use of vacant shopfronts and other commercial spaces, through negotiated arrangements with real estate agents and commercial property managers. Productive use might include short term occupancy on a rent free basis by local artists and art groups, as has recently been initiated by the City of Newcastle, through the work of the Renew Newcastle organisation, and has previously occurred in other municipalities*”.

Other Models

1. **Renew Newcastle (RN)** was established late last year. It is a not-for-profit organisation managed by a board of volunteers with varying skills and experience including the arts, architecture, urban planning, engineering, legal and small business. The primary objective of Renew Newcastle is to rejuvenate a decaying part of town. With 150 vacant or disused buildings, the town was in need of major rejuvenation.
 - RN is completely independent of the municipal council.
 - It deals directly with property owners and artists/prospective licensees. It does not use real estate agents as they require a commission and do not view this type of operation as profitable.
 - RN enters into a licence agreement with property owners and then a sub licence agreement with artists/occupants. Any conditions can be written into the licence agreement such as minimum hours of operation, active street frontage requirement, maintenance responsibilities etc.
 - RN covers public liability insurance.
 - Artists pay their own outgoings plus a \$20 per week licence fee to RN.
 - To date, 16 projects are occupying 8 buildings with a further 10 projects planned.

- Artists gain occupancy on a 30 day rolling licence agreement and are therefore provided with 30 days notice if the property owner leases or sells the building.
 - Benefits to property owners are security of property and a more attractive looking building to sell or lease on a longer term basis.
 - Benefits to artists are cheap exhibition or working space.
 - Benefits to the community are that the town centre is being rejuvenated with life, colour and activity. There has been a noticeable increase in visitation to the town centre, assisting the economic viability of local businesses.
2. **Creative Spaces (CS)** is a website designed to help artists find suitable and affordable space to develop, exhibit or perform their work. The major partners are the City of Melbourne and Arts Victoria with support from RMIT and The Committee for Melbourne. It is a digital resource that provides information on available spaces across Victoria. Spaces can be for hire or lease or to share or occupy for a short period of time. Property owners or agents can register a property for occupancy, hire or lease and artists can register their need for space. CS then acts as a broker between property owners and artists. The hiring, licensing or leasing arrangements are negotiated between the parties and differ according to individual needs. Anyone can use CS and spaces are grouped by municipality, with Darebin having the Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre, Northcote Town Hall and the Doll's House Miniature Gallery in West Preston, all listed.

The main objective of the Renew Newcastle project is urban renewal, with support of artists as a secondary but important goal, whereas the primary objective of Creative Spaces is to support artists, with urban renewal as a positive by-product in some cases.

CORE ISSUES

In addressing the possibility of a similar project in Darebin, a number of issues need to be considered:

- If artists were to sell their works from hired, licensed or leased premises under these arrangements, then the organising body would be subject to the complex conditions of the Retail Tenancies Act. To avoid this legal complexity, spaces should be for exhibition only, prohibiting any sales.
- Low cost exhibition spaces are already available in Darebin at Northcote Library, Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre, Bundoora Homestead and Synergy Gallery in Northcote.
- If the focus is on the use of Activity Centres, then the focus should also be on uses that provide active and attractive street frontages, eg. exhibition space rather than rehearsal or production spaces, eg. private studios.
- A Darebin project could be either run internally by Council or by a not-for-profit organisation. Initial resources required are estimated at one person at approximately 10 hours per week with office space, phone, computer and internet access. This would require \$20,000 in the first year and \$15,000 per annum in subsequent years.
- Artists would need to pay a small licence fee and outgoings (similar to the Newcastle model).
- The organising body would need to cover public liability insurance.
- The organising body would act as the broker between property owners and artists.
- This proposal works best in an area similar to the City of Newcastle, where buildings have been vacant over a long period of time and are likely to be vacant for a number of years.
- Discussions with the Fairfield Trader Association indicate that they have no interest in such a project as they have a very low vacancy rate.
- Discussions with the President of the Northcote Business Association (NBA) indicate that this would be a good fit with their existing promotional and business activities and while they

usually have a low vacancy rate, they do from time to time have significant vacancies. There are currently about eight vacant buildings in Northcote that could be available for such use, subject to negotiations with property owners. However, it is NBA's charter to undertake economic development and promotional activities for Northcote, not for other parts of Darebin.

- An alternative to Darebin's own project would be for either a Council officer or an employee or representative from a not-for-profit organisation to work collaboratively with Creative Spaces, promoting the use of this existing resource amongst Darebin artists and property owners. This would be a lower cost option but has not been separately costed at this stage.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Environmental Sustainability

Nil.

Social Inclusion and Diversity

Artists are often characterised as subsisting on meagre incomes as they pursue their artistic endeavours. The proposal to allow the use of unused shopfronts would facilitate opportunities for a disadvantaged section of the Darebin community.

Other

Nil.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

For Darebin to establish its own project, funding would be required to either employ a Council officer or else to provide seed funding to a not-for-profit organisation. Estimated costs are:

Year one:	\$20,000
Subsequent years	\$15,000 per annum.

FUTURE ACTIONS

1. Liaise with Creative Spaces to see how Darebin artists and property owners could make more use of this existing facility.
2. Gauge the level of interest from Darebin real estate agents.
3. Report back to Council on the outcomes from actions 1. and 2. above.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Council briefing paper 14 April 2009

7.4 DAREBIN HERITAGE STUDY UPDATE

MINUTE NO. 139

AUTHOR: Senior Strategic Planner - Rachel Haynes**MANAGER:** General Manager City Development - Kevin Breen**BUDGET****IMPLICATIONS:** Within budget.**SUMMARY:**

In February 2007 Council engaged Context Consultants Pty Ltd (Context) to undertake a comprehensive heritage study for the City of Darebin. The Darebin Heritage Study aims to identify, document and protect sites of cultural, natural and Aboriginal heritage across Darebin. The study reviews the existing sites and controls and identifies new sites/areas of significance for protection.

Integrating indigenous and non-indigenous as well as natural and cultural heritage, it is based on a six-stage approach, which has been periodically refined as needed to respond to changing issues and fieldwork demands.

It is anticipated that work on the Planning Scheme Amendment to protect the places and precincts identified as being of local or State significance in the *Stage 2 Report* will be exhibited in the second half of this year. As part of that process Council will receive a further comprehensive report on the Study and its findings.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council note current progress on the Darebin Heritage Study.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION**MOVED:** Cr. V. Fontana**SECONDED:** Cr. T. McCarthy**THAT:**

- (1) Council note current progress on the Darebin Heritage Study.
- (2) Officers prepare a report for the next Council meeting on the implications and requirements of bringing forward the Heritage Overlay to Woolton Avenue Thornbury.

CARRIED

REPORT**BACKGROUND**

On 6 April 2009 Council passed the following resolution:

“That Council officers submit a report to the next meeting on the status of the Heritage Citation Report (2008) and bring forward actions in relation to additional Heritage Overlays in Woolton Avenue Thornbury and adjacent Streets, including:

- (1) Liaising with Heritage Victoria and other relevant organisations to ensure timely action.*
- (2) Ensuring that recommended Heritage Overlays for properties including and adjacent to 55 Woolton Avenue Thornbury are considered before any development occurs at these properties.”*

This report is in response to that resolution.

Darebin Heritage Study 2007

In February 2007 Council engaged Context Consultants Pty Ltd (Context) to undertake a six stage comprehensive heritage study for the City of Darebin. The Darebin Heritage Study aims to identify, document and protect sites of cultural, natural and Aboriginal heritage across Darebin. The study will also review the existing sites and controls in the *Darebin Heritage Study 2000* and identify new sites/areas of significance for protection.

Integrating indigenous and non-indigenous as well as natural and cultural heritage, the six Stages are:

- 1a Thematic Environmental History and identification of sites of potential heritage significance
- 1b Historical archaeological report
- 2 Cultural heritage in the northern areas of the municipality that have not been studied and areas identified for further work
- 3 Review of existing heritage controls and newly identified places of heritage significance
- 4 Planning Scheme Amendment on municipal wide basis
- 5 Natural heritage
- 6 Pre-contact Koori Heritage.

It should be noted that the six stage methodology has been periodically refined resulting in minor changes to timing. For example, Stage 6 Pre-contact Koori Heritage has been brought forward to become part of Stage 2, while work on Stage 5 Natural Heritage has already commenced, so that sites can be assessed for their ecological value across all seasonal variations.

Thematic Environmental History

In line with conventional heritage practice, Stage 1 of the study involved preparation of a Thematic Environmental History (TEH) for the municipality. The Australian Heritage Commission's (AHC) Historic Themes were used to structure a comprehensive understanding of the historical development of the municipality and to identify previously unrecognised places and areas of heritage value to Darebin.

On 3 February 2008, Council wrote to all owners of potential places of significance advising them that their property(ies) had been identified in Stage 1 and would be researched by Context in more detail as part of Stage 2 of the Study.

The letter also advised that if heritage significance was confirmed it may result in the application of a Heritage Overlay planning control so that "*a planning permit is required to carry out work, demolish a building or subdivide the land.*" Additionally it stated that if a "property is recommended for a Heritage Overlay it will go through the planning scheme amendment process."

The Thematic Environmental History was completed in October 2007 and work then commenced on Stage 2.

Current Progress

Stage 1, including a Thematic Environmental History is finished and Stage 2, which identifies new individual places and precincts of heritage significance, is almost complete.

Context Consultants have now submitted a draft *Pre-Contact Aboriginal Heritage Archaeological Report* to officers for review. Upon acceptance of this work, Stage 2 (now including Stage 6) will be considered complete.

Part of the remaining work has already commenced. It is anticipated that work on the Planning Scheme Amendment to protect the places and precincts identified as being of local or state significance in the *Stage 2 Report* will be exhibited in the second half this year. As part of that process, Council will receive a further comprehensive report on the Study and its findings.

New places of Individual and Collective Significance

On 5 August 2008, Council received the "*City of Darebin Heritage Study Volume 3 – key findings and recommendations Draft Stage 2 Report August 2008*" (the *Stage 2 Report*) from Context.

Consequently, a process of checking building demolition 'report and consents' against the places identified in the *Stage 2 Report* was initiated by council officers. This process will be discussed in the 'Core Issues' section of this report.

CORE ISSUES

'Report and Consent' Protocols

Under section 29A (*Application for building permit for demolition*) of the *Building Act 1993* (**Appendix A**), the Responsible Authority under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* administering the planning scheme relating to that land, is granted 'report and consent' rights for any building permit application lodged for partial or total demolition of any existing building.

This means that as the Responsible Authority for administering the Darebin Planning Scheme, Darebin Council is formally notified of any proposed building permit for partial or total demolition of a building in the municipality: whether the issuing building surveyor is privately licensed or otherwise.

Council is then given fifteen (15) working days within which to refuse its consent to an application if a planning permit is required for the demolition and has not been obtained.

In addition to this, where a property is not currently protected by the Planning Scheme, section 29B of the Building Act can allow for a building permit application to be suspended pending amendment of the planning scheme.

This is the process that was used recently in relation to the Northcote Bowl, considered at the Council meeting on 22 December 2008, where a 'report and consent' was received for a building permit to demolish the complex. Although the Northcote Bowl was not identified in the Darebin Planning Scheme, the *Stage 2 Report* had identified the site as being of individual local significance and officers were informed that another heritage consultant had also identified the site as being of potential State significance.

Council's practice has been to check all 'report and consent' notifications against the findings of the *Stage 2 Report*. Where there is a match, these are referred to Context Consultants for further comment.

Planning Applications

The objectives of planning in Victoria as set out in the Planning and Environment Act include:

"to conserve and enhance those buildings, areas or other places which are of scientific, aesthetic, architectural or historical interest, or otherwise of special cultural value"

Planners are cognisant of this and even where a property is not affected by the Heritage Overlay, they remain alert to any potential and previously unknown heritage value of a place. Sites that have been identified in the *Stage 2 Report* are clearly in this category. However, from time to time additional heritage properties are identified through a planning application process.

Council's planners have been cross-checking any new or current planning applications against the findings of the *Stage 2 Report*. In the event that there is a match, again, the matter is referred to Context Consultants for comment. As this is done on a case-by-case basis it does not automatically mean that interim controls will be appropriate: the advice of Context Consultants is critical to determining the best response.

Woolton Avenue Thornbury Example

The recent case of 55 Woolton Avenue Thornbury provides an example of the process for planning applications.

The *Stage 2 Report* identifies Nos 39, 41, 55, 57 and 58 Woolton Avenue as forming a precinct of local heritage significance.

The Stage 2 Report classifies identified heritage places as being, *Significant*, *Contributory* and *Non-contributory*. These classifications are based upon those contained within *The Heritage Overlay: Guidelines for Assessing Planning Permit Applications* (2007) prepared by the Heritage Council and are as follows:

- A *Significant* place is a single heritage place that has cultural heritage significance independent of its context. These places may also contribute to the significance of a precinct. Significant places will usually have a separate citation and statement of significance.
- *Contributory* places are those that contribute to the significance of a heritage precinct, but would not be significant on their own.
- *Non-contributory* places do not contribute to the significance of a heritage precinct. In some instances, a *Significant* place may be considered *Non-contributory* within a precinct. For example, an important Modernist house within a Victorian era precinct.

So, in other words it is generally inferred that *Significant* places are more significant than *Contributory* and *Non-contributory* places and retention of *Significant* places is generally more important than retention of the latter two types.

Planning Permit Application (D723/2007) to construct a two (2) storey apartment building containing 12 apartments at 55 Woolton Avenue Thornbury was lodged with Council in October 2007. At the request of the permit applicant, the application was held in abeyance until late 2008.

The application was advertised in November 2008 by mail to all adjoining owners and occupiers and by the placement of a sign on the site. Six (6) objections were received to the application. A consultation meeting of objectors, the permit applicant and a Council Officer was held in February 2009. The application is due to be presented to an upcoming Council Planning Committee meeting where Council will decide on the permit application.

As 55 Woolton Avenue Thornbury is identified as being within a precinct identified in the *Stage 2 Report* and development in accordance with the planning permit application would necessitate demolition of the existing dwelling, the application was referred to Context Consultants for comment on 17th February 2009.

Context Consultants advised that, although the dwelling is of *Contributory* significance (rather than being *Non-Contributory*), its loss would have a greater impact than would be the case in a larger precinct. This advice also recognised that it may be difficult for Council to protect due to timing (of the lodgement of the planning application and of the release of the *Stage 2 Report*) and lack of support from the applicant for the dwelling's retention.

At present, the property at 55 Woolton Avenue Thornbury is still in existence and no application for demolition has been received. Consequently the heritage merits of the building and the need to retain it are still being evaluated and the response is yet to be determined. If that were the case, then a building permit would be required and section 29 of the Building Act invoked. As outlined above, Council would then have 15 working days to formally assess the heritage value of the building and decide whether heritage controls should be applied.

Next Steps

Although far from ideal, the current situation is an inevitable result arising from the completion of any new Heritage Study during the time until a Planning Scheme Amendment for permanent controls is exhibited and included in the Darebin Planning Scheme.

It is possible for Councils to seek interim controls during the exhibition of a major heritage Planning Scheme Amendment. However, the Department of Planning and Community Development do not generally support the use of interim controls except when a place is directly threatened (eg. by a demolition application) or an Amendment is being/has been exhibited for permanent controls and thus subject to due process, consultation and review.

Ultimately, the recommendations of the *Stage 2 Report* will be translated to a Heritage Overlay and incorporated as part of the Darebin Planning Scheme via a Planning Scheme Amendment. At such a time the cross-checking of 'report and consents' as well as new planning applications against the recommendations of the *Stage 2 Report* will no longer be necessary as controls in the form of the Heritage Overlay, will be in place.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Environmental Sustainability

This matter does not have any current implications for environmental sustainability; however this matter will be discussed further during the preparation of the Planning Scheme Amendment to implement the *Stage 2 Report* findings and associated Council reports.

Social Inclusion and Diversity

This matter does not have any current implications for social inclusion and diversity; however tangible cultural heritage is an important part of expression of this and can assist to provide a sense of place to a community or communities. This matter will be discussed further during the preparation of the Planning Scheme Amendment to implement the *Stage 2 Report* findings and associated Council reports.

Other

This report is consistent with the following commitments contained in the current *Council Plan*:

A sustainable city:

35. *We will maintain high standards of urban amenity in our community through the design and management of public spaces and streetscapes*
37. *We will address demand for changes to Darebin's neighbourhoods through place management projects and strategic planning policies underpinned by sound research and community consultation*
38. *We will protect Darebin's urban amenity in sensitive neighbourhoods through heritage controls, urban character studies and planning and building controls*

A vibrant city:

44. *We will celebrate Darebin's artistic and cultural vitality through a program of public arts, festivals and events and with the provision of a range of performance, gallery and workshop spaces*
46. *We will celebrate the contribution that Darebin's diversity brings to our neighbourhoods, and seek to nurture new and emerging communities as part of our city's diverse mix*
50. *We will acknowledge the role of local businesses in Darebin's communities and work with them to foster economic prosperity, local employment and active retail, commercial and industrial precincts*

It is also consistent with the strategies contained in *Element 4: Heritage, Culture and Arts* of the *Darebin Municipal Strategic Statement* including:

- *Identify and assess Darebin's cultural and natural heritage values and places of significance.*
- *Encourage and initiate further studies and research into additional aspects of Darebin's history and heritage.*
- *Protect cultural sites that have an identified significance and consult with the traditional landowners (Wurundjeri-willem) and peak indigenous bodies.*
- *Assess development proposals within heritage areas in terms of their sympathy with the character of the area and their likely impact upon integrity and composition of the area.*
- *Ensure that the City's cultural heritage is protected through the planning system, and that nearby development does not compromise the significance of places and areas.*
- *Ensure that redevelopment of heritage buildings and areas is visually compatible with existing forms, and generates a strong and positive contribution to the heritage area through innovative design.*
- *Promote new development that makes a positive contribution to the heritage place or area.*

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Within budget.

FUTURE ACTIONS

Council is required to seek authorisation from the Minister for Planning to prepare a major Planning Scheme Amendment to implement the recommendations of the *Stage 2 Report*.

It is anticipated a detailed report on the *Stage 2 Report* findings and the proposed Planning Scheme Amendment will be reported to Council later this year.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- *"City of Darebin Heritage Study Volume 3 – key findings and recommendations Draft Stage 2 Report* Context Pty Ltd, August 2008
- *City of Darebin Heritage Study Stage 2 Citations* – Context Pty Ltd, August 2008
- *The Heritage Overlay: Guidelines for Assessing Planning Permit Applications* (2007) prepared by the Heritage Council
- **Appendix A** - Building Act 1993 – section 29A (Application for a building permit for demolition) and section 29B (Suspension of demolition permit pending amendment of planning scheme)

The Mayor, Cr. Asmar, disclosed a conflict of interest in the following item classifying the type of interest as an indirect interest by close association and describing the nature of the interest as that she has a relative who owns and lives in property in Elm Street Northcote and another relative who owns and lives in property in Hawthorn Road Northcote both affected by the project. She left the meeting prior to consideration of the matter – 8.24pm.

Appointment of Acting Chairperson

The Chief Executive Officer, Michael Ulbrick, called for nominations for the position of Acting Chairperson of the meeting.

Cr. Fontana was nominated by Cr. Greco and there being no further nominations was declared Acting Chairperson of the meeting.

Cr. Fontana assumed the Chair.

