

Greater Dandenong Council

# Strategic Advocacy Framework





## Acknowledgment

Greater Dandenong City Council acknowledges and pays respects to the Bunurong people of the Kulin Nation, as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters in and around Greater Dandenong.

We value and recognise local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultures, heritage, and connection to land as a proud part of a shared identity for Greater Dandenong.

Greater Dandenong City Council pays respect to Elders past and present and recognises their importance in maintaining knowledge, traditions, and Culture in our Community.

Greater Dandenong City Council also respectfully acknowledges the Bunurong Land Council as the Registered Aboriginal Party responsible for managing the Aboriginal Cultural heritage of the land and waters where Greater Dandenong is situated.





# Introduction

**Located in Melbourne's south-east, Greater Dandenong is a vibrant and culturally diverse community of 165,000 people. A centre of regional industry, more than 113,000 people work within our city, with the manufacturing sector providing the most jobs.**

Our city is vibrant and diverse, but not without its challenges. This is where Council can play a role that goes beyond roads, rates and rubbish.

Greater Dandenong City Council is committed to strengthening the wellbeing of our residents and supporting our community to reach their ambitions and aspirations. Faced with complex issues and service gaps, Council cannot address our community's needs alone.

This Greater Dandenong Strategic Advocacy Framework will help Council take a coordinated and strategic approach to representing the varied voices and concerns of our community. This Framework will direct our advocacy efforts towards other levels of government and organisations, providing Council with the tools to achieve positive change, secure funding and investment opportunities, and influence policy reforms for the benefit of our whole community.

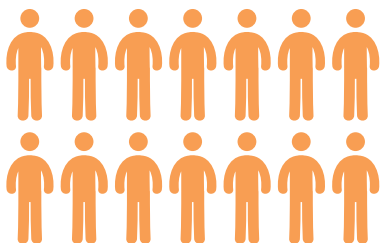
This document will ensure the unique knowledge we have of our community is being shared with key decision makers as we take a seat at the table and seek to influence, negotiate and advocate for better outcomes for our community.

Common challenges in Greater Dandenong include low levels of income, high levels of unemployment and high levels of financial hardship, including the rising cost of housing. These and other conditions are matters of concern for Council and are key opportunities for us to advocate to different levels of government to improve circumstances for our residents.



# Community Snapshot

## Population



**165,000**

residents in 2024.  
Predicted to grow  
over the next decade  
to **185,000**



**615**

residents are of  
Aboriginal and  
Torres Strait  
Islander Heritage



over **154**  
birthplaces



**2/3**

of people are  
born overseas

**24,000**

migrants have  
arrived since 2016



**5,500**

immigrants settled  
in 2022–23



**860**

asylum seekers

## Employment

Unemployment rate

**6.5% (2023)**



**113,000**

people work within  
CGD, mostly people  
living outside the  
municipality

## Industry Type

Manufacturing

**22.5%**

Health care and  
social assistance

**10.5%**

Construction

**10%**

Retail trade

**9.5%**

Transport, Postal,  
Warehousing

**8.5%**

Source: Census 2021

## Housing



**62%**

owned or being purchased



**2,400**

people are homeless or living in severely overcrowded dwellings



**1/5**

of renting households are at risk of housing related financial stress or homelessness



