



# Annual Report 2012-2013





Engaging with the community

## OUR VISION

Greater Dandenong is a City of Opportunity with quality buildings, places and facilities, and where people of all ages, cultures and backgrounds can reach their potential to live secure, happy and fulfilling lives for generations to come.



## OUR GOALS

### A city planned for the future

- Places and buildings
- Travel and transport
- Activity and economy

### A thriving and creative city

- Employment and education
- Places and facilities
- Activity and economy

### A healthy community and environment

- Places and buildings
- Wellbeing in the community
- The environment

### A city of respect

- Community pride
- Living and working together
- The generations

### A leading Council

- Effective governance
- Excellence in local government
- The best place to work
- Engaging with the community
- Customer focus



## GREAT PLACE

- Recognised as the capital of Melbourne's south-east
- Victoria's manufacturing heartland and home to 9000 businesses
- Playground and picnic areas upgraded across the city
- Launch of 'Discover your own backyard' website and video
- Boasting 513 hectares of open space including 170 parks
- Revitalisation of Central Dandenong and Springvale
- Quality infrastructure including 635km of local roads and 993km of footpaths

## GREAT PEOPLE

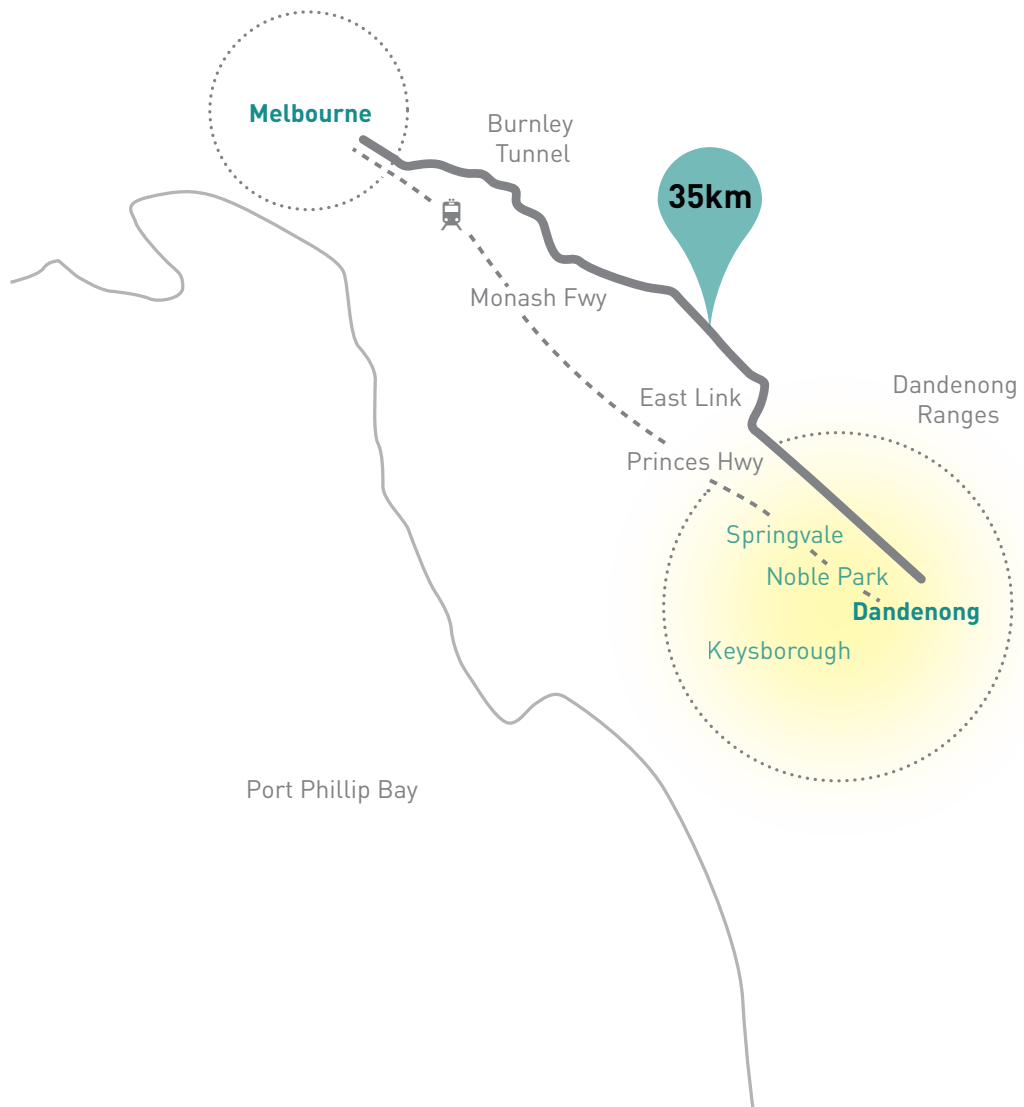
- Over 145,000 residents
- People from 150 nations
- 60 per cent of our 140,000 residents were born overseas
- 55 per cent are from non-english speaking backgrounds
- Over 70,000 people employed locally
- Over 400 local community groups and service clubs
- An active and committed volunteer community