**7.5 SUBMISSIONS TO AMENDMENT C81 – NORTHCOTE
STRUCTURE PLAN**

MINUTE NO. 140

AUTHOR: Senior Strategic Planer - Rachel Haynes

MANAGER: General Manager City Development - Kevin Breen

BUDGET

IMPLICATIONS: Within Budget

SUMMARY:

The purpose of this report is to enable Council to consider the submissions received in relation to Amendment C81 to the Darebin Planning Scheme. A total of 27 submissions were received in response to the exhibition of Amendment C81 which was undertaken between 5 March 2009 and 6 April 2009.

Amendment C81 seeks to implement the *Northcote Activity Centre Structure Plan* (the Structure Plan) which was adopted by Council at its meeting on 2 April 2007. The Structure Plan provides a framework articulating how the Northcote Activity Centre will develop by defining the key areas where growth and development can be encouraged, and the actions that are needed to realise that goal. Amendment C81 proposes to incorporate the strategic directions of the Structure Plan, including the adopted *Neighbourhood Character Guidelines*, into the Darebin Planning scheme.

Amendment C81 affects land identified in the Structure Plan, which is generally bounded by Darebin Road to the north, Charles Street to the south, St. David Street and Andrews Street to the east, and the Epping railway line to the west. The area includes the retail and business areas of High Street, Arthurton Road and Separation Street, Northcote, and the inter-nodal gateway, known as the Croxton Precinct, as indicated in **Appendix A**.

This report recommends that all submissions received to Amendment C81 to the Darebin Planning scheme be referred to an independent Panel appointed by the Minister for Planning pursuant to section 23 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

CONSULTATION:

Community consultation in relation to redevelopment of the subject land has taken two forms:

- Consultation on the preparation of the Northcote Activity Centre Structure Plan April 2007; and
- Amendment C81 exhibition.

Northcote Structure Plan Consultation

Extensive consultation was undertaken both prior to and throughout the development of the *Northcote Activity Centre Structure Plan April 2007* including:

- Regular review by a Community Working Group (CWG)
- 17 June 2005 one day scoping workshop with Council officers, representatives of the Community Working Group and relevant government stakeholders.
- Comments and feedback on issues identified through discussions with the Community Working Group. This has included specific feedback from the Community Working Group on issues facing Northcote as compiled at a meeting on 30 June 2005.
- Onsite consultation exercises undertaken by Council officers and compiled in a consultation report contained within the background report. This included community “listening posts” undertaken at various times at High Street (Thursday evening 14 July 2005), Northcote Library (Friday lunchtime 15 July 2005) and Northcote Plaza (Saturday morning 16 July 2005).
- 21 July 2005 public meeting.
- A four and a half day ‘Charette’ from 25 August 2005 to 29 August 2005 with with landowners, government agencies, trader representatives, local residents and users of the centre undertaken.
- A follow up public presentation of draft design outcomes from the ‘Charette’ on 1 September 2005.
- Briefings to and meetings with Councillors.

Appendix B includes a full history of the earlier consultation undertaken on the *Northcote Structure Plan, April 2007*.

Amendment C81 Consultation

Amendment C81 was exhibited in accordance with the requirements of the *Planning and Environment Act, 1987* from 5 March 2009 to 6 April 2009. Notice of the Amendment was provided as follows:

- Notice in the Victoria Government Gazette on Thursday 5 March 2009;
- Notice via post to 1776 owners and occupiers of properties within the Northcote Activity Centre Structure Plan Area which included
 - Formal notice of the Amendment; and
 - A brochure which provided further information on the Amendment, how to make a submission and contact information; and
- Notice in the Northcote Leader local newspaper on 3 March 2009.

The Amendment was also available for inspection at the Preston Customer Service Centre, the Northcote library and on the websites of the Darebin City Council and the Department of Planning and Community Development.

Community drop-in information sessions, attended by Council officers, were held at the Northcote Town Hall on Thursdays 12, 19 and 26 March 2009 and on 2 April 2009, from 5:00pm - 7:00pm.

This level of notification exceeds the obligations of Council under the Act for the exhibition of Amendments.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr. S. Tsitas
SECONDED: Cr. S. Chiang

THAT Council:

- (1) Consider all the submissions received to Amendment C81.
- (2) Request the Minister for Planning to appoint an independent panel in accordance with section 23(1)(c) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* to consider submissions to Amendment C81 to the Darebin Planning Scheme and that the request specifies that the Panel appointed to consider submissions to Amendment C81 be also appointed to consider Amendment C92.
- 3) Receive a further report advising its proposed submission to the independent Panel closer to the date of the Panel hearing.

CARRIED

REPORT

BACKGROUND

Northcote Structure Plan

Council adopted the *Northcote Activity Centre Structure Plan* (the Structure Plan) at its meeting on 2 April 2007.

Informed by extensive community consultation, including a 'Charette' process, the Structure Plan provides a framework setting out how the Northcote Activity Centre will develop by defining the key areas where growth can be encouraged, and the actions that are needed to realise that goal.

Drawing on community values identified through consultation exercises, the Structure Plan sets a broad vision for Northcote:

"... to provide the foundation for the existing and continued vibrant community of Northcote through a regional focus for arts and cultural development of northern metropolitan Melbourne focused around sustainable transport modes and built form.

This is focused around development at the intersection of High Street with Separation Street / Arthurton Road as a village hub, providing good pedestrian links to key destinations, including the Town Hall, Northcote Plaza, Northcote library, community health centre, railway station and a range of uses along High Street."

A 'sustainable future' was the core principle identified through the Structure Plan process upon which the Northcote Activity Centre should be established.

The Structure Plan contains objectives, policies and strategies that inform structured around six themes of:

- Centre roles, boundaries and precincts
- Providing a range of affordable accommodation
- Transport and access
- Economic development
- Urban design and heritage
- Community identity.

The Structure Plan then makes detailed and specific policy recommendations for implementation on a precinct by basis for 10 sub-areas.

See **Appendix A** for a map of the Structure Plan area and its boundaries.

Neighbourhood Character Guidelines

On 18 February 2008, Council also adopted *Neighbourhood Character Guidelines* as an appendix to the Northcote Activity Centre Structure Plan. The *Guidelines* will inform the preferred character outcomes for the medium and low change residential precincts in the Activity Centre area. They also inform the strategic direction for the proposed *Northcote Activity Centre local planning policy* (Clause 22), which forms part of Amendment C81 to the Darebin Planning Scheme.

Appendix B is a detailed summary of the consultation undertaken and methodology used during the preparation of the Northcote Activity Centre Structure Plan.

Appendix C contains the minutes of the Council Meeting of 2 April 2007 relating to adoption of the Structure Plan.

Melbourne 2030

Melbourne 2030 is the State Government's strategy to manage growth and change across metropolitan Melbourne, and encourage increased housing growth within activity centres, where the facilities and services to support more people already exist.

Melbourne 2030 projects that Darebin will accommodate an additional 8,253 people and 8,644 dwellings over the next 25 years. Through work already completed on structure planning and housing, it has been identified that Darebin's activity centres, key transport corridors along High Street and other key sites, have the capacity to accommodate the projected growth in new households. Channelling this growth to activity centres within Darebin can assist with protection of established residential areas elsewhere in the municipality from contextually unsuitable development.

Melbourne 2030 identifies Northcote is as a Major Activity Centre.

Melbourne 2030 also requires that Council prepare a structure plan for each major and principal activity centre to:

- Set a strategic framework for the use and development of land in and around the centre; and
- Give clear direction about appropriate land use and the preferred location and scale of future development throughout the centre.

Melbourne @ 5 Million

In late 2008, the State Government released *Melbourne 2030: a planning update Melbourne @ 5 Million (M@5M)* in order to augment the policy initiatives and directions of *Melbourne 2030*. Although, M@5M is not yet incorporated into the Victoria Planning Provisions, Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) have directed that it should *be considered together* with *M2030*. (www.dse.vic.gov.au/DSE/nrenpl.nsf/LinkView)

In augmenting *Melbourne 2030*, M@5M:

- Aims to shift Melbourne from a single-centre metropolis (with one Central Business District) to a multi-centre city through the designation of six new ‘Central Activities Districts’ in Box Hill, Broadmeadows, Dandenong, Footscray, Frankston and Ringwood.
- Identifies Employment Corridors to support these Central Activities Districts, three of which will be targeted by the government: Avalon Airport to Werribee, Melton, Melbourne Airport and Donnybrook (Hume-Mitchell); Caulfield to Dandenong; and Monash University/Chadstone to Box Hill, Austin Hospital and Bell Street.
- Expands the outer Melbourne Urban Growth Boundary to accommodate some of the 284,000 new dwellings expected to be built in the growth areas.
- Changes the *State infrastructure contribution* to the *Growth Areas Infrastructure Contribution* announced in *A Plan for Melbourne’s Growth, 2005*.

Northcote’s status as a Major Activity Centre under *M2030* remains unchanged; however, it has not been targeted for priority government attention as would be the case if it was one of *M@5M*’s designated CADs or Employment Corridors.

While the State Government has indicated that housing targets will be required for each Metropolitan Council as a result of M@5M, these are not expected to be finalised until some time in 2010.

Form of Amendment C81

Amendment C81 seeks to incorporate the strategic directions of the Structure Plan, including the adopted *Neighbourhood Character Guidelines*, into the Darebin Planning Scheme.

Amendment C81 applies to land identified in the *Northcote Activity Centre Structure Plan 2007*, generally bounded by Darebin Road to the north, Charles Street to the south, St. David Street and Andrews Street to the east, and Epping railway line to the west. The area includes the retail and business areas of High Street, Arthurton Road and Separation Street, Northcote, and the inter-nodal gateway, known as the Croxton Precinct (see **Appendix A**).

It should be noted that if approved, Amendment C81 would only invoke the policy directions of the Structure Plan in situations where a planning application is required for use and/or development of land within the affected area.

Amendment C81 proposes to make mapping and written changes to the Darebin Planning Scheme as follows:

Local Planning Policy Framework Changes

- Changes the Municipal Strategic Statement to reference the Northcote Activity Centre Structure Plan 2007 and the Northcote Activity Centre Medium and Low Change Residential Areas Precinct Guidelines, 2008.
- Modifies the Local Planning Policies to respond to the Structure Plan as follows:
 - By introducing a new local policy for the Northcote Activity Centre at Clause 22.11 of the Darebin Planning Scheme to implement the strategic directions of the *Northcote Activity Centre Structure Plan, 2007*.
 - By ensuring that the High Street Corridor Land Use and Urban Design Local Planning Policy (Clause 22.08) is consistent with the new Northcote Activity Centre Policy.
 - By avoiding repetition by excluding land within the proposed Design and Development Overlay 13 (DDO13) Northcote Major Activity Centre from the operation of the Local Planning Policies:
 - Residential and Mixed Use Development of Less than Four Storeys in Business 1 and Business 2 Zones Local Planning Policy (Clause 22.09); and
 - Residential and Mixed Use Development of Four or More Storeys (Clause 22.10)

Zoning Changes

- Rezones land from Industrial 3 (INZ3) to Business 2 zone (B2Z) and applies the Environmental Audit Overlay (EAO) at 167, 169, 171-175, 177, 1-2/179, 181, 181A and 183 High Street, Northcote (situated on the western side of High Street between James Street and Campbell Grove);
- Rezones land at:
 - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 1-3/12 Robbs Parade, Northcote (situated between High Street and Northcote Plaza, on the northern side of Robbs Parade) from Residential 1 to Business 5 zone;
 - 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16 and 1-14/20 Separation Street, Northcote (situated between High Street and Andrews Street on the southern side of Separation Street) from Residential 1 to Business 1 zone; and
 - 3 Dennis Street, Northcote from Residential 1 to Business 2 zone.

The Australian Horizons site (8, 9-13 and 16 – 18 Arthurton Road and 17 Elm Street Northcote) is not rezoned as part of Amendment C81.

Design and Built Form Controls

- Introduces a new Schedule to the Design and Development Overlay (DDO13) Northcote Major Activity Centre at Clause 43.02 and applies DDO13 to all land within the Structure Plan area.
- To avoid duplication it removes land within the Northcote Activity Centre Design and Development Overlay 5 (DDO5) from High Street Corridor View Protection and the incorporation of the DDO5 provisions into DDO13.
- Deletes references to land within the Activity Centre from DDO5.

For details of the amendment and its purpose, see the exhibited *Explanatory Report* in **Appendix D**.

Submissions

A total of twenty seven (27) submissions were received during and subsequent to the exhibition period.

3 submissions from statutory referral authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No comment/did not object
15 individual submissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objected to the amendment or requested changes (including minor modifications)
9 proforma emails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objected on the basis of several broad grounds (A circulated standard email)

Key Themes

The following concerns have been expressed in the submissions:

- Inappropriate and excessive height recommendations
- Potential increased adverse traffic and parking impacts
- Lack of infrastructure and facilities to support the additional population that would be generated by implementation of the Structure Plan
- Opposed to the widening of Arthurton Road shown in Structure Plan
- Legitimacy of M2030 as justification given release of *M@5M*
- “In principle” opposition to *M2030*, the Structure Plan and C81
- Proposed pedestrian and vehicular links through Arthurton Road Precinct
- Whole of Arthurton Road Precinct should be rezoned Business 2 Zone as recommended in the Structure Plan
- Some land, such as Latham Street, allocated to an inappropriate Precinct.
- Opposition to the proposed link from High Street to the Northcote Plaza as contained in the Structure Plan
- Creation of an inappropriate character
- Opposition from the proponent for Amendment C92 to the inclusion of the Australian Horizons site within C81
- Need greater strategic recognition and protection of the green corridor provided by the Epping Railway line
- Opposition to new tram stops proposed as part of the Route 86 project.

A detailed summary of the issues raised by submitters to Amendment C81 forms Attachment 5 to this report.

CORE ISSUES

Relationship to Amendment C92

Amendment C92 deals with a specific parcel of land at 8, 9-13 and 16-18 Arthurton Road and 17 Elm Street Northcote: locally known as the Australian Horizons site. It has been prepared at the request of a third party (the Meydan Group). A report appraising submissions to Amendment C92 is also an Item in this Council Meeting Agenda (see Report No. 7.6). Each officer report has therefore been prepared in a manner that is cognisant of and consistent with the other and its respective implications.

Amendment C92 seeks to facilitate a mixed-use development of the Australian Horizons site for residential, commercial, office and retail purposes.

Amendment C81 does not propose to rezone the Australian Horizons site, though it does include broader built form controls (in the form of a Design and Development Overlay – DDO13) across the activity centre area including this site.

The use of two separate but related Amendments provides an approach that collectively implements the strategic directions of the Structure Plan at both a broad and specific level:

- Broadly for the whole Northcote Activity Centre as well as on a precinct basis generally through C81; and
- Specifically for the Australian Horizons site through C92.

While Amendment C92 is generally consistent with the policies of the Structure Plan, Amendment C92 presents a major divergence from the recommended heights for this site.

When recommending that Council seek authorisation to exhibit Amendment C92 despite this difference, the officer report of 4 August 2008 noted that this approach would enable Council “*to advise the community of the proposal, seek their views, make a submission to a Panel and then receive the Panel’s advice before making a decision as to whether the Amendment should proceed.*”

Amendment C92 completed exhibition on 13 March 2009 and due to the type of submissions received also requires referral to an independent Panel Appointed by the Minister for Planning under section 23 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. A key issue arising from the 152 submissions received relates to the above mentioned difference in height between Amendment C92 and the Structure Plan.

Although C81 and C92 are separate Amendments, as they inform each other, any Independent Panel appointed by the Minister for Planning to consider submissions on Amendment C92, will also need to consider them in the context of Amendment C81. Therefore, one independent panel should consider both amendments.

Heights: the key difference between Northcote Structure Plan Amendment C81 and Arthurton Row Amendment C92

The key difference between Arthurton Row Amendment C92 and provisions of Amendment C81, relates to the recommended maximum heights possible on the Australian Horizons site.

The Structure Plan envisaged a built form with a combination of eight, five and three storeys within the Arthurton Road (AR) Precinct. Amendment C81 formalises these built form recommendations within its exhibited Design and Development Overlay (Schedule 13).

However Amendment C92 proposes a combination of twelve, eight, five and three storeys within the parameters of its exhibited Development Plan Overlay (Schedule 10).

At present there are no specific planning scheme provisions on the preferred heights for this land, except the broad policy statements contained in Clause 19.03 *Design and Built Form* within the State Planning Policy Framework of the Darebin Planning Scheme.

Under the current Victorian Planning system the Department of Planning and Community Development has mandated that height limits can only to be a guide rather than absolute limit on built form. Consequently, the heights recommended in the Northcote Activity Centre Structure Plan are not mandatory and provide guidance as to the preferred form of development.

Built form recommendations of the Structure Plan. support the retention of the High Street policy provisions for those areas currently affected and provide broad or 'rule-of-thumb' heights throughout the remaining Activity Centre area.. They are informed by the outcomes of the public consultation process used during development of the Structure Plan. and form Council's adopted position to date. Consequently Amendment C81, particularly the Design and Development Overlay (Schedule 13), reiterates the built form recommendations of the Structure Plan and has enabled further public comment through the exhibition process.

The majority of submitters to Amendment C92 generally objected to development in their local area with the most frequent points focussing on the heights of the Development Plan Overlay (Schedule 10) and their differences to those recommended by the Structure Plan.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Environmental Sustainability

Amendment C81 seeks to implement the Northcote Activity Centre Structure Plan into the Darebin Planning scheme. In turn, the Structure Plan seeks to realise the broader sustainability objectives of *Melbourne 2030*.

Melbourne 2030 which seeks *inter alia*, to provide a more ecologically sustainable footprint for the whole of Melbourne by containing urban sprawl and promoting transit orientated development within existing activity centres. It is anticipated that so long as *M2030* is implemented and services are provided to support the increase in population within these locations, that there would be a reduction in car dependence and greater containment of greenhouse gas emissions than if car-dependent development was to continue unfettered.

Additionally, Amendment C81 reiterates the core principle upon which the Northcote Activity Centre should be established as identified by the Structure Plan: 'A Sustainable Future'. This promotes ecologically sustainable design and development around five key themes:

- Energy Efficient Design
- Water sensitive urban sign
- Sustainable transportation
- Waste reduction
- Biodiversity.

This is at a high order policy level and it should be noted that in Victoria it is currently not possible to mandate the specific Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) provisions within the planning scheme. However Council will continue to promote the use of its STEPS and SDS tools to realise ecologically sustainable development provisions within specific developments on ground.

Social Inclusion and Diversity

Northcote has become more affluent with a significant increase in property and land values over recent years. This is part of a 'gentrification' process across inner Melbourne; resulting in a commensurate dislocation of less affluent and marginalised groups to more affordable areas, usually in outer suburbs where there are fewer services and infrastructure such as public transport and hospitals.

This can have an adverse impact locally from the perspective of socio-demographic diversity and inclusion.

In Victoria it is currently not possible to mandate the provision of affordable, non-market or social housing within private development development.

Therefore Amendment C81 does not and cannot include specific measures to deliver affordable or non-market housing or redress the continuing gentrification of the area.

Other

An addition to the State Government and Council policies already mentioned in this report, this Amendment is consistent with the following commitments contained in the current *Council Plan*:

A sustainable city:

35. *We will maintain high standards of urban amenity in our community through the design and management of public spaces and streetscapes*
36. *We will plan for the growing population and changing demographics of Darebin and promote the development of housing in identified activity centres and major transport corridors*
37. *We will address demand for changes to Darebin's neighbourhoods through place management projects and strategic planning policies underpinned by sound research and community consultation*
38. *We will protect Darebin's urban amenity in sensitive neighbourhoods through heritage controls, urban character studies and planning and building controls*

A vibrant city:

44. *We will celebrate Darebin's artistic and cultural vitality through a program of public arts, festivals and events and with the provision of a range of performance, gallery and workshop spaces*
46. *We will celebrate the contribution that Darebin's diversity brings to our neighbourhoods, and seek to nurture new and emerging communities as part of our city's diverse mix*
50. *We will acknowledge the role of local businesses in Darebin's communities and work with them to foster economic prosperity, local employment and active retail, commercial and industrial precincts*

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Council will bear its own costs for a panel, in terms of appearances before the panel and costs incurred by a panel. If the same panel decides on a joint hearing of C81 and C92, then the costs will be equitably borne by both Council and the proponents of Amendment C92, resulting in some cost savings.