**36%**

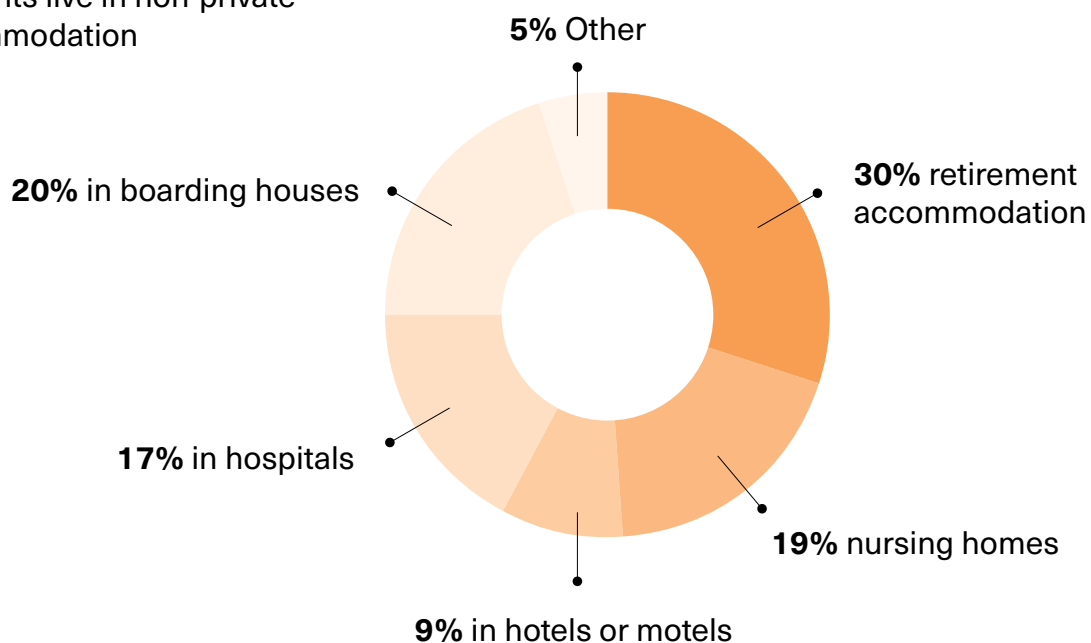
rent



Since 1999 the average cost of a home has increased from **3.2 to 10.4** times the median annual household income

**3,390**

residents live in non-private accommodation





## What is Advocacy?

Advocacy involves representing the views and needs of Council and its community to decision-makers, in order to achieve agreed-upon outcomes. Strategic advocacy is dedicated to pursuing short, medium and long-term results that align with Council's goals and objectives.

**Council-led advocacy is key to driving change that not only meets community priorities but can enable a deeper engagement in the ongoing transformation of neighbourhoods and cities.**

## Why do we Advocate?

The *Victorian Local Government Act (2020)* confirms the role of councils as:

**“Requir[ing] to give priority to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations.”**

Although Council has always striven to do so, achieving best results for the community has become more challenging as local governments adapt to rate capping and cost shifting by state and federal governments.

Working towards the *Greater Dandenong Community 2040 Vision* and the *Council Plan 2025–2029* requires Council to avoid reactive and ad hoc advocacy in favour of a more strategic and tactical approach.



# Scope and Objectives

The Framework lays out the foundation for prioritising advocacy goals and developing advocacy strategies and associated action plans to generate best outcomes to:

- **Shape** public policy
- **Secure** funding and resources
- **Increase** visibility and understanding of issues impacting everyday lives
- **Participate** in matters impacting community



A successful Framework will enable Council to:

- ✓ **Better influence policy and legislation**
  - Ensure Greater Dandenong City Council has a seat at the table with decision makers
  - Ensure community voices are being heard by state and federal governments when forming policy and legislation.
- ✓ **Secure more funding and resources**
  - Raise awareness of Council-led projects with funding bodies and different levels of government
  - Undertake grant submissions that help achieve the goals of the Council Plan and Community 2040 Vision.
- ✓ **Foster greater partnerships and collaboration**
  - Consult and work with the community in our advocacy priorities
  - Form strategic partnerships with other councils on issues affecting the region
  - Connect with politicians and policy-makers, encouraging and assisting them to advocate for our community.
- ✓ **Continue to empower the community**
  - Elevate the voice of grassroots advocacy initiatives that align with the Council Plan.

**The objectives of the Framework are to strengthen the planning, coordination, efficiency and effectiveness of Council advocacy to maximise its success and deliver the most favourable outcomes for the community.**

The Framework aims to ensure Council undertakes:

- ✓ a **strategic approach** instead of a reactionary approach
- ✓ an **evidence-based approach** in identifying advocacy priorities
- ✓ better **engagement with stakeholders** and community on advocacy issues
- ✓ **centralised and targeted actions** for advocating across different levels of government
- ✓ a more **coordinated and collaborative approach** that makes use of all opportunities, while considering resource requirements and risks associated with advocacy.







## Guiding Principles in Developing Council's Advocacy Priorities

**Evidence-based decision-making:** ensuring actions are based on comprehensive data and research, to address community needs and respond to emerging trends with informed and strategic intention.

**Transparency:** ensuring processes and decisions are open and pro-actively shared with all stakeholders. By maintaining transparency, Council leads from the front to build trust and accountability, enabling our community to understand and support our advocacy efforts.

**Responsiveness:** ensuring advocacy is flexible and responsive to emerging issues and stakeholder feedback. This involves being prepared to adjust strategies as new information arises, by listening to, and addressing, the concerns of our community and key stakeholders. Effective responsiveness ensures advocacy remains relevant, timely and impactful.

