

Overview

Community Reference Groups (CRGs) were established for each Activity Centre to provide advice to the Department of Transport and Planning in developing its Activity Centre Plans. The advice was developed over 3 sessions in June 2025.

All Statements of Advice will be released publicly alongside other engagement outcomes during Phase 2 engagement planned for September 2025.

Statement of Advice – Coburg Station

What we value about the Activity Centre:

A summary of what CRG members believe makes the place unique and worth protecting.

The Coburg Activity Centre has a distinct character defined by its cultural diversity, strong community spirit, and mix of historic and evolving features. While areas need improvement, the community sees Coburg as a place worth protecting and investing in.

Community Identity and Local Life

- Coburg is proudly multicultural, inclusive, and welcoming, described by many as having “heart” and “grit.” Events at Harmony Park and a wide range of diverse eateries on Sydney Road reflect this cultural richness.
- Vital public gathering places like Pentridge, the Coburg Farmers Market and Coburg Night market at Coburg Primary School, and local schools foster social connection across generations and backgrounds.
- Community facilities such as the Coburg Town Hall, Olympic Pool, Coburg Library, Table Tennis Centre, and Schoolhouse Studios are well used but require updates to meet modern accessibility, sustainability, and capacity needs.
- Green Spaces and Natural Assets
- Coburg Lake Reserve and nearby Merri Creek and Edgars Creek trails offer peaceful, shaded areas for recreation, mental wellbeing, and exercise.
- The Upfield shared path is a valued active transport corridor, connecting residents to parks, shops, and the train line.
- Areas like Bell Street and Sydney Road remain heavily paved and exposed, with few mature trees or garden beds—community members want more street planting and shade to address rising urban heat.
- Most open space near the Activity Centre is sports club-oriented (e.g., Coburg City Oval), which limits casual, unstructured community use. Residents desire multipurpose open spaces such as pocket parks and gardens.

Getting Around

- Coburg Station, Sydney Road trams (routes 19 and 6), and local bus routes are heavily used, but gaps remain in off-peak services and integration between modes—especially between buses

and trains. Desire to improve tram, train and bus frequency and accessibility to lessen the limit to users.

- East–west cycling connections (e.g., across Munro Street, O’Hea Street) are fragmented or unsafe. Protected bike lanes and safe crossings are priorities and there is a desire for them to be increased to enable more active transport.
- Free parking at supermarkets, Sydney Road, and surrounding residential streets reinforces car use which leads to congestion. Some community members support multi-level parking to free up land for better uses like green space.

Character and Future Potential

- Landmarks such as Pentridge, Coburg Library, Olympic Pool, Coburg Drive in and Victoria Street Mall are seen as defining elements of Coburg. These places need thoughtful renewal, not replacement.
- Small businesses such as Half Moon Café, True North, and Gervasi Continental Supermarket play a major role in defining the area’s local, grassroots identity.
- The community supports retail diversity, housing choice, and well-designed buildings—particularly on Sydney Road and around the station precinct—so long as new development includes greenery, access, and architectural quality

Our Advice

Part A: General Advice

How do we plan for more homes in and around Coburg while strengthening the things that make it unique?

- Growth must be matched with supporting infrastructure such as schools (e.g., Coburg Primary and Coburg High), upgraded bus interchanges, drainage systems, and public toilets near malls and open spaces.
- Coburg’s distinct structure—two centres linked by the Upfield train line—should inform walkable and accessible planning decisions.
- Revitalisation projects like Victoria Street Mall should improve safety, shade, and seating while retaining its role as a civic gathering place.
- Design should respond to social needs, including places for older adults, teenagers, those with disabilities, culturally diverse communities and families with children.

Part B: Thematic advice across four key areas:

Public and Green Space

- Green space is concentrated around Coburg Lake and City Oval, leaving other parts of the Activity Centre underserved.
- Opportunities exist to convert underutilised land—such as the Woolworths car park or parts of the former Vasili Nursery site—into new public green spaces.
- Locations like Bell Street, O’Hea Street, Murray Road, Gaffney Street, Sydney Road and Munro Street need more street trees and garden beds to improve amenity and combat heat.
- Open space should support informal uses: shaded seats, barbecue facilities, gathering lawns, and play areas—like those at Harmony Park—not just formal sports fields.

Moving Around

- East–west access across Coburg (e.g., from Harding Street to Moreland Road) is limited by narrow paths and vehicle-prioritised intersections. Desire to create protected bike lanes.
- Residents describe public transport as unreliable after hours and on Sundays. Better frequency on buses, trains and tram route 19 is widely supported.
- There is strong support for duplicating the Upfield rail line to improve service and reduce delays in order to improve frequency.
- Barrow Street is cited as an example of a blocked or overly congested local route that restricts movement.
- Improved lighting, clearer signage, and smoother footpaths are needed across the centre, especially near shared paths and school zones.
- Support for accessible platform tram stops and the street improvements they provide.

Safety

- Key areas like Coburg Station, Victoria Street Mall, Murray Road and bike paths lack lighting at night, making them feel unsafe or unusable after dark.
- Speeding and hooning, particularly on Bell Street and near O’Hea Street and Murray Road, are major concerns. Residents support lower speed limits (e.g., 30 km/h) and traffic-calming measures like speed bumps and narrowed lanes.
- Community members suggest that active night-time uses—like food trucks, night markets, or extended trading hours that encourage activity in a safe manner—could deter anti-social behaviour.
- Bike paths have limited lighting and width near the north of Coburg Station and South of Brunswick particularly near road intersections.
- Better presence of local safety officers, including foot patrols, is needed in quiet or poorly used areas like behind Coburg Station and near creek-side trails.