FUTURE ACTIONS

Referral of Amendment C81 to an Independent Panel:

Although the nature of submissions and issues raised have been analysed by officers, no modifications to the Amendment have been proposed at this stage.

As not all submissions will be accommodated by either changes to the amendment, Council is required to refer Amendment C81 to an independent panel appointed Minister for Planning pursuant to Section 23 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*,

The panel process will provide submitters with a further chance to have their submissions heard, and accordingly have their submission grounds reviewed independently.

The submissions received during the exhibition of Amendment C81 are numerous and varied and present differing viewpoints with regard to future development of Northcote. By referring Amendment C81 to a Panel, Council has the advantage of receiving an independent assessment of the substance of these submissions.

Any such Panel will need to consider submissions on Amendment C81 along with those received in relation to the 'site specific' Arthurton Row Amendment C92. Prior to any Panel hearing, Council will need to determine its approach to Amendment C92. As such, a separate report will be prepared for the consideration of Council. This is reflected in the recommendation of the report.

Should a submitter choose not to make a presentation at the Panel hearing, then their written submission will still be considered.

Upon completion of the hearing process, the Panel will prepare and release to Council, a report on submissions to Amendments C81 and C92. In its report, the Panel may make any recommendation it thinks fit. Council must make the Panel report publicly available after 28 days of receiving the Panel's report.

Council's consideration of the Panel Report

Council must consider the Panel report, but is not bound by the Panel's recommendations. Council is able to decide whether any changes should be made to the Amendment and whether the Amendment should be adopted or abandoned.

Upon adoption, Amendment C81 would attain the legal status of 'seriously entertained document'. This means that its recommendations and implications must be considered when planning applications for properties within the affected area are determined by Council and/or Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

Decision by the Minister for Planning

Once adopted, Council must submit the Amendment to the Minister for Planning for approval. The Minister will then consider Amendment C81 and may:

- Approve the Amendment with or without changes; and subject to any conditions the Minister wishes to impose; or
- Refuse to approve the Amendment or part of it.

The Minister will then publish a notice of the approval of the Amendment in the Victoria Government Gazette.

The Amendment will come into operation once the notice of approval of the Amendment is published in the Victoria Government Gazette.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- *Northcote Activity Centre Structure Plan, April 2007* (SUB/150).
- *Planning & Environment Act 1987* (Vic)
- *High Street Urban Design Framework* (David Lock & Associates et al, 2002)
- *Darebin Retail Activity Centre Strategy* (Essential Economics et al, 2003)
- *Melbourne 2030* (Vic)
- *Northcote Structure Plan Status* (Council Report, 18 October 2004)
- *Northcote Place Making Project Status* (Council Report, 16 May 2005)
- *Community Working Group* (Council Report, 18 July 2005)
- *Draft Northcote Structure Plan Release for Comment* (Council Report, 7 August 2006)
- *Northcote Structure Plan – Consideration of Public Comment, Recommended Changes and Adoption of the Final Structure Plan.* (Council Report, 2 April 2007)
- *Northcote Structure Plan Status Report* (Council Report – 18 October 2004)
- *Northcote Place Making Project Status Report* (Council Report – 16 May 2005)
- *Report on Community Working Group* (Council Report – 18 July 2005)
- *Draft Northcote Structure Plan Release for Comment* (Council Report – 7 August 2006)
- *Northcote Structure Plan – Consideration of Public Comment, Recommended Changes and Adoption of the Final Structure Plan.* (SUB/161-01) (Council Report – 2 April 2007)
- *Adoption and Inclusion of Neighbourhood Character Guidelines for Medium and Low Change Residential Areas in the Northcote Activity Centre Structure Plan, 2007* (Council Report – 18 February 2008)
- *Darebin Planning Scheme Amendment C92 Arthurton Rowe* (SUB/178/01)

Appendices

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| Appendix A | Precinct Plan from the <i>Northcote Activity Centre Structure Plan, April 2007</i> |
| Appendix B | Summary of the Northcote Activity Centre Structure Plan Consultation and Methodology |
| Appendix C | Report of Council Meeting 2 April 2007 |
| Appendix D | Report of Council meeting 4 August 2008 |

- Appendix E** Detailed summary of submissions received to Amendment C81
- Appendix F** Exhibited C81 Explanatory Report

The Mayor, Cr. Asmar, disclosed a conflict of interest in the following item classifying the type of interest as an indirect interest by close association and describing the nature of the interest as that a relative owns and lives in property in Elm Street Northcote affected by the project. She left the meeting prior to consideration of the previous item (Report No. 7.5) – 8.24pm.

**7.6 CONSIDERATION OF SUBMISSIONS TO AMENDMENT C92
- ARTHURTON ROW (AUSTRALIAN HORIZONS SITE)**

MINUTE NO. 141

AUTHOR: Senior Strategic Planner - Rachel Haynes

MANAGER: General Manager City Development - Kevin Breen

BUDGET

IMPLICATIONS: Within Budget.

SUMMARY:

The purpose of this report is to enable Council to consider the submissions received in relation to Amendment C92 to the Darebin Planning Scheme.

Amendment C92 was prepared at the request of the Meydan Group. The land affected by the amendment is 4, 8, 9-13 and 16 – 18 Arthurton Road and 17 Elm Street, Northcote. The Amendment proposes to:

- Rezone land from Industrial 3 Zone and Residential 1 Zone to Business 2 Zone;
- Apply the Environmental Audit Overlay to the land;
- Apply the Development Plan Overlay (DPO10) to the land;
- Replace the Schedule to the Business 2 Zone to restrict the combined floor area for a shop;
- Insert a new Schedule 10 (Arthurton Row) to the Development Plan Overlay to guide the future use and development of the land; and
- Replace the Schedule to Clause 61.03.

The Amendment was exhibited between 12 February 2009 and 13 March 2009, in accordance with the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. A total of 157 submissions were received in response to the exhibition, with the majority opposing the amendment either “in principle”, or requesting changes. Issues raised in the submissions include:

- Inappropriate height and density provisions representing overdevelopment that is out of character with the area
- Pressure on existing infrastructure and local facilities, including drainage, parking, transport, traffic, schools, medical and services
- Displacement and financial burden
- The widening of Arthurton Road
- Loss of business to adjoining commercial properties during and after construction
- Disrespectful of surrounding heritage values and elements

- Inconsistency with building heights recommended in the community endorsed Northcote Structure Plan and Council's initiated Amendment C81 which implements it
- Lack of market for the proposed commercial (office and retail) components and potential for whole development to become residential rather than mixed use
- Lack of follow-through on affordable housing
- Adverse impacts to the to the current creative arts cultural dynamic of Northcote
- Legitimacy of M2030 as justification given release of M@2M
- Northcote is not one of the six designated Central Activity Districts identified in M2@M.

Council is at the stage of the Planning Scheme Amendment process where after considering submissions, it has to decide whether or not or agree to all the changes requested by the submissions. Under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, if it agrees to all the changes requested, it has to abandon the Amendment. If it does not agree to all the changes requested, it has to request the Minister to set up an independent panel to consider the submissions.

In light of the submissions received, it is recommended that under section 23(1) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, Council requests the Minister for Planning to appoint an independent panel to consider all submissions to Amendment C92. It is recommended that Council also advises the Minister that submissions to Amendment C92 be considered by the same panel that considers submissions to Amendment C81. The latter amendment deals with the implementation of the *Northcote Activity Centre Structure Plan, April 2007* and is the subject of a reported item in this Council Meeting Agenda (see Report No. 7.5).

CONSULTATION:

Exhibition of Amendment

Amendment C92 was exhibited from 12 February 2009 to 13 March 2009, in accordance with section 19 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. The consultations were in excess of the statutory obligations required of Council for the exhibition of Planning Scheme Amendments.

The Notice of Preparation of an Amendment was given in the following manner:

- Notice in the Victoria Government Gazette on 12 February 2009
- Direct mail to 413 owners and occupiers of properties to adjacent to and surrounding the Australian Horizons site comprising:
 - Formal notice of the Amendment; and
 - A Frequently Asked Questions and Summary document prepared by the Meydan Group;
- Notice via post to all authorities and Ministers prescribed in the Act.
- Notices in the Preston Leader and the Northcote Leader newspapers published on 10 February 2009

Amendment documents were available at the Preston Customer Service Centre, the Northcote Library and, electronically via the websites of Darebin City Council and the Department of Planning and Community Development.

Additionally, arrangements were made for drop-in information sessions at the Northcote Town Hall during the exhibition period when Council officers and the proponent's representatives were available to provide information about the proposal. The drop-in sessions were designed to provide opportunities for the community to inspect the documents on exhibition and to ask questions about the proposed amendment, during the hours indicated below:

- Thursday, 19th February 2009, 5:00pm – 7:00pm
- Thursday, 26th February 2009, 5:00pm – 7:00pm
- Thursday, 5th March 2009, 5:00pm – 7:00pm
- Thursday, 12th March 2009, 5:00pm – 7:00pm.

Summary and FAQ documents were published separately by the Meydan Group on their website www.arthurtonrow.com.au.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr. S. Tsitas
SECONDED: Cr. N. Katsis

THAT Council:

- (1) Consider all the submissions received to Amendment C92.
- (2) Request the Minister for Planning to appoint an independent panel in accordance with section 23(1)(c) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* to consider submissions to Amendment C92 to the Darebin Planning Scheme and that the request specifies that the panel appointed to consider submissions to Amendment C81 be also appointed to consider Amendment C92.
- (3) Receive a further report outlining its proposed submission to the independent Panel closer to the date of the Panel hearing.

CARRIED

REPORT

BACKGROUND

C92 Amendment Request

At its meeting of 4 August 2008, Council considered the request from the Meydan Group and resolved to seek authorisation from DPCD to prepare and exhibit Amendment C92 to the Darebin Planning Scheme. (Refer to **Appendix A**: Item 7.4 of Council Meeting Minutes 4 August 2008.)

The Amendment affects land at 8, 9-13 and 16-18 Arthurton Road and 17 Elm Street Northcote, known locally as the Australian Horizons site. Amendment C92 seeks to rezone the Australian Horizons site in order to facilitate a mixed-use development for residential, commercial, office and retail purposes. Currently, the site is predominantly in an Industrial 3 Zone and partly in a Residential 1 Zone.

While Amendment C92 is generally consistent with the policies of the *Northcote Activity Centre Structure Plan 2007* (the Structure Plan), it presents a major divergence from the *Structure Plan* height recommendations for this site.

At the time of the earlier report, there were two key anomalies between the proposed redevelopment facilitated by C92 and the recommendations of the Structure Plan:-

1. The proposed Mixed Use Zone (MUZ) zoning differed from the Business 2 Zone (B2Z) recommended by the Structure Plan; and
2. The overall height of the development at twelve (12) storeys would be four (4) storeys higher than the *Structure Plan's* eight (8) storey recommendation.

When recommending that Council seek authorisation to exhibit Amendment C92 despite these anomalies, the officer report of 4 August 2008 noted that this approach would not commit Council to formally endorse the proposal. In doing this, it noted that exhibition would enable Council “*to advise the community of the proposal, seek their views, make a submission to a Panel and then receive the Panel's advice before making a decision as to whether the Amendment should proceed.*”

On 6 January 2009 Council received authorisation from the Minister for Planning to prepare and exhibit Amendment C92. Prior to authorisation, the proponent revised the proposed zoning so that it accorded with Business 2 Zone, as recommended by the Structure Plan.

The height difference remains outstanding. This provides the main point of divergence between Amendment C92 and the height provisions contained in Amendment C81 which has been prepared by Council to implement the overarching strategic directions and recommendations of the Structure Plan. The implications arising from this height difference will be discussed in more detail within the ‘Core Issues’ component of this report.

Melbourne 2030

Melbourne 2030 (M2030), the State Government's strategy to manage growth and change across metropolitan Melbourne, encourages increased housing growth within activity centres, where the facilities and services to support more people already exist.

Melbourne 2030

- Projects that Darebin will accommodate an additional 8,253 people and 8,644 dwellings over the next 25 years;
- Identifies Northcote as a Major Activity Centre and requires Council to prepare structure plans for major and principal activity centres that will set a strategic framework for the use and development of land in and around the respective centres; and give clear direction about appropriate land use and the preferred location and scale of future development throughout these centres.

Melbourne @ 5 Million

In late 2008, the State Government released *Melbourne 2030: a planning update Melbourne @ 5 Million* (M@5M) in order to augment the policy initiatives and directions of *Melbourne 2030*. M@5M is not yet incorporated into the Victoria Planning Provisions but DPCD have directed that it should *be considered together* with M2030. While the State Government has indicated that housing targets will be required for each Metropolitan Council as a result of M@5M, these are not expected to be finalised until some time in 2010.

Northcote's status as a Major Activity Centre under M2030 remains unchanged.

Northcote Structure Plan

Council adopted the *Northcote Activity Centre Structure Plan* (the Structure Plan) at its meeting of 2 April 2007. Amendment C81 (subject of another report in this Council Meeting Agenda – see Report No. 7.5) implements the Structure Plan.

Informed by extensive community consultation, including a ‘Charette’ process, the Structure Plan provides a framework for articulating how the Northcote Activity Centre will develop by defining the key areas where growth can be encouraged, and the actions that are needed to realise that goal.

On 18 February 2008, Council also adopted *Neighbourhood Character Guidelines* as an appendix to the Structure Plan. These guidelines will inform the preferred character outcomes for the medium and low change residential precincts in the Northcote Activity Centre.

Structure Plan Policy Directions for the Australian Horizons Site

According to the Structure Plan, the Amendment site forms part of the Arthurton Road (AR) Precinct. The plan for the Arthurton Road Precinct (AR) is contained in the *Northcote Structure Plan April 2007* forms **Appendix B** to this report.

The Structure Plan identifies the precinct, including the Amendment site as having significant development opportunities. It recognises that this area currently zoned Industrial 3, as a suitable location for more intensive development. The policy framework developed for the Arthurton Road Precinct sets out the form that any redevelopment of the site should take. The policy directions set out in the Structure Plan for the precinct include the following objectives:

- Providing employment based activities that complement the core retail functions of High Street;
- Encouraging a variety of housing types, including affordable housing and multi-level apartments;
- Ensuring development that maximises development opportunities and avoids underdevelopment of key sites;
- Limiting the amount and location of retail in the precinct;
- Providing appropriately located pedestrian walkways through the precinct;
- Providing a high level of amenity on the street network;
- Provision of active frontages along Arthurton Road;
- Provision of a built form transition to established residential areas; and
- Encourage the development of live/work accommodation.

Form of Amendment C92

The land affected by the Amendment comprises 4, 8, 9-13 and 16 – 18 Arthurton Road and 17 Elm Street, Northcote. The Amendment proposes to:

- Rezone land from Industrial 3 Zone and Residential 1 Zone to Business 2 Zone;
- Apply the Environmental Audit Overlay to the land;
- Apply the Development Plan Overlay (DPO10) to the land;
- Replace the Schedule to the Business 2 Zone to restrict the combined floor area for a shop;
- Insert a new Schedule 10 (Arthurton Row) to the Development Plan Overlay to guide the future use and development of the land; and
- Replace the Schedule to Clause 61.03.

The existing Development Contributions Plan Overlay (DPCO) and the Special Building Overlay (SB) would be retained in their current form.

An Environmental Audit Overlay (EAO) is required to ensure that any site contamination issues arising from its former industrial use are remediated, given the proposed change to the more sensitive residential use.

The Schedule to the Development Plan Overlay (DPO10) sets out the requirements that must be met in order for Council, as Responsible Authority, to approve any future Development Plan proposed for the site. Because of this, it is a 'high-order' set of requirements. More detailed development issues would be dealt with during the assessment of ensuing planning permit applications.

So long as any future planning application is consistent with the approved structure plan, it would be exempt from the need for it to be advertised to third parties.

The proposed DPO 10 is structured around the following broad requirements:

- Environmental Design and Management
- Permeability and Access
- Design and Built Form
- Requirement for a Mix of Uses
- Integrated Transport and Traffic management
- Landscape Plan
- Construction Management Plan.

Appendix C contains the exhibited Schedule 10 to the Development Plan Overlay (DPO 10).

Draft Proposed Development Plan

To assist with consideration of the Amendment, the proponents have provided a draft proposal for redevelopment of the site. Whilst it is not an approved Development Plan under the DPO for the site, it provides an indication of the type of proposal that could be submitted for approval, should Amendment C92 be approved as exhibited. These plans have also been circulated with Amendment C92 and show:

- Approximately 350 residential units in dwelling types ranging from row houses, apartments of varying size and type, and live/work spaces;
- Commercial and services floor space of approximately 10,000m², designed across a variety of buildings, designed to cater for corporate offices and smaller professional and business service providers;
- Some retail and service business inclusions such as convenience shops, food and drink premises, new retail businesses, showroom/office businesses and entertainment/recreational uses, in total less than 6,000m²;
- Provision of car parking, car rental, bicycle and pedestrian facilities that will provide for the range of mobility options while encouraging reduced private car usage;
- On site car parking, predominantly in basement for approximately 750 cars;
- Arrangements to provide allocated space for a short term car rental service;
- Garden, pedestrian, and internal roadway areas;

- A high level of environmental design and performance with a minimum five Green Star design or equivalent; and
- Major improvements to the public realm, particularly by the introduction of a wider, landscaped footpath to the north-side of Arthurton Road through the transfer of a 5 metre wide strip of land at ground level into the road reserve.

Submissions received to Amendment C92

A total one hundred and fifty seven (157) submissions have been received and the issues raised are summarised in the table below

4 submissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No comment/did not object: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Yarra Valley Water, – SPI PowerNet, – Melbourne Water (flagged requirements for future planning applications) – Department of Sustainability and Environment
42 objections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objected to the Amendment or requested changes (including minor modifications)
99 form letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objected “in principle”
5 form letters with further comment added	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objected “in principle” and added further specific comment to augment the proforma.
7 supportive submissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported the Amendment

Key Themes

Issues of concern include:

1. Inappropriate height
2. Inappropriate density and over development
3. Out of character with local environment
4. Pressure on existing local facilities such as parking, transport, traffic, schools, and medical services
5. Displacement and financial burden associated with need to seek facilities and services elsewhere
6. Inadequate infrastructure, particularly drainage
7. Lack of demonstrated commitment at state government level to redress off-site impacts in infrastructure, services, facilities, transport provisions
8. Perceived conflict of interest in supporting research commissioned by the developer
9. Northcote has not been selected as a Principal Activity Centre
10. The widening of Arthurton Road
11. Loss of business to adjoining commercial properties during and after construction
12. Disrespectful of surrounding heritage values and elements
13. Building height proposed is inconsistent with that recommended in the Northcote Structure Plan
14. Lack of market for the proposed commercial (office and retail) components

15. Potential for whole development to become residential rather than mixed (due to previous point)
16. Lack of follow-through on affordable housing
17. Adverse impacts on the current creative arts cultural dynamic of Northcote
18. Legitimacy of M2030 as justification given release of M@5M
19. Northcote is not one of the six designated Central Activity Districts identified in M@5M.