## GREAT TIMES

- State-of-the-art cultural facilities including the multi-million dollar Drum Theatre
- Arts events and festivals held monthly
- Sandown Racing – cars, horses and greyhounds
- Scenic bike paths stretching 53km from Jells Park to Carrum beach
- 200 active sports clubs
- Largest basketball and volleyball stadium in the southern hemisphere
- Construction of the new Municipal Building to include a regional library and an open-air civic plaza with giant outdoor video screen
- Indoor and outdoor swimming pools
- Victoria's largest Lunar New Year festival

## GREAT SHOPS

- The redeveloped Dandenong Market
- Little India and Afghan Bazaar cultural precincts
- Modern shopping complexes at Dandenong and Keysborough
- Wide variety of fresh produce, seafood and meat
- Over 50 Asian restaurants and specialty supermarkets
- Extensive range of factory outlets
- Showcase of cuisines from around the world



## Snapshot of Greater Dandenong

### Geography and Population

- Greater Dandenong encompasses an area of 129 square kilometres in Melbourne's south-east, approximately 35km from Melbourne's CBD.
- Around 145,000 people live in Greater Dandenong.

### Cultural Diversity

- The City of Greater Dandenong is the most culturally diverse community in Victoria.
- Greater Dandenong is the second most diverse community in Australia, with residents from over 150 different birthplaces.
- Over half (60 per cent) of our population were born overseas, with 55 per cent from nations where English is not the main spoken language, double the Melbourne metropolitan average of 26%.

- Birthplaces include Vietnam, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, India, China, Italy, Greece, Bosnia, Afghanistan, New Zealand and Britain.
- The number of Greater Dandenong residents born overseas rose 13,700 between 2006–2011 including more than 6000 Indian-born residents, nearly 2000 Sri Lankans, 1100 Vietnamese and 900 Afghans.
- The diversity of this city is reflected in the range of religious faiths including Buddhism (18 per cent), Islam (11 per cent), Hinduism (4 per cent) and Christianity (50 per cent).

### Spoken Languages

- Nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) of Greater Dandenong residents speak languages other than English – the largest proportion in Victoria and double the metropolitan average of 31 per cent – including Vietnamese, Khmer, Chinese, Greek, Punjabi and Sinhalese.



Greater Dandenong is the second most diverse community in Australia, with residents from over 150 different birthplaces

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## Message from the Mayor

“The strikingly designed precinct will feature a new regional library spread over 2500 square metres, an outdoor community space, retail areas plus new Council offices, community meeting spaces and city chambers.”

The past year has been a significant one for the City of Greater Dandenong. The city has celebrated a number of key milestones with several major projects completed or progressing well, new initiatives launched and a high level of service provided to our community.

### Highlights include:

#### New civic precinct

Significant progress has been made on construction of the new civic precinct site on the corner of Lonsdale and Walker streets – with work on-track for completion in 2014.

The strikingly designed precinct will feature a new state-of-the-art regional library spread over 2500 square metres, an outdoor community space and giant TV screen designed in the spirit of Melbourne’s Federation Square, retail areas plus new Council offices, community meeting spaces and city chambers.

The \$62 million project forms part of the significant public and private Revitalising Central Dandenong project that has transformed the area.