**Community-focused:** by engaging and consulting with our community, we place the needs and aspirations of residents at the heart of our advocacy.

**Collaborative:** partner with stakeholders to ensure support and a consistent voice in advocacy efforts.

## Building Strategic Partnerships to Address Advocacy Priorities

Council's advocacy efforts will be focused on addressing the needs and aspirations of the community who live, work or play in the City of Greater Dandenong. These needs may arise from various sources:

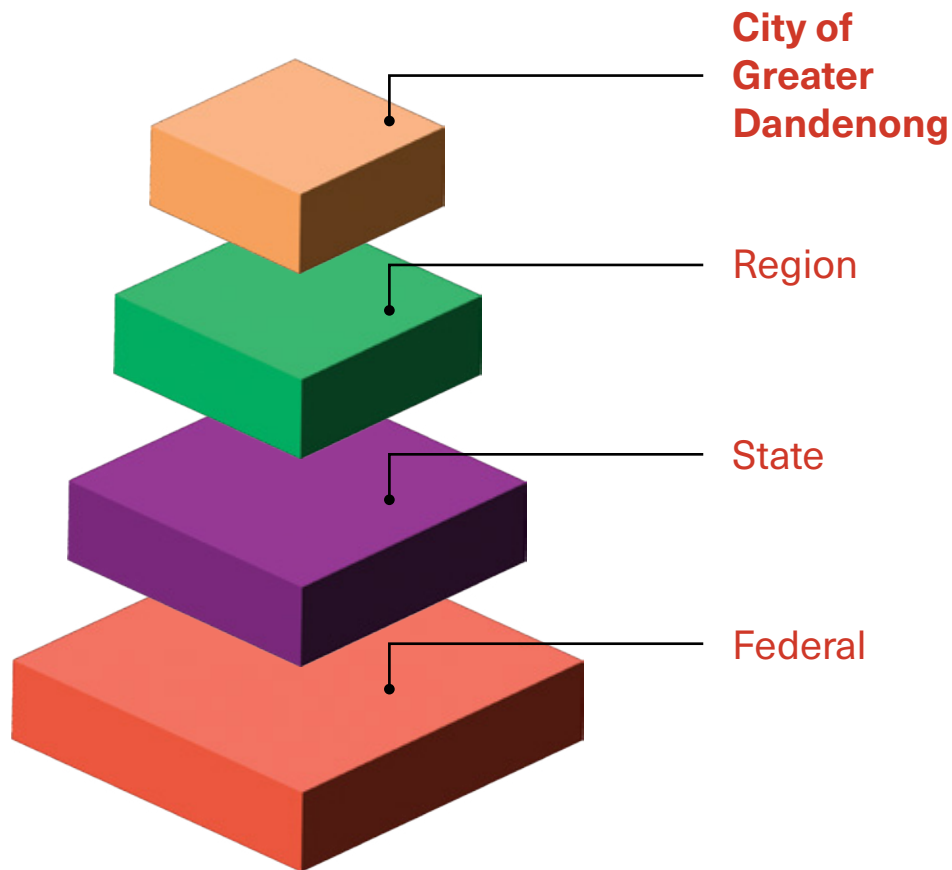
**Local needs:** Specific requirements of Greater Dandenong residents and businesses including local issues such as infrastructure, health and wellbeing, community priorities, public services and economic development.

By developing strong ties with local community groups, residents and businesses, Council will tailor its advocacy to represent local voices. Evidence shows storytelling has the power to create connections to things that matter and motivate people to take action. Advocacy campaigns are at their most effective when councils activate communities, mobilising them on issues that affect their everyday lives.

**Regional issues:** Conditions which affect the southeast region, including regional transportation, environmental sustainability and collaborative initiatives with neighbouring municipalities.

By partnering with other councils and regional organisations, Council aligns its advocacy efforts with regional priorities and helps Council and its partners to form cohesive strategies.

**State and federal policies:** Issues related to interventions or policies of state and federal governments. This involves advocating for or against legislative changes, funding allocations and policy decisions that impact the local community. Council will foster channels of communication with state and federal government officials and agencies to influence state-level decisions and secure funding.







## Approach to Setting Advocacy Priorities

**Council's Advocacy priorities and corresponding plans will be defined through three main steps:**

### 1. Advocacy Identification

In this step, the issues that need to be advocated to different levels of government or other stakeholders will be identified. The identification process involves:

- **Identifying current and emerging opportunities, trends and issues:** Problems raised in research or by the community will be collected and analysed.