A detailed summary of the issues raised by submitters to Amendment C92 forms **Appendix D** to this report.

Since not all submissions can be accommodated by changes to the amendment, Council is required to refer Amendment C92 to an independent Panel appointed Minister for Planning pursuant to section 23 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

CORE ISSUES

Relationship to Northcote Structure Plan Amendment (C81)

At its meeting of 2 April 2007, Council adopted the *Northcote Structure Plan* and resolved to request the Minister for Planning for authorisation to prepare and approve an Amendment to incorporate the Northcote Activity Centre Structure Plan into the Darebin Planning Scheme.

Amendment C81 to the Darebin Planning Scheme has been prepared to do this and the outcomes of its exhibition process are also an item for consideration in this Council Meeting Agenda (see Report No. 7.5). That Agenda Item also recommends that the submissions received to Amendment C81 be referred to an independent panel appointed Minister for Planning pursuant to section 23 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

Amendment C92 deals with a specific, though strategically important parcel of land within the Northcote Activity centre. It has been prepared at the request of a third party (the Meydan Group). Amendment C81 is a Council initiated Amendment which seeks to implement the overarching strategic directions of the Northcote Structure Plan.

Amendment C81 does not propose to rezone this site. However, it includes broader built form controls in the form of a schedule to the Design and Development Overlay – DDO13 for the site and across the whole activity centre area.

Heights: the key Difference between the Northcote Structure Plan and Amendment C92

The majority of submissions to Amendment C92 generally objected to development in their local area with the most frequent points focussing on excessive height.

The Structure Plan envisages a built form with a combination of eight, five and three storeys for the Australian Horizons site. Amendment C92 proposes a combination of twelve, eight, five and three storeys.

Amendment C92 building heights is contained in **Appendix E**.

The proponents argue that the extra height is necessary because of the risk involved in promoting office development on the site. This claim has not been substantiated. If 10,000m² of office floorspace is provided, then this site will be one of the largest office developments in the northern suburbs, outside the universities and hospitals.

The heights recommended in the Structure Plan are not mandatory and provide guidance as to the preferred level of development. Generally, mandatory height limits would not be supported by the Department of Planning and Community Development.

In any planning document, a height limit is meant to be a guide to the built form with the flexibility to deal with innovative developments that provide a different design response. The heights proposed by the Structure Plan are consistent with provisions of the High Street Policy. Council previously engaged in a public consultation process in the development and adoption of the Structure Plan.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS**Environmental Sustainability**

The proposal implements *Melbourne 2030* which seeks *inter alia*, to provide a more ecologically sustainable footprint for the whole of Melbourne by containing urban sprawl and promoting transit orientated development within existing activity centres. It is anticipated that so long as *Melbourne 2030* is implemented and services are provided to support the increase in population within these locations, that there would be a reduction in car dependence and some amelioration of greenhouse gas emission than if car dependent development continued unfettered.

The draft DPO10 proposes a higher standard of environmental performance for redevelopment than is generally required by the Victorian Building Regulations or the Victoria Planning Provisions.

The Environmental Audit Overlay will require the industrial site to be rehabilitated prior to redevelopment. This would reduce any potential issues of environmental contamination within the Northcote area.

Social Inclusion and Diversity

Northcote has become more affluent with a significant increase in property and land values over recent years. This is part of a 'gentrification' process across inner Melbourne, resulting in a commensurate dislocation of less affluent and marginalised groups to more affordable areas, usually in outer suburbs where there are fewer services and infrastructure such as public transport and hospitals.

This can have an adverse impact locally from the perspective of socio-demographic diversity and inclusion.

In Victoria, it is currently not possible to mandate the provision of affordable, non-market or social housing within private development.

The proposal for the Australian Horizons Site does not include specific measures to deliver affordable or non-market housing or redress the continuing gentrification of the area.

Other

In addition to the State Government and Council policies already mentioned in this report, this Amendment is consistent with the following commitments contained in the current *Council Plan* under *A sustainable city*:

35. *We will maintain high standards of urban amenity in our community through the design and management of public spaces and streetscapes*
36. *We will plan for the growing population and changing demographics of Darebin and promote the development of housing in identified activity centres and major transport corridors*
37. *We will address demand for changes to Darebin's neighbourhoods through place management projects and strategic planning policies underpinned by sound research and community consultation*
38. *We will protect Darebin's urban amenity in sensitive neighbourhoods through heritage controls, urban character studies and planning and building controls*

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Costs of panel hearings are fully borne by the proponents of the Amendments. In the case of a joint panel hearing for the both Amendments C81 and C92, the costs will be borne equitably by Council, as proponent of Amendment C81, and the Meydan Group, as the proponent of Amendment C92.

FUTURE ACTIONS

Referral of Amendment C92 to an Independent Panel

The submissions received during the exhibition of Amendment C92 are numerous and varied and present differing viewpoints with regard to future development of the land. As previously advised, the matters raised and changes requested by submitters can be reviewed by an independent Panel appointed by the Minister for Planning pursuant to section 23 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

Any such Panel will need to consider submissions on Amendment C92 within the context of the broader Structure Plan and consequently Amendment C81 which seeks to statutorily implement the Structure Plan.

The proponent (Meydan Group), Council and all submitters will be given the opportunity to appear before the Panel in support of their submissions. Should a submitter choose not to make a presentation at the Panel hearing, then their written submission will still be considered.

Upon completion of the hearing process, the independent Panel will prepare a report for Council (generally within six (6) weeks of the panel hearing) which makes recommendations about how Council should proceed with the Amendments. The report must be made available to the public 28

days after the date Council receives the report or earlier if Council has made a decision on the Amendment.

Council must consider the Panel report, but is not bound by the Panel's recommendations. Council is able to decide whether any changes should be made to the Amendment and whether the Amendment should be adopted or abandoned.

Decision by the Minister for Planning

If Council adopts an Amendment, Council must submit the Amendment to the Minister for Planning for approval. The Minister may:

- Approve the [Amendment](#) with or without changes; and subject to any conditions the Minister wishes to impose; or
- Refuse to approve the Amendment or part of it.

The Minister will then publish a notice of the approval of the Amendment in the Victoria Government Gazette.

The Amendment will come into operation once the notice of approval of the [Amendment](#) is published in the Victoria Government Gazette.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- *Northcote Activity Centre Structure Plan, April 2007* (SUB/150).
- *Darebin Planning Scheme Amendment C81 Northcote Structure Plan* (SUB/161/01)
- *Planning & Environment Act 1987* (Vic)
- *High Street Urban Design Framework* (David Lock & Associates et al, 2002)
- *Darebin Retail Activity Centre Strategy* (Essential Economics et al, 2003)
- *Melbourne 2030* (Vic)
- *Northcote Structure Plan Status* (Council Report, 18 October 2004)
- *Northcote Place Making Project Status* (Council Report, 16 May 2005)
- *Community Working Group* (Council Report, 18 July 2005)
- *Draft Northcote Structure Plan Release for Comment* (Council Report, 7 August 2006)
- *Northcote Structure Plan – Consideration of Public Comment, Recommended Changes and Adoption of the Final Structure Plan.* (Council Report, 2 April 2007)

Appendices

- [Appendix A](#) Report of Council meeting 4 August 2008
- [Appendix B](#) Arthurton Road (AR) Precinct Plan from the *Northcote Activity Centre Structure Plan, April 2007*
- [Appendix C](#) Schedule 10 to the Development Plan Overlay exhibited as part of Amendment C92
- [Appendix D](#) Detailed summary of submissions received to Amendment C92
- [Appendix E](#) Draft Development Plan Heights exhibited with Amendment C92

The Mayor, Cr. Asmar, returned to the meeting at the conclusion of this item and resumed the Chair – 8.40pm.

7.7 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND 'HOUSING STRESS'**MINUTE NO. 142****AUTHOR:** Coordinator Cultural Diversity - Jeremy Liyanage**MANAGER:** Manager Social Inclusion and Diversity - John Smith**BUDGET****IMPLICATIONS:** Within budget**SUMMARY:**

On 2 February 2009, Council requested a report and action plan that outlines joint efforts with La Trobe University and other stakeholders to tackle the student housing crisis and the current housing exploitation that many international students face in Darebin.

On 2 March Council also requested an initial terms of reference (to be followed by a full report by 30 June 2009) on the feasibility of brokering a 'home stay' accommodation arrangement between Darebin residents willing to offer spare rooms for rent and students seeking secure and safe accommodation.

This report addresses both requests and places the discussion on housing issues and initiatives in the broader context of issues experienced by international students more generally.

CONSULTATION:**Internal**

- Nik Filips, Coordinator Youth Services
- Mandy Bathgate, Social Policy Coordinator
- Tennille Temizyuz, Coordinator Community Access, Health and Safety
- Alison Duncan, Family Services Coordinator
- Katherine Wositzki, Social Research and Service Development Coordinator
- David Diaz, Multicultural Relations Officer

External

- John Zika, Chairperson, Darebin Ethnic Communities Council
- Nalliah Suriyakumaran, Steering Committee Member, Darebin Ethnic Communities Council
- Professor Diane Bretherton, Australian Centre for Peace & Conflict Studies
- Con Pagonis, Multicultural Policy Advisor, Municipal Association of Victoria
- Senior Constable Ali Gurdag, Victoria Police
- Larry Marshall, Project Officer, Centre for Dialogue La Trobe University
- Trevor McCleery, Director, TCN Homestay
- David Bycroft, Director, Australian Homestay Network

- Nalika Peiris, Manager Social Policy, Moreland City Council
- Josh Presser, Living in Harmony Representative, Department of Immigration and Citizenship

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council endorse:

- (1) An advocacy approach to accommodation issues faced by international students, through requesting the Municipal Association of Victoria bring together local, state and federal government agencies, registered training organisations, educational institutions, housing services, international student services to discuss international student issues at a local operational level. This may lead to the establishment of an *Overseas Student Coordination Committee* with formal links to the Victorian Government's Overseas Student Education Experience Taskforce.
- (2) Development of an internal protocol which outlines compliance and service delivery functions to confront exploitation, increase student support and avoid homelessness as a result of rooming house closures through the convening of a time-limited *Overseas Students Emergency Housing Taskforce*.
- (3) Commendation of the 'homestay' program both to international students and potential host families and individuals through:
 - a) Negotiating with homestay agencies in the north that are compliant, safe and flexible to *consider different models* of affordable housing to meet the diverse needs of international students.
 - b) Promoting 'homestay' through *Darebin publications* and through the *local media* so that residents consider welcoming international students into their homes and lives, either informally or through an established homestay provider.
- (4) Homestay information evenings for hosts and students through:
 - a) Calling for *expressions of interest* from homestay agencies with high standards of compliance to present information to potential homestay hosts and students on the requirements, responsibilities and benefits of homestay options.
 - b) Organising information *evenings* for international students and hosts with the aim of explaining homestay arrangements.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr. G. Greco
SECONDED: Cr. T. Laurence

THAT Council endorse:

- (1) An advocacy approach to accommodation issues faced by international students by playing a leading role with the Municipal Association of Victorian and Victorian Local Governance Association to bring together local, state and federal government agencies, registered training organisations, educational institutions, housing services, international student services to discuss international student issues at a local operational level. This may lead to the establishment of an *Overseas Student Coordination Committee* with formal links to the Victorian Government's Overseas Student Education Experience Taskforce.
- (2) Development of an internal protocol which outlines compliance and service delivery functions to confront exploitation, increase student support and avoid homelessness as a result of rooming house closures through the convening of a time-limited Overseas Students Emergency Housing Taskforce.
- (3) Commendation of the 'homestay' program both to international students and potential host families and individuals through:
 - a) Negotiating with homestay agencies in the north that are compliant, safe and flexible to *consider different models* of affordable housing to meet the diverse needs of international students.
 - b) Promoting 'homestay' through *Darebin publications* and through the *local media* so that residents consider welcoming international students into their homes and lives, either informally or through an established homestay provider.
- (4) Homestay information evenings for hosts and students through:
 - a) Calling for expressions *of interest* from homestay agencies with high standards of compliance to present information to potential homestay hosts and students on the requirements, responsibilities and benefits of homestay options.
 - b) Organising information *evenings* for international students and hosts with the aim of explaining homestay arrangements.

CARRIED

REPORT**BACKGROUND**

On 2 February 2009, Council requested a report and action plan that outlines joint efforts with La Trobe University and other stakeholders to tackle the student housing crisis and the current housing exploitation that many international students face in Darebin.

On 2 March Council also requested an initial terms of reference (to be followed by a full report by 30 June 2009) on the feasibility of brokering a 'home stay' accommodation arrangement between

Darebin residents willing to offer spare rooms for rent and students seeking secure and safe accommodation.

This report addresses both requests and places the discussion on housing issues and initiatives in the broader context of issues experienced by international students more generally.

Snapshot of international students in Australia

- Students from 187 different countries studied in Victoria in 2007 with students from India being the largest nationality representing 25% of all international students, followed by China with 23%. The number of student enrolments from Vietnam increased by 43% and those from Sri Lanka increased by 38% in 2007.
- International student enrolments in Victoria between 2002 and 2007 have grown from 74,433 to 133,454, with almost half this growth occurring in 2007 (AEI:2007).
- Although international students on the whole report positive experiences, nevertheless many are affected by key issues including affordable accommodation, student welfare and safety, employment, social inclusion and information provision (Overseas Student Education Experience Taskforce, 2008).
- International students represented approximately 30% of all students at Victorian universities (AEI:2007).
- The value of international education to Victoria was \$3.5 billion and \$11.3 billion to the Australian economy, the third highest export for Australia (June 2007).
- The growth in the international student market has coincided with historic decrease in rental vacancy rates to 1% (Victorian Department of Human Services:2008).
- Some students face waiting periods of several months before finding housing, often at a distance from their place of study.
- A lack of accommodation may soon constrain the growth of the international student market.

Overseas Student Education Experience Taskforce (Victoria)

- The Taskforce, established in September 2008, identified housing specific issues - lack of affordable accommodation, discrimination against overseas students in the rental market, lack of information on rental procedures, students unlikely to assert their rights and make a formal complaint.
- The Taskforce report makes five accommodation-specific recommendations with an Overseas Students Strategic Plan to be released sometime this year.

Rationale for local government involvement

Although governments at the national and state levels have a greater responsibility toward international students, Councils have a complementary role to play in the welfare of this group as they represent a growing and integral part of our community.

The rationale for Council's involvement with the issues of overseas students is fourfold:

- **Social cohesion** – to encourage harmonious communities, community safety and opportunities for belonging and interaction through addressing community suspicion, anxiety and negativity toward overseas students

- **Human rights** – to safeguard the human rights of new and emerging communities, including overseas students, through addressing issues of affordable housing, mental health, physical safety, social inclusion, employment and civic participation
- **Compliance issues** – to ensure the wellbeing of overseas students by undertaking local law obligations with a coordinated, integrated and compassionate service approach
- **Economic benefit** – to protect a valuable national income stream through advocating ‘value for money’ services and experiences for overseas students.

CORE ISSUES

More than housing

‘Housing stress’ experienced by international students has been the main focus of both media and community concern. A broader look at the issues faced by this group provides us with a more comprehensive understanding of the interrelatedness and complexity of the issues and the opportunity to develop responses, with Council’s partners, that impact positively on these issues.

Responding to the issues of international students may also involve focusing on their needs for mental and physical health, employment and career development, visa and permanent residency requirements, education, social inclusion, cultural and religious practice, civic participation, security and affordable housing.

A framework for responding

In order for the City of Darebin to determine how best to respond to the range of issues faced by overseas students, a framework encapsulating roles for Council – advocacy, compliance, leadership and service - is outlined below. These principles could undergird and shape Council’s actions.

1. Advocacy through coordination

There is a plethora of agencies and institutions at national and state government as well as private sector levels whose responsibility it is to support international students.

Although individual educational institutions may attempt to coordinate services to meet the needs of their own students, what has contributed toward poor outcomes for international students in general has been a lack of a coordinated service response which ensures fair and effective outcomes for this group.

A clear role that Councils can play is to agitate for strategic coordination at an operational level among the appropriate service providers. Through this mechanism, Councils are well placed to advocate to government, community and private sectors on the housing, employment, health, education, social and civic issues encountered by international students.

2. Compliance and compassion

Existing types of student accommodation are many and varied and come under the jurisdiction of Council's local laws. There has been a number of recent incidents involving unscrupulous landlords who have offered sub-standard housing. When complaints have been received, officers from Building Services and Environmental Health Branches have responded. This intervention has at times resulted in evictions.

Faced with the emergency situation of possible student homelessness, Council, through its family and youth services areas, has also responded compassionately, assisting students with emergency accommodation, searching for alternative housing and responding to their mental health needs.

Among Council's responses could be to establish a taskforce on international student housing which would plan a coordinated and integrated service response following the closure of non-compliant boarding houses or other types of student accommodation.

3. Leadership through cohesion

Recent media reports have graphically highlighted the plight of international students in their pursuit of both affordable housing and wider community acceptance. Communities have been faced with an 'influx' of students particularly from India, the latter group numbering over 158,000 in Victoria alone. Issues of 'hot bedding' to calls from the public for Indians to talk softly on trains to avoid community backlash and in some cases violence, have highlighted the urgent need for civic leaders to publicly defend the rights of these students and appeal to the broader community to embrace this newest of the new, emerging community.

Council is well placed to instigate a public campaign to welcome and embrace international students, appealing to the wider community whether they be public transport commuters, neighbours, real estate agents or landlords to give overseas students a 'fair go' and to encourage interaction between these students and the wider community.

4. Service through consultation

Within the parameters of Council's response, it is imperative that Council, for the aforementioned reasons, identify complementary actions to be undertaken to positively impact on the issues facing international students.

The development of service responses will be based on the outcome of consultation processes both with international students and relevant service providers. This information gathering initiative, using focus groups, structured interviews and surveys will assist Council to identify a set of achievable outcomes which will have an impact on the issues.

What role for Councils?

Although responding to the housing issues facing international students would not be considered traditionally the domain of local government, the fact that this group makes up an increasing proportion of Darebin's population, is incentive enough to be familiar with the range of issues involved and to respond within the means of Council. To date, a number of possible Council responses have already been identified and captured in the table below.