#### Community Satisfaction Survey Results

We were extremely pleased to receive the results of the 2013 Community Satisfaction Survey, in which Greater Dandenong was ranked higher than its Outer Melbourne Metro counterparts and the state-wide average in all key categories. These results reflect Council’s commitment to a clear long term direction, continuous improvement, engaging with and lobbying on behalf of our communities and customer service. Our overall performance rated three points higher than the state average.

This survey is coordinated annually by Local Government Victoria on behalf of all local government areas, and provides us with a very strong base on which to continue striving for service improvements.

#### Healthy Together Greater Dandenong

Council and the Victorian Government joined forces with local schools, early childhood services, businesses and families to help build a healthier, happier community under the Healthy Together Greater Dandenong initiative.

The three-year project encourages our community to make healthy choices in everyday life.

It aims to reduce chronic disease by promoting healthy lifestyles where people live, work and play.

More than 55 local schools, early childhood services and workplaces have already signed up and are making simple changes to promote healthy lifestyles.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Angela Long', written over a light blue circular stamp.

Cr Angela Long  
Mayor





“...commitment to a clear long term direction, continuous improvement, engaging with and lobbying on behalf of our communities and customer service.”



## Chief Executive Officer's Report

“2012–13 can be counted as another successful year for Council. But with each successful year comes a new challenge – to meet if not exceed community expectations and on this basis, 2013–14 presents as yet another opportunity to serve the people and businesses of Greater Dandenong to the best of our corporate ability.”

This report is something of a rarity – it can be given once in each four year period as it covers the period across two elected Councils – from July to November 2012 when a previously elected Council was in place and from December 2012 to June 2013 under a newly elected Council. Regardless, such are the processes of governance of your Council and its longer term, strategic focus and commitment to financial management, service and project delivery that changes to, and transitions of, Council are seamless and reports such as these may focus without departure, from a full and uninterrupted year of achievement.

Once again, I commend to you the efforts and achievements of your elected Councils in continuing a journey of growth, support and improvement. The newly elected Council has re-visited the Council Plan and strategic priorities of Council – and these will take greatest effect from 1 July 2013 – but for the period of this report, a focus on and commitment to quality and equitable service delivery; the provision of essential infrastructure; and, support for all stakeholders, has remained unchanged.

Greater Dandenong's standing as a prominent city in a developing region is without challenge and the presentation of Dandenong as a Central Activity Area within Melbourne's 'poly-centric city' framework remains sound.

Greater Dandenong is highly regarded as a revitalising city that:

- ▶ increasingly responds to regional needs
- ▶ has principal and neighbourhood activity centres that reflect growing standards of amenity and opportunity
- ▶ is well-served by public transport (but with many remaining needs)
- ▶ has significantly improved infrastructure and assets
- ▶ remains a centre for employment in the region.

Revitalisation has not been confined just to Dandenong and in 2012–13, important steps were taken in advancing the sub-regional importance of Springvale and progressively, Noble Park.

For Springvale, the State Government's commitment to grade separate the Dandenong rail line from Springvale Road was not only a welcome response to Council's long term advocacy, but will be a catalyst for further, positive change that will take this centre to a new level. Complementary public and private investment in this centre will advance Council's growth and development objectives and lay foundations for a vibrant and successful retail and commercial precinct.

## Council's Strategic Focus

In 2012–13, Council has demonstrably maintained its focus on:

- ▶ **advocacy for better outcomes** – referenced among many things by ongoing support for the full implementation of the Springvale grade separation and grade separations along the entire Dandenong line – all of which will lead to lesser congestion and greater productivity for our business sector
- ▶ **securing partnerships in the delivery of community needs** – evidenced by stronger relationships with State and Federal agencies in the support of disadvantaged people and newly arrived migrants and refugees
- ▶ **commitment to the progressive enhancement of community infrastructure** – with increasingly high levels of capital investment including essential investment in 'renewals' (looking after the infrastructure we already have)
- ▶ **Creating a sound and sustainable financial strategy that can ensure operational resourcing and capital investments that satisfy community expectations** – Council is pushing toward a decade of financial sustainability as it records strong and responsible financial outcomes that reflect prudence and sound fiscal management by your Council.

