

DISCOVER / CREATE / SHARE

City of Greater Dandenong
Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy
2022–2026

Year 1 Report Card





PRIORITY 1 /

1 Support the development of strong and connected local arts, culture and heritage sectors

Projects and initiatives	
1.1	Support local arts, culture and heritage practitioners, collectives and groups to collaborate and lead local arts, culture and heritage activity.
1.2	Connect local individuals and organisations in the arts, culture and heritage sectors with local, national and international networks, opportunities and best practice learnings.
1.3	Advocate and explore opportunities for local arts, culture and heritage activity across national and international platforms.
1.4	Continue to provide accessible and fit for purpose arts, culture and heritage spaces and infrastructure locally.

Highlights and Achievements

- Walker Street Art Gallery and Arts Centre supported both Council-run programs and community groups, attracting over 18,400 visitors to the gallery. Bookings for the gallery’s theatre space increased by 49.6%, with participation from new community groups such as Burke and Beyond and SECAN (South Eastern Contemporary Art Network).
- The increase in visitation and engagement positions the venue as a hub for arts and culture in Greater Dandenong and the south-east, empowering lives through creativity.
- Supported local arts and culture practitioners by fostering collaboration and empowering them to lead various arts activities and creative initiatives, including community exhibitions, public art installations and 19 online programs to broaden their reach.

“Just wanted to say a big Thankyou for your help and support in making the three day event so smooth and seamless. We had quite a few people who had never been to Walker Street Gallery [and Arts Centre] before coming and they really appreciated the space and the intimacy of the musical sharing. Thanks again for all your help!”
– Sangam Melbourne

Front cover image: *Our Beat, Drum Theatre, 2022.*

Opposite image: *Surveyed exhibition opening night, Walker Street Gallery and Arts Centre, 2022.*



Our Beat Spoken Word event, Multicultural Arts Victoria takeover as part of the In Situ program of events, Drum Theatre, 2022.

- Low cost and in-kind use of Walker Street Gallery and Arts Centre, has enabled creative development and presentation. It empowered groups such as Fusion Theatre and Sangam to develop works which connected local creatives with each other, and offered opportunities to connect and perform with broader networks such as the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and paid acting opportunities for all-abilities actors.
- Arts in Greater Dandenong digital content accumulated over 56,000 views, promoting the broad program of exhibitions, events and workshops held across the municipality and online.
- Supported local artists and groups to present public performances, including dozens of diverse artists through *Our Beat* open mic nights.

“[This program] Helps me understand the psyche of the arts industry in Australia. Perfect for a new comer setting up an arts practice in Australia.”

– *Local Artist*

- Commissioned performer Candy Bowers to deliver *Sweet Mama*, a show about diabetes among the African community which was performed to the local schools audience.
- Support for local South Asian artists (Sangam) with workshop space to collaborate and lead performance in the south-east.

- Relocation of Springvale and District Historical Society collections from Morwell Parade site to the Springvale Community Hub, providing opportunities for greater community access and engagement with their research collections and services.
- Support for local historical societies and Spirit of Enterprise Group to store their collections at Council’s Shared Archive Collection Store, ensuring preservation of important local heritage collections for future generations.
- Local historical societies and local refugee community group representatives invited to collaborate on three Heritage Hill exhibitions and two public programs, increasing community awareness of local stories and collections.
- Connected local historical societies and community collecting groups with best practice learnings through delivery of Significance Assessment and Caring for Collections professional development training sessions.

“The Dandenong Historical Society are delighted in the partnership we have with the heritage personnel who curate the exhibitions at Heritage Hill. As a volunteer group with limited resources the talks and exhibitions at both Benga and Laurel Lodge give us the opportunity to either loan items for an exhibition or supply a speaker. This is a marketing opportunity for our society. Also we are able to offer our society members the opportunity to attend these functions. We would love to be involved with more functions at Heritage Hill.”

– *President, Dandenong and District Historical Society*



City of Greater Dandenong: Then and Now’ exhibition, Hertiage Hill Museum and Historic Gardens, 2022.