### 2. Advocacy Prioritisation

Once identified, all advocacy issues will be assessed against comprehensive criteria to determine:

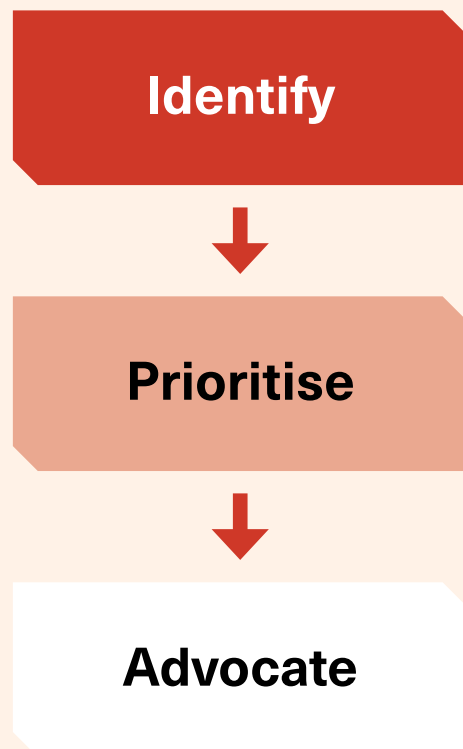
- **Alignment with Community Vision and Council Plan Priorities:** Ensuring that the issues align with the community's vision and the priorities outlined in the Council Plan as well as the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.
- **Urgency of Advocacy Issues:** Establishing which issues need immediate attention.
- **Level of Efforts and Engagement required:** Determining the resources required and the extent of stakeholder engagement necessary.
- **Tools Used for Advocacy Campaigns:** Identifying the most effective methods and approach for each advocacy campaign.

### 3. Develop Action Plans for Each Advocacy Priority

After prioritising the advocacy items, a detailed action plan will be developed for each issue. The action plan will outline:

- **Asks, framing and messaging:** Creating consistent messaging that frames the advocacy priority as a relevant issue with clear and realistic asks.
- **Tactics:** Specifying the tools and resources needed for effective advocacy.
- **Stakeholders:** Mapping key stakeholders and their roles in the advocacy process.
- **Stages:** Breaking down the advocacy process into distinct stages with clear objectives, timelines/engagement and communications schedule.
- **Cost estimations:** Resource allocation for required activities while taking into consideration resource availability and project length.
- **Risks:** Identifying potential risks involved in each advocacy campaign, and mitigation strategies.

Such a process will help to ensure advocacy is strategic, focused and aligned with the goals of the community and Council.



# Evaluation and Review

The advocacy process is incremental, making it important to monitor progress along the way. This can help to determine whether we are achieving our intended outcomes and whether advocacy is being conducted in an effective and sustainable manner.

Monitoring advocacy efforts requires flexible benchmarks because successful advocacy activities can be “measured” in a range of ways, from changed lives to improved public policies, from enhanced engagement with stakeholders to secure funding for council projects.

To ensure the advocacy activities are delivered efficiently, the following aspects should be assessed:

- **Effectiveness of advocacy activities:** Monitor the success of advocacy activities in achieving the desired outcomes and influencing policy or securing funding.
- **Capacity building:** Assess the improvement of skills and knowledge within the team and among stakeholders involved in advocacy efforts. Including the number of residents who become involved with or support our campaigns.
- **Relationship development:** Document the quality and number of new relationships or partnerships developed with different levels of government and other stakeholders. It is also important to assess the expansion of advocacy networks, feedback from stakeholders and the ability for additional partnerships.
- **Cost-effectiveness:** Consider the time and cost of advocacy campaigns to ensure they are being conducted in the most efficient way to achieve their goals.

\*The Advocacy priorities and the action plans will be reviewed annually to ensure ongoing relevance and effectiveness. Reporting back to the community and to Council is a crucial aspect of this process, as it closes the feedback loop, provides continuous improvement and maintain engagement.

To keep Council informed and aligned, regular briefings will be held to discuss progress and encourage dialogue, ensuring that everyone is on the same page and aware of key connections and stakeholders.

For the community, updates will be provided through annual and quarterly reports, as well as via Council’s communications platforms. This transparent communication will help maintain trust and demonstrate our commitment to addressing the community’s needs and priorities.





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 Acknowledging  
Bunurong Country

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