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COMPLETE

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Page 1: 2024 Merri-bek Council Candidate climate survey

## Q1

Candidate Name

Owen Miller

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## Q2

**Bulleke-bek Ward**

Contesting Which Merri-bek Ward?

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## Q3

**Fusion Party**

Are you a candidate for a political party? Which Party?  
Are you standing as an Independent candidate? If you  
are standing as an Independent but you are also a  
member of a political party, please write that party in the  
Comment box.

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## Q4

Connections to Merri-bek Wards. Outline your connection to Merri-bek, do you live in the ward you are contesting, do  
you work in that ward? What are your other connections to the Merri-bek community?

I moved to Brunswick East in 2022 after living in the US for 7 years. It was great to return to a place with convenient bike lanes,  
beautiful nature, vibrant street art and an active night life.

I now live in an apartment in Brunswick and I work from home in the tech industry.

I'm a regular at the music and comedy clubs around here and I've even performed stand-up myself a few times.

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## Q5

Climate Emergency. Merri-bek Council declared a Climate Emergency in September 2018. Do you accept the research evidence from climate scientists and the UN Secretary General that:

	Answer
the earth is already too hot and we are outside the safe climate zone?	Yes
we face a climate emergency?	Yes
local cooling is required to prevent runaway warming?	Yes

Other (please specify):

The Fusion Party is a signatory to the Climate Rescue Accord, a collaboration between Animal Justice, the Australian Progressive Party, and the Fusion Party.

## Q6

Governance and Triple bottom line accounting brings to account three domains that we need for a good life. They are economic, social and environmental sustainability. In the past projects have been delivered based on organisational silos often not considering other aspects outside the silo. Will you endeavour as a Councillor for Council to use triple bottom line accounting on all Council infrastructure decisions to ensure that climate emergency priorities are embedded in Council decisions? Note that triple bottom line is already encapsulated in the Local Government Act 2020 Section 9, 2b and 2c for good Council governance.

(no label) Yes

## Q7

Transport: Upfield Rail Upgrade - Problems with parking and traffic congestion, capacity issues of public transport need solutions for upgrading the Upfield Line. According to Infrastructure Australia, the northern region Transport Corridor will reach and exceed capacity in the next decade. Do you support the Northern Councils Alliance campaign to Connect Melbourne's North for duplication and extension of the Upfield rail line to Craigieburn and Wallan for provision of a more reliable and frequent rail service catering for the growing population in Merri-bek and residents in new growth suburbs further north?

(no label) Strongly Agree

## Q8

Transport: Mode shift - What actions will you be pushing for to facilitate a mode shift to more sustainable modes of transport in Merri-bek as part of, or beyond, Moving Around Merri-bek Strategy (PDF), including increasing safety for walking and cycling and increasing public transport advocacy?

Council really needs to assist in the uptake of cycling, through more modal filtering of traffic, more protection for bike lanes, and more enforcement against traffic violations which endanger cyclists.

It's also in our interests to create more beautiful, enjoyable paths so that active transport is appealing. The council's stance on street art is undermining our status as the cultural heart of Melbourne and we see so many walls in a never-ending cycle between ugly tagging and ugly mismatched paint covering it up.

If the council just left things alone, they'd see artists willing to spend time creating a beautiful masterpiece over the tags, confident that some busybody isn't going to remove it.

Imagine getting to a situation where streets are closed off to cars because they're too popular with cyclists and pedestrians?

I'd also like to see council facilitating the replacement of petrol engines with something more sustainable, whether it's methanol, ammonia, biodiesel, or something else.

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## Q9

Heat Vulnerability: Large sections of Merri-bek's north are at the extreme end of the Heat Vulnerability Index, meaning residents are very susceptible to global warming extreme heat events. What will you do to address this beyond existing policies, including Merri-bek Urban Heat Island Effect Action Plan (PDF), Merri-bek Urban Forest Strategy 2017-2017 (PDF), Cooling the Upfield Corridor Action Plan 2018-2028 (PDF)?

To deal with heat islands, we really need to be reducing the popularity of car parks, and replacing these exposed concrete surfaces with swales and trees.

Sure, humans can stay inside with air conditioning, but our local wildlife doesn't have this luxury when dealing with more frequent heat waves.

For popular streets like Sydney Road and Lygon Street, we might like to spray rainwater on the road on hot days, to keep the area cool.

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## Q10

Waste Management. Merri-bek aims to be a leading council in sustainable waste management. What will you do to help Merri-bek in educating citizens on waste streams, to achieve Merri-bek's 2030 zero waste to landfill target as part of Zero Carbon in the Planning Scheme – ESD Policy v2.0?