PRIORITY 2 /

2 Strengthen the resilience of the local arts, culture and heritage sectors to withstand the challenges of today and tomorrow

Projects and initiatives	
2.1	Invest in capacity and capability building programs that support the development of the local creative economy.
2.2	Support connection to funding pathways for local arts, culture and heritage practitioners and organisations, including supporting access to income generation opportunities, government grants, philanthropic and other in-kind contributions.
2.3	Progress planning and development of creative industry production hub in central Dandenong.
2.4	Complete and launch Dandenong New Art.
2.5	Undertake a feasibility study for Civic Archive Capacity Expansion.

Highlights and Achievements

- Secured \$950K funding from Creative Victoria for interim activation and planning for a creative industry hub, involving a detailed co-design with community members and industry professionals.
- Initiated the *creative RISE* program, providing local individuals and organisations with professional development sessions.
- Supported artists in grant opportunities through Community Arts Grants workshops and provided 10 artists with support letters for funding from Creative Australia, Creative Victoria and Multicultural Affairs.
- Introduced the *Our Beat Makers Market*, providing local creatives with showcasing opportunity and a place to connect with community members.

“creative RISE events are a place to learn, practise and grow.”

– Local Artist

- Supported local heritage and multicultural groups through provision of advice and letters of support for heritage funding opportunities including Public Records Office Victoria Local History Grants Program and National Library of Australia Community Heritage Grants Program.
- Continued sale and promotion of Greater Dandenong 25th anniversary publication through Greater Dandenong Libraries.
- Collaborative management of the Shared Heritage Archive operations in conjunction with other user groups.

Opposite image: Cultural Sketch participants, Walker Street Gallery and Arts Centre, 2023.

“[creative RISE] is a fantastic initiative with great benefits for creatives.”

– Local Artist



PRIORITY 3 /

3 Elevate and expand the impact and representation of arts, culture and heritage

Projects and initiatives	
3.1	Deliver arts, culture and heritage initiatives through local cultural facilities and beyond, including exhibitions, performances, festivals and events.
3.2	Measure, evaluate and communicate the health, wellbeing, social, cultural and economic impacts created by arts, culture and heritage activities.
3.3	Activate public places to create innovative and immersive arts, culture and heritage experiences.
3.4	Strengthen partnerships and synergistic opportunities across Council teams, community organisations, peak bodies, the private sector and other councils.
3.5	Review and revise Council's relevant plans and policies (including Public Art Policy, Heritage Study including Thematic Environmental History, Festival and Events Plan, and Collections Policy).
3.6	Integrate arts, culture and heritage expression in new and existing infrastructure projects.
3.7	Seek opportunities to integrate arts, culture and heritage expression and approaches through Council Service delivery.
3.8	Increase the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in arts, culture and heritage activity.
3.9	Invest in supporting digitisation of civic and local heritage collections.

Highlights and Achievements

- Completed research, development and delivery of five heritage exhibitions; four interpretative displays; one online video; four rehangs of Civic Collection artworks in Civic buildings, all allowing greater public access to Council's Civic and Cultural Heritage Collection and celebration of local heritage stories.
- Coordinated and delivered 21 Heritage Hill tours and school programs to 538 participants, ensuring activation of heritage public spaces, acknowledgement of their significance and links with the broader history of the State of Victoria.
- Development and delivery of six heritage public programs to 128 participants, to pass on knowledge and activate community support for local heritage places and collections, whilst enhancing social connectedness through celebration of community's diverse intangible cultural heritage.



Shared storytelling afternoon tea 'Our home is the City of Greater Dandenong', Heritage Hill Museum and Historic Gardens, 2023.

“A highly informative, wide ranging and interesting presentation. It was well targeted to the audience and there was good follow up response to audience questions. It was an educational talk on a topic not previously aware of. The talk enormously broadened the knowledge base of those who attended the City of Greater Dandenong’s collections, why they are kept and its significance and connection to the community.”

– *Our Community Objects heritage event patron*

- Continued development of the *We Built This City* heritage interpretation project, which will provide our culturally diverse community and newly arrived residents with opportunities to connect with the history of their new home.

“An excellent exhibition and talk. A well-researched and interesting talk that was up lifting and inspirational for the audience.”

– *A Floral Muse heritage exhibition and talk patron*

- Participation in National Trust Australian Heritage Festival and Royal Historical Society of Victoria’s History Month.
- Collaboration with Strategic Planning on the development of Greater Dandenong Heritage Study Review, ensuring adequate protection of local built heritage assets.

