

Yarra City Council

Business Advisory Group

Meeting minutes

Meeting #1, 2025

Date: Thursday 20 March 2025

Time: 8am to 10am

Location: Learning Bank, 124 Victoria Street, Richmond

Attendance:

First Name	Initial	Business Name
Present		
Cr Kenneth Gomez	KG	Yarra Councillor (Chair)
Cr Meca Ho	MH	Yarra Councillor
Cr Evangeline Aston	EA	Yarra Councillor
Cr Edward Crossland	EC	Yarra Councillor
Sam Rush	SR	HANDSOM
Shane Hryhorec	SH	Push Mobility
Freya Berwick	FB	Sense of Self
Helen Haines	HH	Dollars and Sense Consulting
Apologies		
Kevin Cahya Tjangdjaja	KC	Makmur Enterprises
James Richardson	JR	Optimising
Matthew Kovacs	MK	Ventia
Sebastian Pasinetti	SP	Oko Restaurant
Guest		
Simon Osborne	SO	Yarra City Council
Eliza Henty	EH	Yarra City Council
Will Anderson	WA	Yarra City Council
PK	PK	People of Gertrude Street
Kathryn Pound	KP	Yarra City Council
Kate Yuncken	KY	Yarra City Council
Ha Nguyen	HN	Otao Kitchen/Victoria Street Business Association
Absent		
Xue Zhou	XZ	Addict food and coffee
Luke Phillips	LP	Into Coffee
Cr Andrew Davies	AD	Yarra Councillor

		Action/Update
1	Acknowledgement of Country Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra. We also acknowledge the significant contributions made by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to life in Yarra. We pay our respects to Elders from all nations here today—and to their Elders past, present and future.”	
2	Apologies	
3	Declaration of conflict of interest None	
4	Introductions of new councillors, BAG members, council officers and guests	
5	Actions arising from previous meeting and adoption of minutes Moved by HH. Seconded by SR.	
6	Roundtable discussion 1. What are the two biggest challenges over the last 3-6 months? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cashflow for small business • Bins • Graffiti • process to get permits (e.g. painting) costly and takes too long • grants needed to support businesses in the application process • LOTE customers have barriers to apply for permits • help businesses through the permit process • parking and public transport are difficult for people with disabilities • funding to make businesses accessible • objects blocking footpaths in Yarra • poor customer behaviour to service staff • ‘trauma dumping’ • threatening our businesses on Google • currently amending a planning permit to upgrading our carpark to a courtyard – long process, slow. • Customer confidence is down • Cost of rent. 	

		Action/Update
	<p>2. What are you most excited about for 2025?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renovating my business • planning permit hopefully being approved • expanding our business' offering. <p>3. If you were Mayor for a day, what 2 things would you implement?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use council-controlled buildings or spaces to promote businesses with advertising on billboards. • Gertrude St businesses offer discounts to workers from other Gertrude St businesses – could this be extended to other precincts? Locals pricing (\$4.50 large coffee) • Keeping the street looking good and inviting • Better support for graffiti removal in Yarra • Business planning track • If you want small business to prosper it can't take a year to get a permit. • All small business owners are renting – this is our most significant cost. How long will I be waiting for a planning permit? • First 1-2 years of a business is the most vulnerable time • Some form of grant to make businesses more accessible • Soft furnishing for the street, make it more appealing for people to visit • Cleaning and greening around Victoria Street • Remove graffiti • Give out \$200 vouchers for residents to shop and eat local. 	
7	<p>Yarra's New Approach to Business – SO</p> <p>A discussion on the Economic Development team's focus for 2025, plus upcoming strategies and engagements that have a business impact/focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Notice of motion (NOM) report into red tape reform - Graffiti Management Framework - New Eco Dev Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Current strategy 2020-2025. New strategy 2026-2030 - Victoria Street – Revitalisation - Precinct audits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 9 completed, 3 to be completed. <p>Council report – KPI's and initiatives</p>	

		Action/Update
8	Upcoming Business Permit forum – KP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business permit forum coming soon 	Eco Dev team to promote this event to the wider business community. Give them enough notice, even if a date is not confirmed. The forum should be recorded for people who cannot attend in person.
9	What KPIs should Council be focussing on? – KG <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Common problem in retail and hospitality (service industry) now is staffing - Permit KPIs - Street strategy, economic diversity, retail mix - Response times from planning - Strengths of each street - Route 86 tram, increased frequency and accessible tram stops. How do we lessen the impact of these works as not to that don't hurt the businesses on our precincts? 	
10	Meeting closed 09:58	