Local Infrastructure

- Local schools, including Coburg Primary and Coburg High, are over capacity and need investment to accommodate growing enrolments. Desire for additional schools to be built in the area.
- Footpaths on Sydney Road, O’Hea Street, and surrounding residential areas are uneven or cracked, limiting access for people using prams, wheelchairs, or walkers.
- Older infrastructure, including stormwater and sewerage lines, must be upgraded to handle increased density and runoff along the entirety of Sydney Road and the Upfield Line corridor.
- Public seating is lacking on busy walking routes like Bell Street and Sydney Road, reducing accessibility for older residents and those with mobility needs.
- Community members want cleaner, safer, and greener streets—examples include better maintenance of planter boxes on O’Hea Street and Louisa Street and rubbish collection at Victoria Street Mall.
- Social infrastructure: Services like libraries, maternal health centres, and youth spaces should grow with the population and be equitably distributed.

Considerations

Areas where the community was open to acceptable compromises, and areas where compromise was not supported.

Density and Housing

- There is support for well-designed modern, energy-efficient medium-density housing in walkable areas like Bell Street, Sydney Road, and near Coburg Station, especially on sites like former car parks and industrial edges.

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- Residents want a guaranteed mix of high-quality housing types that blend into the centres suburban character—including 3-bedroom family-friendly units and affordable rentals—to reflect different life stages and income levels.
 - There is strong support for sustainable mid-rise (6–8 storey) developments, similar to Paris-style urban design, with lower-rise transitions into residential streets with increased greenery that allow for accessible pedestrian access to walkways and open spaces.
 - There is strong support for requiring new housing developments to include social and affordable public housing.
 - Mixed-use buildings with street-level shops (e.g., Sydney Road) and homes above are preferred for vibrancy and walkability.

Transport and Mobility

- Multi-level parking, such as at the current Safeway site, could replace surface lots and free land for housing, parks, or community use.
- Residents are open to reducing on-street parking in favour of improved public transport, wider footpaths, and safe bike lanes.
- Increased frequency and reliability on the Upfield Line, as well as better tram stop accessibility (e.g., near Moreland Road), are essential.
- Cycling paths need upgrading and protected along east–west routes such as Munro Street, Murray Road, Sydney Road and O’Hea Street, and intersections should be redesigned for safety and not to the impediment of vehicles.

Heritage and Character

- Residents want to preserve iconic buildings like the Progress Theatre, Union Knitting Mills, and Olympic Pool while allowing modern upgrades that respect their form.
- Bluestone laneways, such as those off Victoria Street, are appreciated but should be resurfaced for safety and accessibility.
- Coburg’s unique blend of historic charm and multicultural life is considered an asset and should be reflected in future development and planning.
- Public Space and Amenity
- Green spaces must be preserved, enhanced and walkable, particularly around Coburg Lake, Harmony Park, and Bridges Reserve.
- Tree planting, greening and parklets are strongly supported for shopping streets like Sydney Road and Bell Street as well as an overall support for increased tree canopy on local streets.
- Community members request better access to arts and cultural facilities, such as gallery spaces or performance venues—not just upgrades to sports ovals.

Community Engagement and Process

- Residents express concern that consultation has been minimal or symbolic, with decisions appearing predetermined.
- Suggestions for improvement include pop-up information centres and virtual reality visualisations.
- Recognition and implementation of Community Reference Group (CRG) recommendations is critical for trust and transparency.
- Celebrate project milestones and explain how community input has shaped outcomes to keep locals engaged and informed.

Key Areas of Agreement and Disagreement

Agreements

- Growth is supported when paired with early investment into infrastructure, quality design, and accessible public and green space.
- Green space, heritage protection, and public transport improvements are widely agreed priorities.

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- Pedestrian and cycling upgrades are needed to create a safer, healthier environment.
 - The planning process must be ongoing, transparent, and accessible to all community members.

Disagreements or Concerns

- Car parking: Some see car parks as underutilised land that could be repurposed; others (especially older residents) rely on their continued availability.
- High-density housing: Support is conditional—residents are concerned about infrastructure lag, overshadowing and character loss if poorly implemented.
- Noise and congestion: Concerns about overdevelopment and impacts on quiet residential streets were raised.
- Developer accountability: Many remain sceptical that promised public benefits will be delivered in full or on time. Residents want to explicitly protect solar power infrastructure.

Key Messages for Planners – Coburg Station

Final key messages the group would like to leave with decision-makers.

- Buildings need to be of a high standard and character that are consistent with the general area, as well as providing liveability and amenity that makes us love where we live while celebrating our history and heritage.
- It is important that options and sizes are provided for multiple stages of life and needs - single, families and those with a disability and the elderly.
- Community infrastructure, particularly schools, public and active transport, needs to be invested in ahead of continued population growth:
 - Trains - more frequency and duplication
 - Trams - accessibility of trams and stops
 - Bike paths - protected lanes and lighting
 - Education - Coburg High School needs continued investment and can't do all the work
 - Open spaces - not just for sports clubs.