- Commenced discussions with Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation on repatriation of Council’s Aboriginal heritage artefacts, a vital step forward in local truth telling and reconciliation.
- Collaborated with Dandenong Market to celebrate NAIDOC week, featuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dance performances, workshops by the Indigenous Outreach Project, and family-friendly sessions with Emmy Webbers from Wurruck Yambo.
- Supported local arts community with display space, hosting 26 artists and eight exhibitions in two community arts spaces, Garnar Lane Light Boxes, and Harmony Square Exhibition Windows, generating exposure through high foot traffic.
- Showcased six major exhibitions at Walker Street Gallery and Arts Centre, including touring works from Canberra Glassworks; *SHE of mind and body* featuring works by women and female-identifying artists; and *9 by 5*, an open entry exhibition resulting in display of works from people aged 8 – 80 years. Total visitation of 18,443 people.
- Supported artists through digital initiatives, including the release of *QuickArts* programs with 27,614 views, online live workshops featuring exhibiting and local artists, and the production of videos for exhibitions and programs. Collectively, Arts in Greater Dandenong contributed 35-40% of the content displayed on the Council’s outdoor large screens across the municipality.
- Facilitated the creation of *Hanging by a Thread* mosaic for Afghan Women at Drum Theatre, showcasing public art and associated creative expression programming in collaboration with Drum Theatre and Greater Dandenong Libraries.

“My wife and I are long term members of The Drum, we would like to congratulate you and your team on this presentation, this artist [Roy] was one of the best shows we have attended.”

– *Drum member after Roy Theaker’s Always Love The Music*

- The Drum Theatre hosted 317 events and activities, featuring 152 performances, and connected with 42,706 attendees and 10,488 artists and participants.
- The Drum worked with Council’s Activity Centre activation team and Development Victoria to present a youth performance in the Little India precinct. 20 local young people aged between 14 and 20 worked with Melbourne performance company Pony Cam to create a site-specific theatre work in Little India. Six intimate performances took 15 people each performance on a tour of the precinct and the imaginings of the urban development dreams of this young cast.

“Saw [*Promises Promises*] at The Drum recently, Janet and the show were just awesome, loved every bit of it.”

– *Drum Theatre patron*



Audience at Jimeoin – *The Craic*, Drum Theatre, 2023.

“In all the years I have worked at Council I can honestly say I have not experienced the support, attention to detail and professionalism you all provided yesterday ...To one and all you are an exceptional team and I look forward to booking The Drum rooms more often for group events.”

– Volunteer Program Leader

- The Drum collaborated with Festivals and Events to create light-filled art installations in Springvale, Noble Park and Dandenong.
- Supported Council’s Volunteers Appreciation event.
- Programmed *Common Dissonance* by Da Njinang Circus, a First Nations-led circus company

“It means so much to us to have your trust to tell stories that are deeply personal to us, and we hope you and your community really got something out of it.”

– Na Djinang Circus

PRIORITY 4 /

4 Priority 4: Foster inclusive pathways for community to participate in arts, culture and heritage activity

Projects and initiatives	
4.1	Provide pathways for community to participate in arts, culture and heritage activities.
4.2	Pursue opportunities and support the Bunurong People to lead and design activities and programs that celebrate their arts, culture and heritage.
4.3	Pursue and support opportunities for diverse community groups to lead and design activities and programs.
4.4	Support local arts, culture and heritage organisations to increase participation and engagement.
4.5	Create an audience development plan for cultural facilities to increase engagement.
4.6	Increase the accessibility of our arts, culture and heritage programming, activities and infrastructure.

Highlights and Achievements

- 2,000 *At Home Gallery* kits were created with the support of VicHealth, involving engagement with local school children for refinement during development. These kits were distributed to the community through events, exhibitions, Council programs, Maternal and Child Health team, and community agencies such as Victorian Aboriginal Child Agency.
- Provided local young people with pathway development via Youthworx in exhibition filming projects.

