

Q14 Buildings, Biodiversity and Urban cooling: What would you do as a Councillor to ensure that with new building developments, Merri-bek residents have protection from overshadowing existing solar PV systems, and that Merri-bek has sufficient vegetation cover to contribute to biodiversity outcomes, urban cooling, and water sensitive urban design beyond existing policies in the Urban Forest Strategy (PDF), Merri-bek Nature Plan, and the Achieving Zero Carbon in the Planning Scheme – ESD Policy v2.0?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 1

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Ensure building codes stipulate better insulation, cool roofs and efficient air-con systems. Encourage sustainable development - with provisions for green spaces, appropriate drainage, avoiding overshadowing.	10/1/2024 11:15 PM
2	In the new Council term, I believe we should look at whether there could be changes made to our local planning scheme to help reduce clashes between sustainability measures and heritage, for example. We could also look into whether it would be possible to strengthen protection for existing solar PV systems. However, increasing density can be better for the climate and environment, so I would not want for any densification to be stopped due to existing solar systems. There have been cases where new developments can pay for the relocation of existing PV systems, so this could be another potential solution. We also need to continue to protect our existing vegetation, while planting much more.	9/30/2024 4:40 PM
3	The policies and fundamental principles are in place - but more funding is needed to fully realise their potential. Regarding planning, many of the controls are out of Council's hands and are subject to the approval of the state Planning Minister. This is most evident in the Elevating ESD in the Planning Scheme Amendment that has been sitting on the Minister's desk for many months now, resulting in multiple Councils not being able to enforce higher environmental standards in new builds. As per Merri-bek Council's existing policies and guidelines, where there is an application that overshadows existing solar panels, the applicant can be encouraged to change their design, contribute to the supply of new panels or relocate the existing panels.	9/30/2024 10:59 AM
4	I don't agree that development should be stopped on the basis that it will overshadow someone's solar panel – the person installing the panel would've known this was a possibility, and it should be feasible to repurpose the panel. For urban cooling, we could put more pressure on developers to create swales for the guttering outside their buildings. We could also see about requiring developers to tie cables across streets, to allow vines to grow.	9/29/2024 8:06 PM
5	Merri-bek council has already taken steps to improve sustainable design principles through partnering with other Victorian councils to submit an Environmentally Sustainable Design planning amendment. Frustratingly this amendment has been with the minister for consideration for over a year without progress. If elected, I will partner with our state government colleagues and continue to pressure the state government to approve these amendments. I also commit that, if elected, I will do everything within my power to pressure developers to build to a higher environmental standard, including retaining (and where possible increasing) green space, and incorporating heat and water sensitive urban design principles. However, it is important to acknowledge that council and planners' role in negotiating with developers is a sensitive one as the state government has provided a pathway for developers to frequently bypass council decision making through VCAT. Given this, I will also advocate to the state government for return of planning powers back to local government.	9/28/2024 4:28 PM
6	What a huge topic! I love the urban Forest Strategy and support the aspirations in the Nature Zero Carbon Plans. Overshadowing is a difficult topic. Wherever possible overshadowing should be avoided, but there are times when the net benefit of a new structure can be greater than the benefit of the impact on the general amenity and PV	9/23/2024 2:14 PM

systems of affected sites. In these situations relevant compensation needs to be considered.

7	I will ensure all of these considerations are factored into any design decision of council. I will be a vocal advocate towards ensuring that buildings are sustainable and include all these features.	9/22/2024 4:57 PM
8	As with many of these questions, the policies and fundamental principles are in place - but more funding is needed to fully realise their potential. Regarding planning, many of the controls are out of Council's hands and are subject to the approval of the state Planning Minister. This is most evident in the Elevating ESD in the Planning Scheme Amendment that has been sitting on the Minister's desk for many months now, resulting in multiple Councils not being able to enforce higher environmental standards in new builds. As per Merri-bek Council's existing policies and guidelines, where there is an application that overshadows existing solar panels, the applicant can be encouraged to change their design, contribute to the supply of new panels or relocate the existing panels.	9/21/2024 10:26 AM
9	These initiatives as outlined in these reports are essential in the Climate crisis we face and I would advocate to the Council and state and federal governments for these requirements to be fulfilled.	9/20/2024 4:30 PM
10	I would like to see genuine outcomes from these existing Council strategies. Have any of them been implemented? Were the desired outcomes reached? We are entering a phase where solar panels are less economical for individual households and planning schemes are more scorecard-driven. I am critical of the tree-planting targets and their genuine effectiveness.	9/19/2024 10:11 PM
11	I support the current policies and would like to see them expanded with additional funding wherever possible. In terms of planning: "Regarding planning, many of the controls are out of Council's hands and are subject to the approval of the state Planning Minister. This is most evident in the Elevating ESD in the Planning Scheme Amendment that has been sitting on the Minister's desk for many months now, resulting in multiple Councils not being able to enforce higher environmental standards in new builds."	9/19/2024 8:13 PM
12	All of the above need to be ensured. Some such as passive solar are virtually cost free- just needs a different approach. I have a big problem with clothes dryers	9/19/2024 6:15 PM
13	Merri-bek has an existing policy around new builds and existing solar panels. I would recommend planning permit applicants be encouraged to incorporate neighbouring houses and contribute to the supply of new panels or to relocating existing panels.	9/18/2024 8:56 PM
14	I would advocate for strengthening planning guidelines to minimize overshadowing of solar PV systems and ensure new developments contribute positively to green cover. I support enhancing vegetation requirements and promoting water-sensitive urban design to protect biodiversity and improve urban cooling, building on the existing policies to create a greener and more sustainable Merri-bek	9/17/2024 11:47 PM
15	Strengthen and actually implement the policies during the application stage. There needs to be more protection in the planning laws for our creeks and wetlands, and parklands. Development should not be allowed to negatively impact our open spaces, creeks and biodiversity. We need to revitalise our creeks especially the Moonee Ponds Creek and this will be a major priority for me on council.	9/17/2024 10:05 AM
16	I am committed to change in the planning scheme to protect solar PV systems from overshadowing and forcing developers to plant trees, . That means opposing attempts to introduce fast track planning where the community loses its right to object to or amend a development's plans. Council also needs to preserve green space and acquire new green space, with a view to protecting habitat.	9/16/2024 2:37 PM
17	Ideally, council would not just rely on developers to increase the housing supply and would be a provider in its own right, with a public housing building programme that takes into account sustainability, urban planning for parks and vegetation and shading. However, permitting only those developments that meet these requirements and having strict controls on delivery is an important first step. As a civil engineer in construction I am well placed to assess plans and ensure accountability.	9/15/2024 12:39 PM
18	My knowledge on these issues beyond what is established in the policies referred to is limited. However, I fully recognise the importance of these planning issues and would seek out expert recommended best practice approaches to further my understanding, and ensure any decisions I make are aligned with promoting sustainability over profit-driven development.	9/15/2024 9:38 AM
19	This is a very complex issue and I think it's hard to answer unless it's on a case by case	9/14/2024 5:15 PM

basis. In some instances we need greater development along the activity and transport corridors but this will mean change which can sometimes be very hard to cop. A visit to the outskirts of Melbourne to see the sprawl and poor quality development is a terrifying indication of what we can expect if we can accommodate some more density in our neighbourhoods. I believe there are good examples or acceptable denser living arrangements that exist but I also see some that is really average.