Possible actions

Council role	Overseas student issue	Council response
<p>1. Advocacy through coordination</p>	<p>Service sector coordination</p> <p>Affordable housing</p> <p>Access to employment</p> <p>Health – mental and physical</p> <p>Visas and permanent residency applications</p> <p>Education support</p>	<p>Negotiate with the Municipal Association of Victoria to convene a regional Overseas Student Coordination Group with state and federal government agencies, registered training organisations, educational institutions, housing services, international student services, etc to tackle student issues at an operational level</p> <p>Advocate for a state-wide Overseas Student Hotline</p> <p>Develop a Council Work Experience Program for overseas students in conjunction with Organisational Development and Youth Services to provide first world experience</p> <p>Lobby state government for Public Transport Concessions for international students</p> <p>Explore the feasibility of Flexible Homestay Services</p> <p>Promote international student issues at the North West Regional Managers’ Forum chaired by the Department of Planning & Community Development</p>
<p>2. Compliance and compassion</p>	<p>Landlords and housing compliance</p> <p>Emergency housing services co-ordination</p>	<p>Convene an Overseas Students Emergency Housing Taskforce at Darebin to develop a protocol which outlines compliance and service delivery functions to confront exploitation, increase student support and avoid homelessness</p>
<p>3. Leadership through cohesion</p>	<p>Sense of belonging</p> <p>Personal safety</p> <p>Social inclusion</p> <p>Civic contribution</p>	<p>Develop a Positive Relations Campaign to communicate clear messages from civic leaders of the rights of international students to live in peace and harmony and to encourage the wider community to ‘acknowledge, accept and engage’ with international students. Activities: civic welcome, media campaign in newspapers inc Darebin News and television, street bbqs, information campaign to residents, civic dinner, sporting and cultural activities</p> <p>Establish an overseas student led Overseas Student Taskforce which advises Council on international student issues and the feasibility of its proposals</p> <p>Instigate a Leadership Program for international students and encourage them to join the Taskforce, volunteer for Council or undertake project work</p> <p>Negotiate an Overseas Student Volunteering Program which aims to involve students in assisting Council organise festivals and events</p> <p>Conduct compliance information sessions for boarding house operators</p>

Council role	Overseas student issue	Council response
4. Service through consultation	Understanding overseas students' issues	<p>Undertake Internal Service Mapping to identify Council's past and current involvement in overseas student issues</p> <p>Undertake External Service Mapping to identify what other Councils, governments, institutions and agencies are already doing for international students</p> <p>Conduct Focus Groups of international students to identify priority issues in conjunction with Darebin Ethnic Communities Council, La Trobe University, NMIT</p> <p>Gather accommodation-related data both anecdotal and quantitative to inform policy and program directions</p> <p>Negotiate with mainstream services better access by international students to existing Support Programs to address social issues inc pregnancy, AIDS, problem gambling, alcohol and drug issues, etc.</p>

5. Housing specific issues

Providing affordable housing for international students is a complex task because as with any individual, family or group, there will be a diversity of needs and wants which must be considered.

The 'homestay' response is one type of housing product on the market which offers variety and affordability. A fuller discussion of this model is outlined in the *Towards a Terms of Reference for Housing Responses* paper.

Diverse clients

A commonly held view is that, in the main, international students arrive 'cashed up' with a generous stipend to meet their every need, provided by wealthy parents. While some rent inner city apartments and undertake prestigious study options, there are many more who do not fall within this category and are resentful at being regarded as 'cash cows', ripe for exploitation.

These students would be more accurately described as 'cash strapped', supported by a high interest loan negotiated by struggling parents who would be otherwise unable to provide for their children's education and living expenses in Australia.

These students face less ideal circumstances in which they work significant hours usually at night, are paid below award wages 'under the table', and 'hot bed' for eight hours in modest houses accommodating between 20 and 60 students.

Anecdotal reports indicate that these students are allowed to sleep during classes so that they will fulfil the attendance requirements of courses like hairdressing and hospitality, careers which hold little interest for them. Their goal is simply, PR (permanent residency) and many unscrupulous registered training authorities assist them reach their goal in unorthodox ways. It is a matter of choice. It is not in their best interests to access mainstream Australia for legal reasons.

The provision of diverse housing options that are safe, compliant and affordable, remains the challenge.

Current housing issues faced by overseas students

- Insufficient affordable rental stock
- Students want a diversity of housing options
- Lack of coordination of services for international students
- Few emergency support options specifically for international students – pregnancy, rape, sexual exploitation, assault, theft, racist incidents
- Consequences of planning, building and health regulations compliance may be homelessness
- Discrimination against international students is prevalent in the rental market
- Students are not accessing existing support services including utilising complaints mechanisms
- Safety of person and property.

Council as homestay placement agency

Two factors prompted Council to request a feasibility study into a homestay option for international students. These were the housing pressure being felt by international students coupled with a high level of sole occupancy households, primarily of older people, in the Darebin local government area. What better match than for residents with spare rooms to offer board and lodging for international students, with mutually beneficial outcomes.

The ‘homestay’ concept

Homestay or private board is where a person lives with a family, couple or single person in their own home, close to public transport. The ‘guest’ is required to compromise living arrangements and routines and expectations of the household.

If the matching of host and student is successful, both parties can be enriched by the experience through learning about another culture, cuisine and way of life and developing a relationship or friend for life.

There are three main types of homestay arrangements:

- *Full board* – consists of a furnished room, two or three meals per day and bills (except telephone and internet), with some homestay providers offering a laundry service. Cost: between \$170 - \$300 per week
- *Part board* - includes a furnished room and bills (except telephone and internet). Cooking and laundry facilities are made available in the house. Cost: between \$120 - \$180 per week
- *Board in exchange* - provides free or low cost housing in return for household duties such as weekly house cleaning and/or childcare. The number of labour hours expected is negotiated at the outset.

Generally, students living in private board or homestay are not covered by the Residential Tenancies Act 1997. Students interested in the homestay option need to make direct contact with a private homestay provider or a homestay placement agency. These agencies organise the placement of students into homes and usually charge a fee of up to \$200 for their services.

Role of homestay placement agencies

The Homestay placement agency matches student with host and provides accommodation options, airport transfers, information relating to the Australian culture, support to both host and student in resolving conflicts and deal with social problems that some students encounter when they first come to Australia.

The agency ensures the student is covered by contents insurance and the host is covered for theft and malicious damage. Agencies also regularly visit the premises and confirm police checks for everyone in the household over 17 years. Some agencies provide a 24 hour helpline for legal, medical and interpreter services and an on-call service for critical issues including illness, accident or if a victim of crime.

There are numerous homestay placement agencies and providers in Melbourne including TCN Homestay (Macleod, affiliated with Aust Homestay Assoc), Student Accommodation Services (Fairfield), Homestay Australia (Melbourne City) and Family Stay Australia (Glen Waverley).

An option for Council?

A preliminary investigation has revealed that it makes sense for Council to consider supporting a 'homestay' option to relieve the 'housing stress' of overseas students, for the following reasons:

- There are many sole occupancy households as well as family dwellings with spare rooms in Darebin local government area
- Current housing stocks are inadequate for the number of international students which are set to double in the next year in this northern area
- International students are seeking a diversity of housing options to suit their financial and lifestyle choices
- Council is acknowledged for actively addressing the housing shortage for international students.

The role Council decides to play in the support of a 'homestay' option is of great importance. If Council were to pursue more informal arrangements, including promoting the concept of home stay and encouraging Darebin residents with spare rooms to consider renting them out to international students, this could be easily achieved without great cost and risk.

If, however Council were to consider a more formal homestay option, then the following factors need to be considered:

- Establishing a homestay initiative is not necessarily a local government role
- There is already a number of homestay placement agencies operating in Melbourne and primarily geared to the international student market
- There is flexibility of homestay product and price ranging from full board to board in exchange
- The Overseas Student Education Experience Taskforce is also considering the 'homestay' option, recommending that "the Victorian Government enters into discussions with

education providers and homestay groups with a view to increasing the role that homestay plays in the suite of accommodation options open to adult overseas students.” (p11, Taskforce Report, Dec 2008)

- The homestay model is suitable only to a limited market as the student is required to make many compromises to meet the expectations of the host’s household
- A homestay agency is a costly enterprise to establish and maintain with recurrent infrastructure and operating costs including wages particularly overtime costs, maintenance of premises, compliance with Australian laws, duty of care, etc.
- Unregulated arrangements in households could lead to financial, emotional, physical and sexual exploitation by the host and property damage and other forms of abuse by the student
- Mediation of complex issues including intergenerational conflicts, religious and cultural misunderstandings and different life priorities could prove an ongoing challenge
- A Council managed homestay operation could be classified ‘high risk’ with detrimental impacts on Council if a major incident involving a host or student occurred.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Environmental Sustainability

Not applicable.

Social Inclusion and Diversity

In line with Human Rights Check List; Social Inclusion Frameworks; Diversity Policy and Council’s commitments to respect, community diversity and wellbeing.

Other

Not applicable.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There will be resource implications for Council in responding to the issues of international students. While preliminary investigations can be absorbed into current financial arrangements, the conducting of focus groups and the development of networking and service responses will require additional funding.

FUTURE ACTIONS

- Meetings with key stakeholders relevant to international student issues by 31 May 2009
- Conducting of focus groups of international students by 31 May 2009
- Determination of Darebin’s response to international student issues by 30 June 2009.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- The Overseas Student Education Experience Taskforce Report (Dec 2008)
- Darebin Ethnic Communities Council Public Forum Report: International Students Living in Darebin (Nov 2008)
- Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission submission to Victorian Overseas Student Taskforce (Oct 2008)
- Australian Social Trends: International Students in Australia Article (ABS, 2007)
- International Students in Darebin Project Report (May 2006).

7.8

WOMEN'S POLICY AND GENDER EQUITY

MINUTE NO. 143

AUTHOR: Social Policy Coordinator - Mandy Bathgate**MANAGER:** Manager Social Inclusion and Diversity - John Smith**BUDGET****IMPLICATIONS:** Within budget**SUMMARY:**

This report outlines directions and activities in relation to the development of Women's Policy and Gender Equity initiatives as part of the broader social inclusion and diversity agenda within Council. Throughout 2008 Darebin City Council has advanced its track record in the area of women's policy and gender equity. As recognition of this progress, in September 2008, Council was awarded the Victorian Women in Local Government Charter Award. Harnessing significant interest across key areas of Council, work is set to continue throughout 2009. A renewed emphasis on gender issues at the State and Federal levels has manifested in a range of policy initiatives. These include (but are not limited to):

- *Victorian Women's Health and Wellbeing Strategy Stage Two: Gender and diversity lens for health and human services 2006-2010*
- *Women's Health Matters: A 10 Point Plan for Victorian Women's Health 2006-2010*
- *National Framework for Women in Local Government 2001*
- *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2009-2021*
- *Victorian Violence against Women and Children Prevention Plan 2009-2019* is presently being developed for release in November 2009, with an officer from Darebin Council invited to sit on the Plan's working group.

The *10 Point Plan* listed above was formally endorsed by Council at its meeting held on 3 July 2006. The *Plan* is an overarching framework from which a range of strategies and projects such as the *Safe, Well and Connected Plan* and *Local Government Capacity Building Project* have been developed by the Victorian health sector.

CONSULTATION:

Internal consultation.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr. T. Laurence

SECONDED: Cr. V. Fontana

THAT:

- (1) Council note the directions outlined in the report towards increasing gender equity within the organisation and the community.
- (2) A further report be provided following a forum exploring the role and composition of a Women's Community Advisory Committee.

CARRIED

REPORT**CORE ISSUES**

The Darebin Women's Policy and Gender Equity initiative seeks to bring key areas within Council together in order to advance identified priority areas across Council plans. The benefits of this approach include:

- An integrated, whole-of-council/community approach in relation to women's policy
- Greater (or continuing) inclusion/representation and participation in local democracy by women across Darebin through advocacy, community engagement and community education
- Strengthened social and economic participation by women in Darebin
- Darebin as a leading employer – gender and workplace equity/leadership/workforce diversity
- More informed Council planning and decision making across a range of areas to include gender considerations. This includes considerations of policies, plans and decisions against the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.
- More timely response to State and Federal Government policy setting and sector development around gender equity/women's health in relation to social, economic and environmental challenges.

Gender Equity and Diversity Working Group

The Gender Equity and Diversity Working Group was established following internal consultation and research during 2008. Membership includes:

- General Manager, Communities and Culture
- Manager, Organisational Development
- Manager, Darebin Libraries
- Manager, Leisure Services
- Human Rights Project Officer
- Northern Interfaith Family Violence Project Officer

- Coordinator, Social Policy, Social Inclusion and Diversity
- Research Assistant, Social Inclusion and Diversity.

Objectives of the Working Group include:

- Increase the participation of women in local government and decision-making
- Achieve equal opportunity for women in the workforce
- Reduce and prevent violence against women
- To disseminate information to the broader organization
- To provide opportunities for members to increase their knowledge of gender equity and inclusion strategies.

Women's Participation - Active Citizenship and Diversity

Darebin Council has a strong track record in promoting diversity and supporting active citizenship and participation through formal committees of Council such as Darebin Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Council, Darebin Interfaith Council and advisory bodies such as the Darebin Ethnic Communities Council. Breakdown of participation by gender and the experience of women on these groups is yet to be understood. This information will be mapped in more detail as part of the Community Engagement Project and will help inform Council responses in this area.

Leisure services, sports and recreation are other well established avenues for promoting active participation. Leisure Services is about to commence development of a new Leisure Strategy and work will include research into resource allocation around gender to ensure equitable allocation.

Council also coordinates a range of initiatives marking International Women's Day each year celebrating the achievements of women in the Darebin community.

Council is committed to extending community engagement and to undertaking effective community consultation. The development of Council's community engagement framework will need to take into account the specific needs of women.

Workforce planning

Under Collective Agreements, Darebin City Council was one of the first Councils to increase paid parental leave to 15 weeks. It also expanded the definition of family to include carers leave, and was one of only three Councils that upgraded all Home Carers to the next classification level in recognition of the high proportion of women in this sector (90%). Cultural leave is another provision. Sixty-four percent of Darebin's workforce is female with the majority sitting within Band Six or under. Nine of the 23 Senior Officers are women. Responsive workplace policies include family work-life balance initiatives and annual diversity training.

Family Violence and Preventing Violence Against Women

Along with targeted services such as Maternal and Child Health and Family Services, Council has received three years funding from VicHealth (2008-2011) to undertake the Northern Interfaith Preventing Violence Against Women Project, working with faith leaders and their communities across the Northern Region to build capacity and develop primary violence prevention strategies.

Council also received philanthropic funding through Helen Macpherson Smith Trust (February 2007 – December 2008) to employ a Family Violence Project Worker to support local government to engage in family violence, develop communication tools and nurture local partnerships to reduce family violence. With the remaining \$11,000 of this grant, Council has established a 1 day (.2 EFT) temporary part-time position (12 months) within the Community Access, Health and Safety Unit to take over responsibility for convening the highly successful Darebin Domestic Violence Network and supporting other family violence initiatives where possible. It should be noted that this one day per week position is limited in its capacity to undertake the work of the previous Family Violence Project Worker, for example: membership of Council's Elder Abuse Working Group, Gender Equity Working Group and Northern Region Strategic Family Violence Network; development and coordination of Northern Region Family Violence Help Cards; and coordination of Council's White Ribbon Action Team initiatives. The project achieved many tangible outcomes and learnings, and in particular, has identified the potential for a position to share expertise, build capacity, value-add and support other areas of Council to engage in preventing violence against women.

A new initiatives bid has therefore been submitted seeking funding to employ a Preventing Violence Against Women Officer in order to embed violence prevention across Council, to sustain this critical work and not lose the momentum and impact the position has achieved. The project has demonstrated local government is critical to delivering a suite of mutually reinforcing strategies to tackle an issue described by the Prime Minister as "the great silent crime of our time".

Darebin Human Rights Project

The Darebin Human Rights Project and the development of a Human Rights and Social Inclusion Framework will be an important influence in policy development around gender equity and women's health through a rights based approach. The Charter protects and promotes the civil and political rights of all Victorians, but provides for particular attention to be paid to groups vulnerable to discrimination and denial of rights. This means that rights such as the right to take part in public life must be protected and promoted by Council and that it is reasonable to have a specific focus on the rights of women based on evidence of gender-based discrimination (or other attributes such as pregnancy).

Darebin Women's Community Advisory Committee - Strengthening a public culture of participatory democracy

Community engagement enhances participatory democracy and builds the capacity of community, other stakeholders and Council to respond to human, social and economic challenges. Community engagement is critical to the work Council does - and remains a continuing priority for Council:

- As required by relevant legislation such as the Local Government Act, Victoria 1989 'that require Councils to consult';
- As stated in the Victorian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Charter which explicitly states that people have a right to participate in decisions that effect their lives; and
- As evidenced in the range of plans, policies and projects that support this work such as the Council Plan, Municipal Public Health Plan, Human Rights and Social Inclusion Framework, Diversity Policy and Community Engagement Project.

Direct platforms such as Committees and Advisory Bodies are a particularly effective mechanism to support active community participation across a diverse range of issues and groups. Currently Darebin Council has six standing committees and 26 community advisory committees. Investigation into the establishment of a new Darebin Women's Community Advisory Committee fits clearly within these priorities. The potential benefit of such a Committee would be to strengthen and increase women's public participation, civic engagement and social inclusion, enabling Council to respond more effectively to the particular needs of women within our community.

City of Darebin Council Plan 2009-2013

Inequity and disadvantage for women remain – and are significant public health issues that Council, through municipal health plans, council plans, services and targeted strategies, is in a good position to respond to.

- Women comprise slightly more than half the State population 50.9 per cent or 2,365,889 and yet are still paid less than men for jobs of equal value or comparative worth.
- Victorian women's average weekly earnings are 20% lower than those of Victorian men.
- Women are over-represented in the lower income brackets and under-represented in higher income brackets.
- 15% of families with children under 15 are one-parent families. Of these 83% have female head of family.
- Even when employed, women are still largely responsible for looking after their homes and families.
- Women constitute a particularly large segment of the older/senior population. (In the northern metro region there are higher proportions of women than men living alone and aged 65 and over).
- Family violence is the leading contributor to preventable death, disability and illness of Victorian women aged 15-45 years and has major implications on workforce participation.
- Women, as a group, currently have one third the super savings of men. There is a significant difference between the superannuation balances of men and women; current payouts for women are around \$37K compared with \$110K. For women in the 45 – 59 year age group, 50% have less than \$8000 in superannuation savings.
- The global economic crisis will have further impact on women's wellbeing and equity.

The new Council Plan makes clear commitments around leadership, engagement and community wellbeing that, if supported with clear policy frameworks and leadership commitments across Council, will have positive impact on women in Darebin over the next term and beyond.

Municipal Community Health and Wellbeing Plan 2009-2012

Members of the Gender Equity Working Group have been involved in planning processes to place a gender lens – as a key social determinant influencing health and wellbeing, patterns of illness and behaviours specific to different groups of women and men – within the Municipal Community Health and Wellbeing Plan 2009-2012. This is in line with the Environments for Health Municipal Public Health Planning Framework and Victorian Women's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Safe, Well and Connected: Victorian Local Government Action Plan for Women's Health 2008-2012

During Victorian Government elections in November 2008, Women's Health In the North, as part of a state-wide Local Government Capacity Building Project, asked Council candidates to commit to the *Safe, Well and Connected: Victorian Local Government Action Plan for Women's Health 2008-2012*. This same period saw Council working to advance our own commitment to women's health and wellbeing through the Women's Policy and Gender Equity Initiative.

In December Women's Health in the North contacted the three Darebin Councillors who made a commitment to the *Safe, Well and Connected Plan* and asked to present a briefing to Councillors on current issues impacting on women's health in the Northern region and to provide more detail in relation to the *Safe, Well and Connected Plan and Local Government Capacity Building Project*. Women's Health in the North (WHIN) is the agency responsible for advancing these two projects across the northern region Councils of Moreland, Yarra, Banyule, Nillumbik, Hume, Whittlesea and Darebin.

CEO Michael Ulbrick was also contacted with a similar request and on 18 December 2008, Jan Black, General Manager Communities and Culture, responded on Council's behalf with an invitation for WHIN to provide a briefing to Council. This briefing is scheduled for 25 May 2009.

The *Safe, Well and Connected Plan* outlines nine actions for local councils to improve women's health in their community. Some commitments included within the plan are to develop a women's health and wellbeing strategy for women within their municipality; be involved in a violence against women prevention strategy for the northern region; consider mental illness, psychiatric and intellectual disability in Council disability strategies; and to support family friendly workplace practices.

A total of 93 candidates running in the 2008 Council elections in the northern metropolitan region of Melbourne declared their commitment to women's health and wellbeing in their respective communities including a number of Darebin candidates and elected Councillors.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS**Environmental Sustainability**

Not applicable.