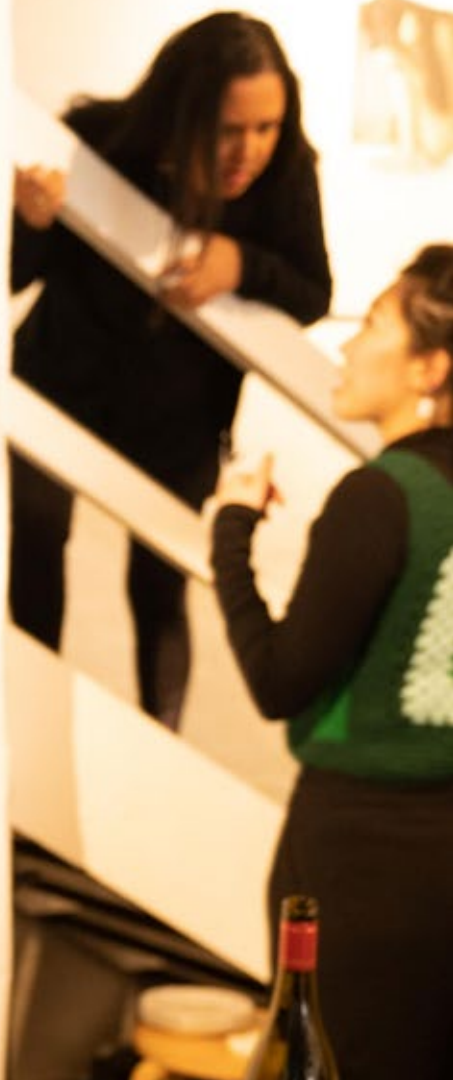
“The shows we have seen over three years have never disappointed us and it is a joy to sit, sing-a-long, laugh in comfortable seating and relax for one and a half to two hours once a month...I do feel the cost is very reasonable and as a pensioner it enables me to be within our budget.”

– *Drum Theatre Encore program patron*

Opposite page: *SHE of mind and body exhibition opening event, Walker Street Gallery and Arts Centre, 2023.*

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Name	Age	Sex
Lindy (Kimmy) Lucena	64	Female
Dagna Isaac	23	Female
Wendy Steeman	61	Female
Maria Williams	58	Female



- The Band Room space (Walker Street Gallery and Arts Centre) saw the revival of the *Artist in Residence program*, offering an accessible space for participating artists. The program supported a Bunurong artist to lead, design, and deliver an arts program to a Koori youth group, celebrating the arts, culture, and heritage of Aboriginal peoples.
- Supported and guided the Dandenong Keshava Community through the planning, funding, and procurement process of a significant large-scale community mural. The mural will be implemented on the facade of the Dandenong Thunder Soccer Club building located at George Andrews Reserve, Dandenong.

“Thank you for giving us the opportunity to make art from the comfort of our home. The workshop was wonderful! ...I looked around a little [at] what is happening in surrounding councils and what art activities they offer. It appears that only the Dandenong Council offers community art related workshops. It is outstanding program and what a cohesive power for the community and art lovers. Thank you for organising them and lifting people’s spirits!”
 – *Online programming patron*

“Dandenong’s hidden paradise.”
 “A wonderful treasure that should be valued by the whole community.” “Will definitely be back in the different seasons to see the changing colours in the garden.” “An excellent job by staff who are very informed on the history of the houses and gardens.”

– *Heritage Hill tour patrons*

- Developed a partnership with the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation for the design and delivery of collaborative projects, particularly in the creation of public art projects. These projects offer opportunities and support for self-determination and artistic cultural expression for Bunurong artists and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists residing across Victoria.
- Drum Theatre presented an intergenerational Encore matinee program during the September school holidays that was the best attended Encore program for the year with 357 seniors, children and family members attending *Bon Appetit by Petit Circus*.
- Drum conducted focus group for Encore audience members to help inform future programming, enabling the focus group to tell us their likes, dislikes and aspirations which informed the following year’s program, particularly times and types of shows.



Luminosity 2022, featuring works by the indirect Object and Nik Azidis.

- Promotion of local historical societies on Council’s Library website to increase visibility and engagement opportunities.
- Accessibility of Council’s Civic and Cultural Heritage Collection online collections increased through heritage rebranding project; sharing of ‘Flashback Friday’ social media content and use of digital public screens; resulting in 5,056 online page views to the eHive digital platform.
- 58 heritage research requests successfully completed, supporting local researchers and academics to have greater access to local heritage collections.

“Heritage Hill is a great asset as we get a chance to step back in time. The class can visit without cost which gives all students the opportunity to participate.”

– *Heritage Hill school program participating schoolteacher*

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