The educational initiatives of governments are increasingly difficult due to the global availability of compelling distractions.

One of my policies is to move towards open-source software for powering the government, allowing civilians to be involved in the website and the processes of government.

This would allow compelling content creators to be a part of any government initiatives, increasing the ability of councils to connect with residents.

I'd also like to see more local composting sites. These would each need a caretaker. By increasing the visibility of these practices, it helps them gain popularity and understanding.

When I lived in New York, there was a shared composting site in a nearby park, then I found out I could sign up my apartment building for the city's composting collection. So many people just aren't aware of how easy it is to change their waste habits.

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## Q11

Energy Efficiency and Renewables. Merri-bek has a goal of "Efficient and 100% renewably powered energy". How can Merri-bek "walk the talk" on renewable energy and meet the community goals set in the Zero Carbon Merri-bek – Climate Emergency Action Plan 2020/21 – 2024/25 (PDF)?

Besides the extra support for cycling, we could also help kickstart the infrastructure around converting existing vehicles to methanol, ammonia or biodiesel.

This would involve engine conversion, as well as refuelling facilities.

Electric cars have significant embodied emissions and I believe that electric cars are not here to save the planet, they're here to save the car industry.

One of the suggestions in the plan is to have a clean tech incubator hub – I would definitely support the creation of coworking spaces in Merri-bek with purified air. It would allow residents a calm space to do their best work, doubling down on the creative and innovative spirit of our community.

We are missing out on untapped potential to get our community more involved in the transition to a clean and renewable society.

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## Q12

Supporting business and the environment What actions will you take to help the Council promote environmentally sustainable jobs in the municipality and for businesses to reduce emissions in their operations?

Council is responsible for ensuring food hygiene locally. In making readily available maps about the food safety ratings for restaurants, they could also allow users to find out about the environmental practices of the restaurants.

It could be a good way for residents to find out about the enormous environmental impacts of beef for instance.

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### Q13

**Food Security**How would you build community resilience and address food security in Merri-bek beyond the existing Merri-bek Food System Strategy 2024 - 2027 (PDF)? How do you think Council could further support culturally relevant and nutritionally rich food to diverse and vulnerable communities?

I don't agree with supporting culturally relevant food – when people talk of Italian food for instance, they'll inevitably mention tomatoes, even though tomatoes were only introduced to Europe after the discovery of South America.

Few people are aware that cows were invented only 10,000 years ago after selective breeding of the auroch.

If people aren't even prepared to change a part of their diet, then what hope do we have for avoiding catastrophe?

In order for council to support nutritionally rich food, council could work with our wastewater companies to provide more biological analysis of wastewater, discovering the health of humans in the area.

Council could also fund the development of open-source software for tracking meals and food purchases, allowing residents to more easily analyse and optimise their behaviour.

Finally, council could provide more compelling active transport options and exercise equipment, spurring people into healthier lifestyles where they'll become inspired to improve their health further.

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### 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?

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.

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### Q15

What are your top four priorities for the Council Plan, to be formulated for 2025-2029.

Priority 1	<b>All council software should transition to open-source, and the websites themselves should similarly enable collaborative editing with residents.</b>
Priority 2	<b>Council should be doing more to endorse green development: green concrete, green steel, swales, and wildlife corridors.</b>
Priority 3	<b>Council should assist in the proliferation of cycling, especially through the installation of protections for cycle lanes.</b>
Priority 4	<b>Council should embrace street art and stop trying to censor our culture which has made Brunswick East the 6th coolest neighbourhood in the world</b>

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## Q16

Democracy and representation: advocacy to State Government on multi-member wards versus single member wards. The state government has imposed single-member wards on Merri-bek against the recommendation of the council, the Local Government Association of Victoria, and even the Victorian Electoral Commission. This shift in electoral structure is an imposition by the parliament, not a choice of experts.

Answer

Do you support or oppose single-member wards?

**Oppose**

If (re)-elected will you initiate and/or support measures to pressure the state government to return to multi-member wards?

**Support**

## Q17

Do you have any other comments on Climate Leadership and Advocacy by Council? Do you have any supplementary comments relating to the questions above, comments on other issues related to climate resilience and climate adaptation, or comments on making decisions for the whole municipality?

It's unfortunate that voters have voted for climate inaction for so long, but for those who now want our climate emergency to be addressed, please be aware that Fusion is the most committed. All options are on the table for us, even geo-engineering.