

22 June 2026

Councillor

Merri-bek City Council

Via email



By your side

Dear Councillor,

URGENT – Council’s secret ‘AI Roadmap development plan’

I write to bring to your attention Council’s management’s secret ‘*AI Roadmap development*’ plan developed by consultants to introduce AI into the Merri-bek Council workplace and delivery of community services. The ASU is concerned that this roadmap is intended to replace job functions and ultimately jobs in customer service, planning, policy development, and legislative interpretation.

The ASU understands during the period March to May 2026 Council management met with consultants on multiple occasions to participate in workshops to develop a Roadmap to the introduction of AI into the Council’s work systems. The consultants also prepared a briefing paper for Officers titled *AI Pilot Project Options Paper (March 2026)*.

In the first 6 months, the Roadmap outlines ‘quick wins’ that includes the automation of ‘translation and multilingual communication’ including translation of Council communications and notices, which we can only assume includes formal regulatory notices.

The roadmap proposes that in the next 6-18 month period, it would build a platform to undertake compliance checks against zone, building codes and overlays and undertake infrastructure condition assessment utilizing drone footage and analyze budget performance. Most alarmingly, even community consultation will be automated with the platform to undertake ‘*community sentiment analysis including reviewing submissions and surveys*’.

The longer-term plans over the next 2-3 years indicates options to undertake ‘AI assisted town planning’ that would ‘*model the impact of planning decisions on traffic, amenity and environment*’ and ‘environmental monitoring’ including ‘*urban heat mapping, flood prediction, air quality, biodiversity tracking*’.

These tasks are key job functions for workers across the organization, including customer service, planning, policy, environmental health and building and asset teams. Introduction of this technology threatens the jobs of the skilled workforce employed by Council and risks the quality and community responsiveness of Council services. It poses particular and urgent risks for culturally and linguistically diverse residents with the introduction of automated communications and notices in community languages in the first 6 months of the program.

We understand that Council management voted to rank implementation of these measures at the workshops and intends to pursue implementation of the roadmap. Despite this advanced decision

making, no consultation has occurred with affected workers and Unions, or the community to gain their views about the automation of delivery and decision-making of community services. This is concerning given the *26/27 Council Draft budget* forecasts successive cuts to full-time staff every year for the next four years, despite servicing a growing community.

We bring this to Councillor's attention and request that you seek an urgent and public explanation of Council management's intentions to implement the roadmap.

Given the roadmap identifies a timeline that commences in the 26/27 financial year, we suggest it would be prudent to seek specific information about the IT and AI projects funded in the draft budget proposed to be passed tonight.

Additionally, given the environmental impacts of Generative AI, we also suggest it would be prudent to obtain external advice on how its widespread use at the Council, would impact with the Council's zero carbon commitment.

The Budget resolution tonight may be Councillors only opportunity to prevent the automation of Council services and significant job loss in the local community.

The AI Roadmap should not proceed until consultation has occurred with the workforce and community and the significant risks of automation considered by the community. We urge you to pause the passage of the Draft Budget until adequate explanation and information is shared with the community and workforce and a public consultation has occurred.

Thank you for your consideration of these issues.

Regards,



Zoe Edwards

Deputy Branch Secretary

ASU Vic/Tas Branch

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