Social Inclusion and Diversity

Aligns with Human Rights Check List; Darebin Social Inclusion Framework; Diversity Policy and Council's broader commitment to respect, community diversity and wellbeing.

Other

Not applicable.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Within budget.

FUTURE ACTIONS

- Women's Health in the North to present at the Councillor Briefing Session on 25 May 2009 as part of ongoing strategies in relation to *Safe, Well and Connected Plan* and *Local Government Capacity Building Project*.
- Workforce planning - Darebin will be liaising with Moreland and Bendigo Council who have recently conducted a gender pay equity project to understand any further actions that maybe needed in this area.
- Members of the Gender Equity Working Group to continue to work closely with relevant Council officers around application of a gender-lens framework within the Municipal Community Health and Wellbeing Plan 2009-2012 and the Darebin Diversity Policy. Continued research to build evidence of women's disadvantage and wellbeing in Darebin to inform planning.
- Council to continue engagement through participation on Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) Women's Policy Working Group.
- Planning to commence regarding the National Year of Women in Local Government 2010.
- The Gender Equity Working Group to commence planning community workshops in partnership with key stakeholders as part of Council's community engagement strategy to increase women's participation on key decision making forums in both government and community. This includes conducting a forum to explore the role and composition of a Women's Advisory Committee.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- 4 May 2009 Reducing Violence Report to Council
- 18 May 2009 Human Rights Report to Council
- Safe, Well and Connected: Victorian Local Government Action Plan for Women's Health 2008-2012
- Gender and diversity lens for health and human services: Victorian Women's Health and Wellbeing Strategy Stage Two: 2006 -2010
- 10 Point Health Plan for Victorian Women's Health 2006-2010
- Australian Local Government Association: National Framework for Women in Local Government 2007
- Council Minutes 3 July 2006 endorsing 10 Point Plan for Victorian Women's Health 2006-2010

7.9 BROADSCALE ENERGY AND WATER PROGRAM OPTIONS**MINUTE NO. 144****AUTHOR:** General Manager Environment and Amenity - Libby Hynes**MANAGER:** Chief Executive Officer - Michael Ulbrick**BUDGET****IMPLICATIONS:** \$90,000 is recommended to be referred to the 2009/2010 budget considerations to implement proposals.**SUMMARY:**

Council resolved at its meeting on 16 February, 2009 *“that Council Officers provide a report within six weeks outlining possible options and costings to scope the development and delivery of a broad-scale energy and water program for Darebin households and businesses”*

This report responds to this request and recommends that Council contribute to and participate in feasibility studies on these issues as well as developing a procurement process to identify provider/s to supply, install and finance solar hot water systems or energy efficient alternatives, with payment methods including no up front cost and quarterly payments commensurate with anticipated savings.

A number of actions consistent with the draft Community Climate Change Action Plan (CCCAP) are also recommended within the report.

CONSULTATION:

Yarra Council, Moreland Energy Foundation, Darebin Environmental Reference Group (DERG)

COUNCIL RESOLUTION**MOVED:** Cr. T. McCarthy**SECONDED:** Cr. T. Laurence**THAT:**

- (1) Council refer the proposed *Feasibility Study for Financing Options and Bulk Solar Hot Water Roll Out* project estimated to cost \$90,000 to the 2009/2010 budget process for consideration.
- (2) Council note that the projects outlined in this report are included in the draft Community Climate Change Action Plan for community consultation and that a further report will be received by Council following consultation in June 2009.

CARRIED

REPORT

BACKGROUND

Council resolved at its meeting on 16 February, 2009 *that Council Officers provide a report within six weeks outlining possible options and costings to scope the development and delivery of a broad-scale energy and water program for Darebin households and businesses.*

The program may include:

- *Energy auditing and energy efficiency measures*
- *Solar hot water units and photovoltaic panels*
- *Water tanks and water saving technologies.*

In line with Council's renewed commitment to equity and social inclusion, the program should incorporate innovative financing arrangements that allow any household or business to pay off their investment over a number of years, in line with the savings they make on their energy and water bills. Furthermore, the program should seek to address and overcome the key barriers (eg. upfront cost, lack of information) to adoption of renewable energy and water saving measures by households and businesses, thereby encouraging the broadest possible participation across the municipality.

In preparing the initial report on options and costings to scope such a program, Officers will liaise with Yarra City Council, Moreland Energy Foundation and other organisations currently exploring similar programs to see what opportunities exist for collaboration and cost saving."

Council is considering the release of the draft Community Climate Change Action Plan (CCCAP) for consultation as a separate report in this Council meeting (see Report No. 7.10) and the facilitation of a large scale roll out of environmental technologies has been identified as a priority in the draft CCCAP.

CORE ISSUES

Darebin Council have already been undertaking relevant work in the areas requested and the following table summarises these programs:

Program	Details	Results & comments
Community Power is a partnership between Darebin, Moreland and Whitehorse Councils, the Moreland Energy Foundation and Origin to encourage residents and businesses to purchase GreenPower. The program aims to increase the awareness and uptake of GreenPower.	The program has included energy audits and energy advice. The new program includes attractive GreenPower offers for Darebin, Moreland and Whitehorse residents and businesses.	Currently 600 households (with more than 300 in Darebin) saving 2722 tonnes/year. Uptake to be increased with new offer and promotions to businesses to commence. Cost to Council of \$25,000 annually.
Solar panel offer Darebin had the opportunity of promoting	1kW Solar panels were offered by EcoKinetics and timing was scheduled to concur with the end of	More than 150 residents took up this offer. 150 1kW panels is estimated to equate to 285 annual

Program	Details	Results & comments
the City of Manningham photovoltaic panel Provider offer to Darebin residents – residents get to purchase solar panels at a lower rate due to bulk brokering.	the \$8,000 Federal rebate for solar panels.	tonnes (but if RECs were surrendered this is likely to be on sold so someone else claims emission reductions). Cost to Council in promoting the offer including a well attended forum is estimated to be \$3,000.
Live Green with LESS program available to all Darebin residents	Through the Live Green with LESS program all Darebin residents will have access to free home visits and replacement of incandescent light globes with energy efficient compact fluorescents and showerheads converted to 3star water efficient options.	This program is offered at no cost to Council. Promotions (and costs of recycling old globes) by Council will be in the range of \$8,000. If 30% of households take up the offer - significant reductions of around 19,800 tonnes CO2 per year will be achieved.
East Reservoir Neighbourhood Renewal. - Water tank & grey water funding application	The Sustainability Fund round closing in late April is specifically for Neighbourhood Renewal Areas. Projects need to demonstrate resource (waste, energy or water) savings and can be funded up to \$90,000 over three years. The project proposal is still in the development phase with community consultation to date identifying water tanks and grey water systems as the priority focus. Full project details are yet to be developed.	If this project ends up consisting of a bulk purchase of rainwater tanks and/or grey water systems it could be a useful trial to assess the potential for roll-out more broadly across the municipality.
Green Precinct Submission – “Pooling our resources”	Council recently submitted a funding application for 50% funding of a \$3 million project to reduce energy and water use at Darebin’s 2 recreation centres in addition to a community engagement program including bulk purchasing schemes for household energy and water efficient products.	If the submission is successful the community engagement program is anticipated to cost Council \$425,000 over 3 years. The program also includes a challenge program and a seminar series.
CALD sustainability fund submission. An application has been submitted to the	A Community and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community will be engaged in each of the participating municipalities to assist	\$72,000 has been sought from the Sustainability Accord with partners contributing \$12,000 in-kind support each.

Program	Details	Results & comments
Sustainability Accord funding round in January 2009. Darebin has applied as the lead Council in partnership with the City of Yarra and Greater Shepparton.	in the translation and promotion of environmentally relevant material into the community language. Focus groups will be held with community volunteers from each community to assist with the development of relevant information and circulation. A seminar will be held to celebrate the launch of translated information and further engage community members in taking action. Community Champions will be supported and encouraged to promote environmental action. The program will be well promoted in community newspapers and community radio interviews will be pursued.	Evaluation will occur via survey forms of participants, direct environmental savings that can be attributed to the program are expected to be small. Darebin will be advised in April 2009 if we are short-listed to put in a full application and successful applicants advised in December.
Impact of Climate Change and Older People project. The Department of Human Services has provided funding of \$60,000 to Darebin's Home Support Services Unit to ameliorate the impact of climate change for frail elderly people in their homes. Project to be completed by the end of the financial year.	Initial discussions with Home Support Services have identified a focus on insulation. Eligible residents would be assisted in applying for the Federal Government's \$1,600 rebates and funding would be used to assist residents with inadequate insulation to bring theirs up to standard. Weather sealing may also be pursued as part of the same program.	This project will be delivered as a pilot to assess its potential for future roll-out to other vulnerable/disadvantaged members of the community. If insulation is installed in 200 households, greenhouse savings will be in the order of 400 tonnes.
Sustainable homes. Seminar series in partnership with Banyule and Whittlesea City Councils. 2009 is the final year of program delivery under the Sustainability Fund grant; other grant options are being pursued.	Inspirational events eg. showcasing Sustainable Living and six practical workshops with the themes of water efficiency, energy efficiency, buying green and reducing waste, sustainable gardening, transport and food are delivered over the course of the year. Presentations by experts in the field and case studies by local residents focus on simple and inexpensive actions. Participants are invited at the end of each workshop to make six commitments towards increasing their sustainable living based on the information presented	Funded 80% through the Sustainability Accord for a total of ~\$400,000/yr over 3 years. Estimated annual greenhouse savings of 1,635 tonnes a year and water savings of 24,511kL.

Program	Details	Results & comments
	at that event and self-assessments. Those that complete this process and make commitments are eligible for free starter kits.	

What others are doing

Moreland Energy Foundation Limited (MEFL)

MEFL is an independent not-for-profit organization established by the Moreland City Council to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the municipality. Moreland Energy Foundation was established with significant funding through the sale of the Brunswick Electricity Supply Department and is now subsidised by an annual payment of \$300,000 from Moreland Council. MEFL works with households, businesses, schools and community groups helping to reduce wasteful energy use, save money on power bills and make buildings more comfortable to live and work in all year round.

MEFL are responsible for delivering and facilitating Moreland Solar City (part funded from the Federal Solar Cities program) including 4 sub projects: Zero Carbon Moreland, Moreland Energy Services, Energy Hub and the Coburg Initiative.

- The Coburg Initiative aims to influence the major redevelopment of Coburg to lead in urban sustainability. MEFL are concentrating on assisting the integration of sustainable design, technology and distributed power generation into the broader Coburg initiative.
- Zero Carbon Moreland is a community emissions reduction campaign that is targeting 750 households and 250 businesses to reduce emissions through energy efficiency, purchase of GreenPower, sustainable transport and reducing food miles.
- The Energy Hub aims to deliver energy efficient services to low income households with the Brotherhood of St Laurence. A pilot of 200 homes will take place later this year with 1,000 households completed by 2011. The project also aims to employ and skill 8 traineeships.
- Moreland Energy Services aims to develop distributed generation and municipal energy management. Part of this brief includes scoping and development of financial and technical models to drive public and private investment in efficient energy management and sustainable energy generation. A brief for a feasibility assessment to develop an “*aggregated investment structure to facilitate energy services and microgeneration investment – buyers group, community coop, or similar structure that facilitates community and private investment*” is currently being developed. Initial discussions with MEFL on including Darebin requirements as part of this brief have been positive.

Yarra Council

Yarra Council has recently engaged consultants to prepare a report including the following deliverables:

- Report on potential projects aimed at achieving large-scale greenhouse gas reductions within the municipality, including off-setting options,
- Provide an overview of the shortcomings and benefits of different models that may be established to conduct programs for large scale emissions reduction, including an estimate of upfront costs for establishment and ongoing operation, for models including:
 - Establishing an additional unit within Council's structure to deliver community greenhouse programs
 - Establishing a separate legal entity linked to and supported by Council with the ability to explore initiatives like bulk purchasing of power to sell onto residents
 - Establishing a separate entity in conjunction with another neighbouring Council, potentially one of the Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) member Councils
 - Establishing a subset of an existing body like Moreland Energy Foundation (MEFL) or a service delivery arm like Carbon Neutral Newcastle.
- Identify potential funding opportunities to reduce household / business upfront cost barriers (eg. rate rebates, links to external funding sources etc).

The report is anticipated to be complete in mid April.

Additionally the Cities of Yarra and Melbourne have jointly requested Expressions of Interest for one or more Victorian Energy Efficiency Target (VEET) accredited agencies to provide comprehensive retrofits to the maximum possible number of households within their regions. Expressions of Interest were being evaluated at the time of writing this report. Darebin has endorsed and promoted LESS to carry out these activities and the program has commenced.

Other initiatives

Energy and Water Task Force - This program is aimed at assisting pensioners and low-income Victorians to retrofit their homes through insulation and draught stopping to reduce their energy costs and improve the comfort and quality of their homes. This program will continue to provide job training and employment opportunities for unemployed Victorians. Sustainability Victoria is the lead agency for this program which was funded \$600,000 in 2006/7. The retrofitting program is currently delivered by the Brotherhood of St Laurence under contract to Sustainability Victoria.

State and Federal Government rebates – are summarised in **Appendix A**.

Green Homes Loan & Assessors

The Australian Government's Green Loans Program will assist an estimated 200,000 Australian households (earning less than \$250,000 annually) to install solar, water saving, and energy efficient products providing access to low interest Green Loans of up to \$10,000 and detailed sustainability assessments. Details of the scheme were not finalised at the time of writing this report and are expected to be released mid 2009.

Overseas – Woking Council UK

Woking Council in the UK is recognised as a leader in adopting greener energy technologies. Several combined heat and power stations provide district heating and electricity, and electricity is also provided by a combination of hydrogen fuel cells and solar cells dispersed throughout the borough. These are linked via an innovative private electricity distribution system operating completely independently of the public power grid. It has been reported that the borough saves UK£974,000 a year in energy costs if the installation costs are ignored. By March 2004 the initiatives had also cut the borough's carbon emissions by 17.24% and those of the Council by 77.4%.

Energy efficiency advice and services have been a key part of Woking's strategy. Over 3,700 households have been provided with energy conservation grants to provide full insulation measures. This has helped the Council achieve a 30 per cent improvement in energy efficiency in the borough's housing stock since 1996. Woking has been working on this model since 1996 and has sunk significant capital funds into the project through grants and capital raising.

Different community needs and barriers

It is known from both Darebin and broader state and national surveys that key barriers to reducing emissions are primarily cost, information and time. Households and businesses generally represent very different energy and water usage. There are over 55,000 households in Darebin and just under 5000 businesses, but as detailed in the Community Climate Change Action Plan businesses are estimated to produce around 50% of the municipality's greenhouse emissions. Businesses differ greatly and it is likely that a simple broad scale roll out of a technology would not necessarily obtain the best benefit for an individual business.

Key barriers for renters and landlords are split incentives (landlords may not be interested in efficiency measures with upfront costs as they would not normally receive benefits from lower energy or water bills). Models need to address these barriers to be successful in driving long term change. From household survey data - 22% of Darebin households are renting. Whilst survey data regarding commercial premises rental situations are not available it is anticipated that the majority of these businesses (excluding larger companies with purpose built factories) are renting.

Disadvantage is a key issue with 1 in 7 Darebin households earning \$15,000 or less. Age and ability to install energy/water efficiency devices are also issues. In terms of a social justice response additional support should be considered for those most disadvantaged, to enable savings and so that all households can make a contribution.

The type of residential building may also present barriers. 11% of households in Darebin are flats or apartments. This may provide restriction to fitting of energy and water efficiency devices due to both space and shared ownership of: roofs, hot water systems and utility billing. An additional 3% of dwellings are leased by DHS, these are generally being retrofitted by State Government programs.

Darebin's culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities have specific information barriers and further work engaging with CALD communities is required to deliver culturally relevant programs and support.

Additionally there are other types of organisations, education and health institutions who could benefit from a broad scale roll out program but generally are under another government's jurisdiction. For example all schools are eligible for the Federal Solar Schools program.

Current Energy and Water Saving Technologies

The following table summarises current energy and water saving technologies available, including costs, anticipated annual environmental and financial savings and a simple pay back time. ¹

Technology	Current up front cost to Darebin residents (including rebates and RECs)	Yearly saving tonnes CO ₂ /water	Yearly saving* \$	Simple payback time (years)	Comments
Upgrade house with 12 Compact fluorescent light globes (CFLs) – Cost: \$70	\$0	1 tonne	\$105	0	Available for free from LESS
Low water showerhead Cost \$95	\$0	0.4 tonne 67kl water	\$180 energy and water	0	Available for free from LESS
Weather sealing	\$420	Up to 1 tonne	Up to \$112	4	
Ceiling insulation Cost \$1770	\$170 – uninsulated homes \$1,770 if partly insulated.	2 tonne	\$200	<1 7.5	\$1000 rebate for landlords
Energy Audit Cost - \$300	\$300	Up to 1 tonne - depends on measures	depends on measures	Depends on measures	Depends on how comprehensive the audit and the measures undertaken.
Hot water Electric to solar/gas varying cost	\$1,600	3.8 T	\$400	4	Rental issues
Hot water Gas to solar/gas varying cost	\$1,700	0.8 T	\$235	7.2	Rental issues

¹ The following assumptions were used to determine the above information

Average household size, Ceiling insulation was R3.5 installed in a gas heated house. Weather sealing and insulation cost savings were used from a Brotherhood of St Laurence KPMG report, 2008. Insulation emissions reductions were used from Victorian Government. (2008). *What you can do at home.* www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/greenhouse. Solar hot water costings were used for an average 200litre tank and 2 solar collector system. RECs were estimated at \$45 per certificate and it was assumed that the multiplication factors in the Renewable Energy Target legislation were applied (from July 2009) and that no Federal \$8000 rebate was available. Water tanks were plumbed to the toilet and laundry with standard plumbing. Costs for electricity, gas and water were based on current costs .

Technology	Current up front cost to Darebin residents (including rebates and RECs)	Yearly saving tonnes CO ₂ /water	Yearly saving* \$	Simple payback time (years)	Comments
1kW Solar panel Varying cost	\$6,800	1.91 T	\$263	25.8 (lifetime – 25 years?)	Assuming June 30, 2009 RECs Not including proposed Victorian net metering, which has been quoted as providing up to a \$600 yearly refund. Rental issues
Darebin Climate Wise Commercial and Industrial Program (draft CCCAP initiative)	Varies & some rebates available	~2 tonne (target)		< 5	Rental issues will need to be considered
2000 litre water tank (round) Cost - \$2,125	\$1,125	45kl	\$100	11.25	Assuming current \$1,000 rebate
5000 litre water tank (slim line) Cost - \$3,225	\$1,725	45kl	\$100	17.25	Assuming current \$1,500 rebate

The above table was developed from a number of assumptions for the purpose of this report and individual circumstances will impact on installation costs and yearly savings.

Policy Concerns

Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) - To date Darebin has encouraged residents NOT to claim or sell their Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) attached to solar hot water systems or solar panels. Selling RECs effectively transfers the rights to the carbon reductions to the purchaser. This will be a more difficult proposition to put forward from a household's financial perspective, particularly for solar panels, with the Federal Government's removal of the rebate from next financial year and replacing this with REC multipliers. If the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) is introduced in its current form and emissions reductions merely contribute to the National target the issue of ownership of carbon reductions is effectively negated - it won't really matter who owns the RECs as they will all contribute to the 5% target. Selling RECs will however have the perverse effect of reducing Australia's overall renewable energy generation due to the application of the multiplier. So some environmentally concerned individuals are likely to still choose not to do so. It is recommended that Darebin provide information about what selling RECs means so householders can make an informed decision.

Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) If the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme is passed in its current form, all voluntary actions will merely contribute to Australia's National 5% target (or 15% if global agreement is reached) rather than reduce emissions beyond 5% - the link between individual action and aggregate emissions will be broken. For some this may remove the incentive of taking action to reduce emissions and place more emphasis on cost savings - although evidence to date suggests that economic signals are not very effective in encouraging logical energy efficient measures.

Electricity usage - Electricity prices under the CPRS at a carbon cost of \$25 per tonne are estimated to increase by around 18 per cent and gas prices by 12 per cent. Across all households, this would lead to an average increase in spending of \$4 per week on electricity and \$2 per week on gas and other household fuels. Cash assistance to households (89% of low income households will receive 120% - 2.9 million households; 60% of middle income will receive enough to cover the increased cost of living - 2.4 million).

The components of the broad scale roll out being considered would normally include:

- Promotion
- Auditing and advice
- Product sourcing and supply
- Installation – which can range from semi skilled to skilled labor (plumbers and electricians)
- Financing – including upfront cost, billing, management of rebates, RECs and VEECs
- Administration – procurement and partnering.

Broad Scale Roll Out Components

The players/stakeholders, apart from Council who would be involved in a broad scale rollout include:

Energy/Water Service Companies – these can provide all the components in one package. Earth Utility is such a company and currently offering solar hot water and solar panels for quarterly instalments (costed under assumed savings) and no upfront cost. LESS is another – although they are dealing with low cost products able to be funded through Government programs (Victorian Energy Efficiency Certificates). Energy retailers such as Origin are part of this group providing solar panels, hot water and water tanks and currently offer 24 month “no interest” loans for some products.

Product suppliers/installers – these vary from individual plumbers and electricians to large companies. Local examples include the Environment Shop, My Home My Climate, HBIA Pty Ltd, Laser Plumbing Westgarth, Origin Shop Preston, Bunnings and Hot Water Heaven Pty Ltd. EcoKinetics who brokered the recent Solar Panel offer in Darebin are also an example of a product supplier. Some have variable payment terms but most require payment within 12 months.

Financiers – Many banks and credit unions currently offer Green Loans, generally operating as low interest personal loans. Some philanthropic funds operate in this area at the larger scale. Examples of these are the Clinton Climate Initiative, (focusing on the 40 largest cities in the world including Melbourne) the Sustainable Melbourne Fund (Established by the City of Melbourne in 2004, with an investment of \$5 million, investing in projects that enhance the environment and deliver economic benefits for the people of Melbourne. All financial returns are re-invested in future sustainability projects)

Governments of all levels can act as financiers from direct payment through to rebates and market initiatives such as RECs and VEECs. A list of rebates available is attached to this report – see **Appendix A**. The Australian Government's Green Loans Program is described above. Details of the scheme are not yet finalised and are expected to be released mid 2009. Recent newspaper reports stated that there were problems finding partnering banks to finance the project. The Sydney Morning Herald reported on 25 February 2009 *‘It is understood the banks have been reluctant to participate in the scheme because of the low rate of return they would make on the loans and because of the administrative burden they would have to bear’*

Models will depend on the range of products offered and the timings of offers. They could range from a fairly simple offer of one product type to a complete offering of all viable products. They will also depend on the target market, as detailed earlier home occupiers, renters, landlords and businesses all have varying needs. In terms of the player roles there are 3 basic model options. These are discussed below.

Three model options

Option 1 - Council engages a service provider to provide the complete package

As discussed there is at least one service provider on the market, packaging up products, installation and financing in the one service. Currently this can match (and perhaps better) quarterly charges with energy savings of solar panels and hot water, conditional on Government rebates and RECs being surrendered and 20 year loans. This may be limited to certain products – for example water tank financing seems limited to 12 month payment options. Council's role would be limited to the initial procurement process, promotions and a small amount of ongoing administration. This is the type of model being employed with LESS, where the costs of promotion have been included in the current environmental strategy budget. Greater promotion would incur cost. It's estimated that \$70,000 would enable the procurement process as well as fliers, advertising and “market stalls” and appropriate engagement with CALD communities including translations and outreach workers. Possible risks to Council around this process would be limited to reputational risk if the service provider defaulted or provided faulty products, as well as perceived to be taking away markets from local providers.

Option 2 - Council brokers different providers to provide each component

Council could run any number of procurement/partnering processes to find suppliers, installers and financiers. As a general rule the more providers involved, the more complex and costly for Council to administer and the more risk involved to Council. One example of how this could operate is that Council could run tenders/Expression of Interests (EoIs) for bulk purchasing of one or a number of products and could then promote offers as well as a recommended Green Loan (either through Federal Government or a bank). This would incur greater costs to Council through both procurement and promotions. It could be slightly more complex for participants but could possibly reduce costs for them and enable more choice around financing, as well as being better targeted at the different sectors and outcomes. Reputational risk is probably similar to the first option, albeit more providers may mean that even if one defaults, the whole scheme is not jeopardised. A cost estimate would be between \$100,000 to \$130,000 and would require greater timelines to coordinate.

Option 3 - Council brokers different providers and undertakes billing

Council could simplify the process for participants by procuring the services and finances, then undertaking the billing. For example Council would obtain a 20 year loan for the bulk purchasing and pass on loan costs of the purchases to participants through periodic billing. This would be the most costly and risk bound option for Council as it would affect cash flow and loan availability for other Council projects as well as directly involving Council in the energy services transaction, possibly incurring liability around faulty products etc. A cost estimate for this type of arrangement would be \$200,000 plus. Legal and ongoing administration fees would be major components.

Conclusion

Taking the above issues into account Options 1 and 2 offer the best outcomes for our community. The following observations and actions for consideration in the 2009/2010 budget have been developed from this report.

There is a lot of interest and work being undertaken in this area by governments, business and organisations. Policy introduction such as the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) and Renewable Energy Target (RET) legislation expected later this year may affect both environmental and financial returns of projects.

Action: Officers continue discussions with MEFL and Yarra Council and where applicable contribute to and participate in their feasibility studies on these issues – estimated cost of \$20,000.

The best community paybacks are aligned with low cost and high payback energy efficiency measures. Complementary benefits of insulation and weather sealing measures would be ensuring that disadvantaged members of the community and particularly the very old and the very young are less vulnerable to extreme temperatures, such as the recent heat wave. This is a critical health and adaptation issue for our communities. The accompanying 20 April 2009 Council report on the CCCAP (see Report No. 7.10) provides further information on these issues and recommends the following action. This would incorporate both owner occupied and rental accommodation.

Action: Officers review the results of Darebin's Impact of Older People and Climate Change program and the MEFL Energy Hub program and on this basis commence the roll-out of an energy efficiency program to low income/concession card holder households.

All Darebin households (with more than 4 incandescent light globes currently installed) are able to access the LESS program (a free broad scale roll out of Compact Fluorescent Light globes and low water shower heads) and this program will be evaluated to determine further work required in this area following implementation in 2009.

Action: Review and evaluate LESS program following implementation – within current budget.

Programs enabling “no up front cost” and quarterly paybacks commensurate with energy savings are already available to the community for solar hot water and solar panels – although this is contingent on current rebates and RECs and may change with the new Renewable Energy Target (RET) legislation in July 2009. Solar Hot water packages are still likely to be feasible, however solar panels may not attract the paybacks that have been achieved to date. (The table above shows paybacks longer than 20 year loan timescale based on new RECs scheme, but not taking into account net metering). This may vary if RECs increase significantly in price. Solar hot water currently provides better returns than solar panels as it is more cost effective and on average returns higher greenhouse savings.

Action: Council commence a procurement process (EoI or partnering) to identify provider/s to supply, install and finance solar hot water systems or energy efficient alternatives, with payment

methods including no up front cost and quarterly payments commensurate with anticipated savings. Partnership opportunities with other NAGA Councils will also be scoped to maximise outcomes and reduce costs. – estimated cost of \$70,000.

Targeted energy efficiency programs for small businesses and industry can be very effective in reducing emissions and costs. The accompanying 20 April 2009 Council report on the CCCAP (see Report No. 7.10) provides further information on these issues and recommends the following action.

Action: Council engages a part-time Sustainable Business Officer to co-ordinate and promote the Darebin Green Business Program including:

- **Run the expression of interest process to appoint an energy efficiency consultancy to deliver the program**
- **Promote and sign-up businesses to the program**
- **Scope and trial the application of this model to industrial premises**
- **Monitor, review and report annually on the success of the program**

The draft CCCAP strategy also provides further action regarding improving information and promotion to CALD communities as well as further work with all sectors.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Environmental Impacts

Implementation of the proposed actions will assist the Darebin community to reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions and to adapt to the impacts of climate change, including increasing energy costs. Implementation of the proposed actions is not anticipated to have any net negative environmental impacts. Replacement of hot water services may create waste and consideration of recycling and waste reduction alternatives will be required in the Expression of Interest process.

Social Inclusion and Diversity

The actions recommended seek to incorporate innovative financing arrangements that allow any household or business to pay off their investment over a number of years, in line with the savings they make on their energy and water bills. Further actions are included in the draft CCCAP (see Report No. 7.10) which relate to rental properties and improving information and promotion to CALD communities. General practices including translations and use of the multilingual communication line will apply to these actions. Additionally Expression of Interest (EoIs) and feasibility study requirements will require responses to detail services which respond to diverse community needs.

Other

Implementation of the proposed actions is consistent with the objectives of the current Council Plan and the Municipal Strategic Statement. Procurement processes will be conducted in accordance with Council's Procurement Policy.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This report recommends that \$90,000 for proposed actions be referred to the 2009/2010 budget process for consideration. The table below summarises the proposed costs:

Project	Project/Action	Sector	Budget	Comments
Bulk Roll Out	Solar Hot Water Roll-out	Residential	\$70,000	Scope partnership opportunities with other NAGA Councils and MEFL
Bulk Roll Out	Feasibility Study for Financing Options	Residential and potentially commercial/ industrial	\$20,000	In partnership with MEFL. Promote to CALD groups in community languages.

These costs are included in the accompanying Council Report being considered at this meeting entitled Draft Community Climate Change Action Plan – Release for community consultation.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Environment Policy

Darebin Climate Change Action Plan

Council Report 20 April 2009 – Draft Community Climate Change Action Plan – Release for community consultation

**7.10 DRAFT COMMUNITY CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN -
RELEASE FOR COMMUNITY CONSULTATION****MINUTE NO. 145****AUTHOR: Environmental Strategy Coordinator - Michelle Bennett****MANAGER: General Manager Environment and Amenity - Libby Hynes****BUDGET****IMPLICATIONS: \$250,000 referred to the 2009/2010 budget process****SUMMARY:**

This report outlines the process undertaken to develop the draft Community Climate Change Action Plan and the key features of the plan.

The Plan recommends that Council endorse a community greenhouse reduction target of 50% reduction on 2000 levels by 2020 and that Council promote this target and Climate Change Action to the Darebin community.

The report outlines the key priorities and program proposals for consideration in the 2009/2010 budget process for Council to best support the Darebin community to reduce emissions. These programs include: working with disadvantaged and vulnerable members of the community to help them adapt to Climate Change impacts and increasing energy costs; working with Darebin businesses and industry to help them reduce emissions and running costs; engaging and working more effectively with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities; and facilitating a broad scale roll-out of Solar Hot Water. Advocacy work on Climate Change issues will continue to be an ongoing priority for Darebin.

CONSULTATION:

As outlined in the report, the draft Community Climate Change Action Plan has included input from the following consultative processes to date:

- The Darebin Community Climate Change Action Plan Reference Group which has representation from Darebin's diverse community, Traders, the Brotherhood of St Laurence and La Trobe University
- The Climate Change survey undertaken in 2007 with more than 550 respondents
- Six focus groups held in October
- The Community Leaders Forum attended by more than 50 people

The report proposes that the draft be endorsed for further consultation and public comment including two public meetings.

RECOMMENDATION**THAT:**

- (1) Council endorse the *draft Darebin Community Climate Change Action Plan* attached as **Appendix A** to this report for release for public consultation.
- (2) Council refer \$250,000 for proposed Community Climate Change Action Programs included in the report to the 2009/2010 budget process for consideration
- (3) Council receive a further report in June 2009 following public consultation on the *draft Darebin Community Climate Change Action Plan*.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr. T. McCarthy
SECONDED: Cr. N. Katsis

THAT:

- (1) The *draft Darebin Community Climate Change Action Plan* attached as **Appendix A** to this report be amended to reflect a community target of Zero Net Emissions by 2020 and the revised Plan be released for public consultation.
- (2) Council refer \$250,000 for proposed Community Climate Change Action Programs included in the report to the 2009/2010 budget process for consideration
- (3) Council receive a further report in June 2009 following public consultation on the *draft Darebin Community Climate Change Action Plan*.

CARRIED

REPORT**BACKGROUND**

At its meeting on 2 June 2008 Council resolved to:

- (1) Consult and engage with the Darebin community to develop a Community Climate Change Action Plan
- (2) Develop an Adaptation Strategy for Climate Change and Peak Oil.

The consultation program and the development of the Community Climate Change Action Plan has been as follows:

Date	Activity	Comment /Status
Sept 2008	Engage consultants as per brief. Establish Reference Group	Business Shaper (formerly Sustainable Business Practices) has been engaged as the consultants to carry out the work. Reference Group established with broad representation of Darebin's diverse community.
6 Oct 2008	Reference Group Meeting. Introduction to consultants and aim of program. Fine tune program scope.	The Reference Group is chaired by the Mayor. Cr McCarthy and Cr Katsis are also members. Darebin's key consultative committees are represented as are traders associations, La Trobe University and the Brotherhood of St Laurence.
Oct - Nov 2008	Contextual Research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultants review Science and recommend appropriate municipal target. • Review international best practise on local government involvement and programs. • Review of State and Federal Programs • Review NAGA benchmark date for Darebin 	Due to differing interpretations of the science, and to encourage community ownership - community consultation on the targeted reduction level was undertaken. Targets of 5%, 25%, 50% and 100% were scoped. Contextual review re programs and data has been undertaken and benchmark data from the Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action 'Towards Zero Net Emissions' project was used.
Oct 2008	Focus Groups Six focus groups were held targeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents engaged with Council's environmental programs • General public (*2) • Students • Experts • Social support organisations/ teachers / faith organisations 	Key messages from the Focus Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost, knowledge and time are the key barriers for people to take action on reducing emissions • People want leadership action but there is not a strong sense of urgency around taking personal action • Other environmental issues are easier to relate to and opportunities for further linking climate change action through these can be further explored. • Finding ways to cut through with information about programs and activities is a challenge
Nov - Jan 2008	Consultants prepare the Discussion Paper for Community Leaders forum and commence work on the draft Strategy.	Completed - one page summary of the discussion paper is attached as Appendix B .
28 Jan 2009	Reference Group Meeting. Review of:	Strong support for continued leadership action from Darebin and setting of a community

Date	Activity	Comment /Status
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Discussion Paper • Format of Leaders Forum 	greenhouse reduction target. Simplified one page version of the Discussion paper requested.
9 Feb 2009	Briefing to Council - Community Leaders Forum and Key directions.	The Leaders forum consultation and the key priorities were scoped at the briefing session and were supported by Council.
12 March 2009	Community Leaders Forum. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input into target scenarios • What actions are happening now and what is working? • What support do leaders and communities need to take further action? 	More than 50 people attended the Leaders Forum. There was overwhelming support for a Zero Net Emissions target at this forum. Other feedback has been taken into consideration in preparing the draft strategy.
30 March	Draft briefing to Council for input	
20 April	Council Report seeking endorsement for release for public comment	
April - May	Public Comment Opportunity for draft report including two Public Meetings	
2 June 2009	Reference Group Meeting. Review of feedback from consultation and how this should be integrated.	
15 June 2009	Council Report seeking adoption of the Darebin Community Climate Change Action Plan and endorsement of the Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action's Towards Zero Net Emissions Strategy	

The Adaptation Strategy - Climate Change and Peak Oil is being developed concurrently. The document analyses risks in relation to climate change and peak oil and develops municipality wide strategies for managing these risks. Two workshops have been held to feed into the strategy development. Feedback from the draft Darebin Community Climate Change Action Plan consultation that is relevant to the Adaptation Strategy will also be incorporated into a draft document for Council briefing and community consultation in May.

Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) Towards Zero Net Emissions Strategy

The Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) is currently developing a strategy to make large scale emission reductions at the regional level.

The actions identified in the NAGA strategy will complement the implementation of the Darebin Community Climate Change Action Plan.

CORE ISSUES

The attached draft Strategy (attached as **Appendix A**) has been developed for consultation with the broader community. The draft Strategy is comprised of the following sections:

- Executive summary
- Introduction that outlines the purpose of the document and how it was developed
- Climate change science
- Current responses Internationally and from National, State and Local Government
- Darebin's community context including data gathered during consultation processes
- Darebin's Greenhouse Gas Emissions which includes:
 - the breakdown of community emissions
 - Darebin's 2020 greenhouse reduction target
 - strategic Directions and Actions for working towards the target
 - monitoring and review
 - funding opportunities
- Bibliography
- Appendix A - Summary of Consultation results
- Appendix B - Overview of Past and Current Programs and Initiatives including federal, state, Darebin and grass roots programs).

1) Setting a Community Reduction Target

A Darebin target is largely symbolic in nature - to be an inspiration and a call for action - and to act as a platform from which to advocate for a more serious reduction target at the National level. If the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) is passed in its current form, voluntary actions that are undertaken in Darebin will contribute to the National 5% target but will not reduce emissions beyond that 5% target.

Four levels of reduction target: 5%, 25%, 50%, 100% and a 'no target' option were presented in the Discussion Paper and summary (summary attached as **Appendix B**) for consultation at the Darebin Climate Change Action Leaders Forum. Surveys around preferences for these target options were also undertaken on the Darebin website and promoted through Sustainability News and via feedback at the Darebin Festival. Results from these surveys provide an interesting contrast to the feedback from the Climate Change Action Leaders Forum where there was overwhelming support for the 100% target as indicated in the table below.

	No	5%	25%	50%	Zero net
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	Target	reduction	reduction	reduction	emissions
Preference of Sustainability News respondents (79)	3%	0%	18%	43%	30%
Preference of Darebin Festival respondents (138)	1%	5%	32%	30%	17%
Most preferred by Community Leaders (54)	0	0	5%	13%	82%
Least preferred by Community Leaders (54)	71%	22%	7%	0	0

Respondents that are likely to be less engaged environmentally appear to support more moderate targets that seem more realistic and achievable.

It is also anticipated that a 50% reduction target will be an important advocacy platform, which may well carry more weight than a Zero Net Emissions target that is likely to be perceived by state and federal governments as unachievable. With a growing number of Councils declaring 'Zero Net Emissions' targets for their communities there is a risk that these targets will not be taken seriously.

Taking into account advocacy opportunities, achievability and the huge challenge we face in getting large scale engagement on this issue across all sectors of the community, it is recommended that Council endorse and promote a 50% reduction target on 2000 levels by 2020.

This could be done in the context of fully endorsing and encouraging residents, businesses and industry to aim for and achieve more than a 50% reduction - as Council will be with our 2020 Carbon Neutral target.

A 50% reduction is a significant benchmark on the way to achieving Zero Net Emissions. Progress towards the target could be reviewed regularly and a more ambitious target set prior to 2020 if significant progress is made.

A 50% reduction target is still very ambitious and is unlikely to be achieved without large scale systemic change from State and Federal Governments (eg. further investment in public transport and renewable energy).

A 50% reduction target acknowledges that there are many in the community that are not yet taking any action on climate change and that these people are more likely to respond to a call to halve their emissions in the first instance than to aim for zero.

2) Priority Actions for referral to 2009-2010 budget process

Council priorities, and the research and consultation undertaken as part of this strategy development have identified the following key priorities for action:

- Facilitation of a large scale roll-out of environmental technologies to remove barriers to take up and engage a broader cross-section of the Darebin community
- Working with the commercial and industrial sectors
- Assisting disadvantaged members of the community who will be most vulnerable to climate change impacts and increasing energy prices
- Targeting and working more effectively with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities (CALD).

These priorities were scoped with Council at the Briefing Session on 9 February 2009.

The following programs are proposed as the primary means that Darebin directly address these priority actions. Other actions identified in the strategy will also support and complement these programs. The draft Strategy is attached as **Appendix A** - and actions are summarised in the Table in Section 5.3.4.

a) Large Scale Roll-Out of Environmental Technologies.

The Climate Change survey undertaken in 2007 indicated that the key barriers for people to take action are cost (49%); knowledge and information (23%); and time (23%). In the same survey residents indicated that providing rebates was one of the most desirable ways for Council to support them to take Climate Change Action. A bulk roll-out of environmental products can address these barriers by:

- Reducing total costs through aggregated purchasing power
- Removing the barrier of upfront costs via long term financing options - paying off the product through the energy savings achieved
- Council going through a process on behalf of residents to select the best value products options and installers against established selection criteria - addressing the barriers of time and information
- Council promoting and providing clear information about the process and the selected options - also addressing the barriers of information and time.

The commentary around this action is developed in the accompanying Council report titled *Broad Scale Energy and Water Program Options* (see Report No. 7.9). The paper recommends the following specific actions for consideration in the 2009/2010 budget process as well as aligning with other actions presented in the draft CCCAP strategy.

Actions:

Officers continue discussions with MEFL and Yarra Council and where applicable contribute to and participate in their feasibility studies on these issues.

Cost: \$20,000

Council commence a procurement process (Expression of Interest or partnering) to identify provider/s to supply, install and finance solar hot water systems or energy efficient alternatives, with payment methods including no up front cost and quarterly payments commensurate with anticipated savings. Partnership opportunities with other NAGA Councils will also be scoped to maximise outcomes and reduce costs.

Cost: \$70,000

b) Darebin Climate Wise Business Program

The commercial and industrial sectors contribute around half of the municipality's greenhouse emissions. State and Federal Government legislation and supporting programs target very large emitters, there are only a handful of these in Darebin.

Many smaller businesses and industrial premises have significant opportunities to improve their energy efficiency and to reduce operating costs - for most businesses taking climate change action also needs to make good business sense. The format proposed is a program model that is being used by Hornsby Shire Council and Fairfield City Council in NSW and has recently been launched by the City of Knox in Victoria. An energy efficiency consultancy is engaged to deliver the program via an expression of interest process. This company (Global Sustainability Initiatives) has been engaged by Hornsby, Fairfield and Knox) conducts free energy assessments for businesses and identifies energy efficiency measures with less than a five year financial payback. Full energy audits may be conducted for larger businesses on a cost basis where more detailed analysis is beneficial. Businesses that wish to proceed after reviewing the list of options available to them pay a registration fee (\$250) which is then deducted from the cost of any measure/s they proceed with. Cost efficiencies are achieved by bulk contracting for energy efficiency works, with the engaged consultancy working closely with professional associations in tender processes. For example the cost of retrofitting with energy efficient lighting is reduced by bundling a number of businesses together and tendering this work in bulk.

Hornsby Council achieved good take up rates with 99 businesses signed up within the first six months. Analysis of opportunities identified for emissions reductions in 94 businesses that have participated in the program totalled around 1300 tonnes CO₂e - or an average of almost 14 tonnes per business. If a fraction of these identified opportunities are implemented this will be a great result. Knox launched their program recently and had around 60 businesses attend the event and sign up.

Councils do not pay the program deliverer directly but promote the program and assist with achieving business sign ups. Other councils have indicated a two day a week officer commitment, particularly in the program set up phase. Capacity for this additional time commitment is not currently available within the Economic Development Unit nor the Environmental Strategy Unit, where the program would naturally sit. It is recommended that a two day per week part-time officer be appointed to co-ordinate and promote the program. A two day per week officer could add value within Economic Development by working on other environmental programs and initiatives to encourage and progress sustainable business in Darebin.

Action:

Council engages a part-time Sustainable Business Officer to co-ordinate and promote the Darebin Green Business Program including:

- ***Run the expression of interest process to appoint an energy efficiency consultancy to deliver the program***
- ***Promote and sign-up businesses to the program***
- ***Scope and trial the application of this model to industrial premises***
- ***Monitor, review and report annually on the success of the program***

Cost: \$40,000.

c) Disadvantaged and Vulnerable Members of the Community

The elderly, those in poor health, people on low incomes, the unemployed and those that are socially isolated will be the most vulnerable to the impacts of Climate Change and rising energy costs. The Federal Government is offering cash packages to low income households to cover the cost implications of the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme but with competing demands to pay rent, bills, purchase food etc it is unreasonable to expect that those living in poverty will be in a position to prioritise energy efficiency works that will save money over the medium and longer terms.

The barriers of cost, information/knowledge and time will be more severe for the disadvantaged. Targeted programs are needed to effectively reach low income households and remove barriers to energy efficiency implementation.

Two pilot programs currently under development will help inform the best model for unrolling an energy efficiency fit-out to disadvantaged members of the community:

- Darebin's Impact of Older People and Climate Change program funded by DHS will pilot the assessment of insulation, application for the \$1,600 rebate and topping up of inadequate insulation in the homes of frail elderly receiving Home and Community Care (HACC) services from Council. Draft sealing may also be pursued.
- The Moreland Energy Foundation Ltd (MEFL) Energy Hub program in partnership with the Brotherhood of St Laurence will be piloted in 200 homes later this calendar year. Indicative costs are around ~\$800 per household.

The 2009/2010 roll-out that would be informed by these pilot programs would look at targeting low income renters in the private market (the Department of Human Services is working on retrofits of public housing); and working with agencies such as Spectrum to target frail elderly and vulnerable people within CALD communities.

Action:

Officers review the results of both of the above programs and on this basis commence roll-out of an energy efficiency program to low income/concession card holder households.

Cost: \$80,000.

d) Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities - Pilot Program

Darebin is one of the most diverse municipalities in Victoria. Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities (CALD) communities can be disadvantaged in their access to mainstream information and support for taking action on climate change. Some CALD communities are highly engaged in some environmental and conservation practices eg. water harvesting and food production and have a lot to offer the broader community; others have experienced dislocation and hardship and have more pressing and immediate needs than tackling energy efficiency opportunities. Effective programs to reach CALD communities need to be developed in partnership with those communities and be delivered in a culturally relevant way.

A grant submission has been lodged for the 'Talking My Language' program which would work with one CALD community in Darebin to translate relevant environmental information and deliver a seminar to the community in the relevant language. Community champions will be supported and encouraged to promote the program and environmental actions. \$72,000 has been sought under the Sustainability Accord to deliver the program across three Councils - funding is highly competitive however and Darebin may not be prioritised due to our high level of success in accessing grants from the Fund in the past. The program could be delivered in Darebin for \$25,000 and would be a great way to scope opportunities for effectively working with Darebin's CALD communities on a more ongoing basis.

General translations, media releases to CALD newspapers and access to Council's multilingual line will be included in program development according to ongoing requirements.

Action:

The 'Talking My Language' program be piloted with one Darebin CALD community initially

Cost: \$25,000

POLICY IMPLICATIONS**Environmental Impacts**

Implementation of the Action Plan will assist the Darebin community to reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions and to adapt to the impacts of climate change, including increasing energy costs. Implementation of the Action Plan will not have any negative environmental impacts.

Social Inclusion and Diversity

The Climate Change Action Plan intends to specifically target disadvantaged and vulnerable members of the community through a specific program to help improve comfort and weather proofing of homes and lower energy bills. The Plan also aims to ensure that Darebin's diverse community is given the opportunity to fully engage in the Action Plan via ongoing practices such as general translations and the multilingual phone line as well as the inclusion of a pilot program that plans to partner with one of Darebin's Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities. This pilot program is anticipated to be expanded subject to results and resourcing.

Other

Implementation of the proposed actions is consistent with the current Council Plan and the Municipal Strategic Statement. The proposed transport related actions are consistent with Darebin's Transport Strategy which seeks to promote sustainable transport and reduce dependence on private car transport.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This report recommends that \$250,000 for Climate Change programs and promotions be referred to the 2009/2010 budget process for consideration. The table below summarises the proposed costs:

Project	Project/Action	Sector	Budget	Comments
<i>Recurrent projects</i>				
Commercial and Industrial Sectors	Darebin Climate Wise Businesses	Commercial/Industrial	\$40,000	Most of this cost is to have a 2 day a week Sustainable Business Officer located in Economic Development which will have other long term benefits
Disadvantaged members of the community	Review the results of the DHS funded 'Older People and Climate Change' and MEFL and the Brotherhoods Energy Hub	Disadvantaged and Vulnerable	\$80,000	Roll-out could potentially be delayed until 2010/2011 to allow more thorough evaluation.

Project	Project/Action	Sector	Budget	Comments
	program and deliver an energy efficiency retrofit program to low income/disadvantaged households			
CALD communities	Deliver the 'Talking My Language' program to one CALD community in Darebin	CALD communities	\$25,000	Grant funding may be forthcoming - we will know in April if we are shortlisted for a complete application. This would be delivered as a pilot program and if successful could be implemented more broadly in the future.
Climate Action Promotions	Coordinated advertising and promotions		\$15,000	
Total recurrent			\$160,000	
One off projects				
Bulk Roll Out	Solar Hot Water Roll-out	Residential	\$70,000	Scope partnership opportunities with other NAGA Councils and MEFL
	Feasibility Study for Financing Options	Residential and potentially commercial/industrial	\$20,000	In partnership with MEFL. Promote to CALD groups in community languages.
Total- one off			\$90,000	
Total projects			\$250,000	

FUTURE ACTIONS

The following actions will be taken after the Plan is endorsed for public consultation:

- Promotion of the plan, a summary document and opportunity to comment via Council networks, advertisement, website etc
- Two public meetings will be held in late May 2009
- Feedback considered by the Community Climate Change Action Plan Reference Group in early June 2009
- Council to consider adoption of the Action Plan at its meeting on 15 June 2009.
- Council to consider endorsement of the Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action's regional 'Towards Zero Net Emissions Strategy' in June 2009.
- 2009-2010 and ongoing implementation and review.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Environment Policy

Darebin Climate Change Action Plan

Council Report 20 April 2009 - Broadscale Energy and Water Program Options

7.11 MERRI STATIONEERS COMMITTEE**MINUTE NO. 146****AUTHOR:** Manager Open Space Planning – Allan Wicks**MANAGER:** General Manager Community Assets and Leisure – Geoff Glynn**BUDGET****IMPLICATIONS:** Following any lease negotiations: estimated annual lease \$150 and Darebin Parks operating budget will require \$8,500 per annum.**SUMMARY:**

At its meeting on 18 August 2008 Council resolved that a partnership be formed with the Merri Stationeers.

Whilst this partnership may be formed the issue about leasing Merri Common is yet to be resolved. Negotiations for a lease will recommence. A number of separately related issues raised by this group are being investigated for the Merri Stationeers.

CONSULTATION:

Merri Stationeers
Manager Darebin Parks
Manager Traffic Planning
Property Management Officer

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr. S. Tsitas
SECONDED: Cr. T. McCarthy

THAT Council note that:

- (1) Negotiations for a lease for Merri Common will recommence with VicTrack and the results will be reported back to Council.
- (2) Darebin Parks will provide basic materials and advice for the Merri Stationeers as they undertake their projects in the rail corridor.

CARRIED

REPORT**BACKGROUND**

At its meeting on 18 August 2008 Council resolved that a partnership be formed with the Merri Stationeers.

The Merri Stationeers Group was formed in 2008 with its main purpose being to improve the amenity, appearance and safety of the local Merri Railway Station and surrounds on the Epping Line.

The Merri Stationeers have recently taken out a lease with VicTrack supported by Keep Australia Beautiful on land to the west of Merri Station. The land to the east of Merri Station known as Merri Common is not leased and falls under the management of VicTrack. However, during the 1980s, with the help of local residents, grants and the support of Northcote Council, various improvements were made to this land. These improvements to the site included the construction of paths, planting of a large number of trees and grassing. Some seating and feature fencing was also erected. The site is highly valued by local residents with the local community using the land for recreation and many pass through the site on paths walking to and from the station.

The current condition of the site is as follows: the vast majority of trees are in reasonable condition. Several trees are damaged or senescing and could be removed; The paths made from concrete pavers are serviceable however in a couple of places there are potential trip hazards which are in need of repair; Much of the site is devoid of grass due to the drought - this however, is no different to other open space areas in Darebin at the moment. The area is maintained by a VicTrack contractor MainCo at VicTrack's expense.

In the recently completed Open Space Strategy (2008), the land along the rail corridor including Merri Common was considered, the context being that residents in the Northcote precinct (Charles Street vicinity) had access to several areas of open space i.e. Peters Reserve, Merri Common, South Park Street railway and Caddayes Corner. Council owns Peters Reserve and part of the land that forms Caddayes Corner. Thus access to the other three parcels of land is subject to other authorities' permission or more formally through leasing arrangements.

During preparation of the Open Space Strategy, VicTrack undertook a strategic planning land use study of its land holdings for the two rail corridors situated in the Darebin municipality. A plan of the area around Merri Station identifies a number of sites being leased and a number of other sites described as 'beautification' without leases including Merri Common. The Open Space Strategy identifies a number of land parcels within proximity to Merri Station as Open Space. These are identified as Caddayes Corner, Merri Common and Grovesland Reserve.

As noted in the VicTrack Strategic Review 'City of Darebin Rail Corridor Study' the City of Darebin advised that the community has an expectation that the open space areas will remain open space in the future. The Department of Infrastructure (now the Department of Transport) comment in reply was that the land in this segment may be of importance for use in association with future additional rail line. Land may be required to be set aside to create a buffer zone between the rail corridor and surrounding development.

CORE ISSUES

Proposed Lease Agreement with VicTrack

For the past five years Council has been in discussion with VicTrack about the use of this land for open space purposes. Due to the strategic work being undertaken by Council in the form of the Open Space Strategy and VicTrack in regard to its land holdings, the discussions stalled.

New negotiations for a lease for the land known as Merri Common will commence shortly. The terms and tenure of the lease will need to be negotiated. Once the lease is in place, tree removals and minor planting will be considered. Any major upgrade to Merri Common will require a plan, (developed with the local community) and will be assessed along with other priorities for capital works in Darebin's Open Space system. Consideration for such developments will also need to take into account VicTrack's future plans for the land.

Traffic issues

In regard to the traffic issue raised regarding the Committee's concerns at hoon and/or speeding traffic generally involving streets intersecting with the City-bound side of Merri Station, contact has been made with the Merri Stationers Committee and discussions are underway. Council officers are currently organising traffic speed and volume counts in Charles, Bridge and Railway Streets on the east side of Merri Station. Once the data is available we will meet with representatives of the Merri Stationers Committee to discuss the results.

Stormwater Drainage issue

The stormwater drainage issue raised was not within the railway reserve but in Clarke Street Northcote and the group were directed to Melbourne Water who are the managers of the infrastructure.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Environmental Sustainability

No environmental impacts have been identified from actions included in this Council report.

Social Inclusion and Diversity

Council officers are consulting directly with the Merri Stationers Committee, a specific neighbourhood residents group focused on Merri Common. This consultation is being undertaken in response to resident and Council request and is in context of Council's commitments to respect, community diversity and wellbeing.

Other

The terms of any lease for Merri Common need to be assessed before any lease should be entered into. The cost benefit analysis needs to take place taking into account that Council will be asked to cover maintenance costs of the site, and capital costs for improvements weighed up against what tenure will be offered to Council or whether there is the opportunity for cost sharing between Connex and Council. So lease conditions and costs associated with this site need to be considered in relation to the overall open space areas in the immediate area which is outlined in the Open Space Strategy.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

VicTrack has moved away from community based leases with a majority of land leases being subject to more commercial terms. This is evident in the latest leases entered into by Council that are subject to commercial based rental fees. The estimated lease cost to Council would be \$150 per annum.

When a lease has been finalised Council will look to provide some assistance for the minor works discussed such as several tree removals and the provision of some mulch. This would be funded from Council's operating budget for Darebin parks.

The ongoing cost of maintenance at Merri Common is estimated by Darebin Parks as \$8,500 per annum. This is based on mowing 18 times a year.

More substantial works would require planning, a cost estimate and submission as part of the Capital Works Program.

FUTURE ACTIONS

- Council officers will approach VicTrack regarding the lease of the land at Merri Common.
- Council officers will determine if any action is required and convey this to the Merri Stationeers.
- Council's Arborist will visit the site in conjunction with representatives of the Merri Stationeers regarding the scope of works required in relation to the existing trees.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Northcote Precinct – relevant section map (attached – see **Appendix A**)

Darebin Open Space Strategy 2008

Strategic Planning for VicTrack Land Holdings, City of Darebin Rail Corridor Study 2008

8. URGENT BUSINESS

Nil.

9. GENERAL BUSINESS

Nil.

10. CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS CONSIDERED CONFIDENTIAL**CLOSE OF MEETING**

MOVED: Cr. T. McCarthy

SECONDED: Cr. V. Fontana

THAT in accordance with section 89(2) of the Local Government Act 1989, Council resolves to close the meeting to members of the public to consider the following item which relates to a contractual matter:

- 10.1 Proposed sale of land from discontinued road adjoining the side and rear of 7 Mahoneys Road Reservoir.

CARRIED

The meeting was closed to members of the public at 9.20pm

The Council considered and resolved on Report Item 10.1 (Proposed sale of land from discontinued road adjoining the side and rear of 7 Mahoneys Road Reservoir) which had been circulated to Councillors on Thursday 16 April 2009 with the Council Agenda Paper.

RE-OPENING OF MEETING

MOVED: Cr. S. Chiang

SECONDED: Cr. T. McCarthy

THAT the meeting be re-opened to the members of the public.

CARRIED

The meeting was re-opened to members of the public at 9.29pm.

CONFIDENTIAL**10.1 PROPOSED SALE OF LAND FROM DISCONTINUED ROAD ADJOINING THE SIDE AND REAR OF 7 MAHONEYS ROAD, RESERVOIR.**

MINUTE NO. 147

AUTHOR: Property Officer, Asset Strategy – Kristie Berry**MANAGER:** Manager Asset Strategy – Nerina Di Lorenzo**BUDGET****IMPLICATIONS:** Detailed in the confidential report.**SUMMARY:**

This report recommends that Council consider a departure from its policy guidelines in regard to the sale of the land from the discontinued road adjoining the side and rear of 7 Mahoneys Road, Reservoir.

CONSULTATION:

Macquarie Lawyers and Strategists
Owners of adjoining properties
Statutory Authorities and Council Departments

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Council Resolution be made available to the public but the report remain confidential.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr. S. Tsitas**SECONDED:** Cr. T. Laurence**THAT** the following Council Resolution:

*“That Council agree to depart from its policy guidelines and authorise the General Manager Community Assets and Leisure to negotiate the sale of the land from the discontinued road adjoining the side and rear of 7 Mahoneys Road, Reservoir, shown shaded on the plan attached as **Appendix B** to this report, to the owner of that property for the sum of \$15,000 (inc GST), as offered by the owner.”*

be made available to the public but the report remain confidential.

CARRIED

11. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting Closed at 9.30pm.