## Advocacy

Advocacy remains an extremely high priority for Council and in 2012–13 further long-term benefits materialised. The State Government finally commenced works on the \$150 million (estimated) grade separation of Springvale Road and the Dandenong rail line. The Federal Government allocated significant funds through its Regional Development Australia fund to support Council's 'regional focus' at its new Dandenong library and a prominent and exciting civic square (that resembles 'Federation Square') as part of Council's \$63 million commitment to a new library, civic and administration complex.

Finally, and under this headline of 'advocacy', an important structural change was made to our organisation in 2012–13 with the creation of a new 'Greater Dandenong Business Group'. Led by a Group Manager, this group will have increased responsibilities to our very important and diverse business sector. 'Business' in Greater Dandenong contributes 51 per cent of Council's rate revenue; employs some 80,000 people each day; and, makes a substantial contribution to Victoria's State Domestic Product. Such a sector deserves as much support and advocacy for its needs as Council can provide and I have great confidence that this Group can achieve outcomes that the business sector expect.

“...a focus on and commitment to quality and equitable service delivery; the provision of essential infrastructure; and, support for all stakeholders, has remained unchanged.”

## Governance

Governance is always an imperative of Council – its sound, sensible and constant delivery is essential for the proper operation and strategic focus of a significant local government business such as Greater Dandenong City Council.

In 2012–13, Council reviewed and adopted its *'Meeting Procedure Local Law'* and many other important policies and procedures including those that result in community grants and important donations to a community with so many needs. In addition, previously adopted leadership and independent governance structures at the **Dandenong Market** and **Drum Theatre** were implemented and began to demonstrate the benefits that Council envisaged in their creation.

## Capital Investment

Capital investment remained at high, yet sustainable levels, in 2012–13 with \$50.03 million expended on all projects of which \$16.60 million was dedicated to asset renewals. It is most important that a properly determined ratio of 'renewal and refurbishment/total project investment' is maintained to ensure that previous infrastructure investments remain at standards that are serviceable and reflect highly on the city.

Council's capacity to fund this investment grows. This remains a challenge, but difficult decisions continue to be taken that will result in higher operating surpluses and thereby a greater capacity to fund capital improvements.

These challenges include:

- ▶ refining and containing operating expenditures
- ▶ pursuing external grant funds through partnerships and advocacy as outlined above
- ▶ increasing other revenues while maintaining rates at an appropriate level.

This reflects prudent financial management and Council has once again demonstrated its commitment to this core responsibility.

## Sound Financial Management

Council's underlying operating result was a surplus of \$4.95 million. An ongoing challenge to Council's 'bottom line' remains the necessity to contribute to a sector wide and highly conservative Local Authority Defined Benefits Superannuation Scheme – although sound financial management will see current obligations met by 2014–15 without any additional increase in rates.

After considering non-operating income and expenditure, the surplus was \$36.95 million.

It is important to note that these surpluses are 'accounting surpluses' which include a range of non-cash items such as depreciation on Council assets, assets written off, assets gifted to Council by Developers (eg. roads and footpaths) and exclude cash costs such as capital expenditure.

Council remains in a sound financial position but moreover, its forward financial projections would forecast this status continuing – subject of course to continuing, prudent management – with a growing capacity to meet the reasonable needs of the community and, the ongoing demands of ageing infrastructure that Council will always seek to present to increasingly higher standards of quality.

## Capital Improvements

As stated above, of the \$50.03 million spent on capital improvements during the year, \$16.60 million was on asset renewals with a further \$4.17 million on upgrades to existing infrastructure assets and \$26.87 million on major projects.

The funding of basic infrastructure – roads, footpaths and drains – is always a challenge but it is pleasing to report that in 2012–13, \$6.92 million was spent on this essential area. This significant investment continues to underpin the importance of Council's maintenance and protection of existing assets.

City Improvement Projects completed in 2012–13 are outlined elsewhere in this report.

As reported last year, the single most important project – by virtue of its size, value, potential to impact favourably on the local economy and ability to enhance service delivery for many years to come – remains the new Municipal Building Project in central Dandenong. This project commenced in 2012–13 and is scheduled to be finalised in March 2014. When completed, this complex will centralise Council's staff and services, create a new library of regional importance, establish a new civic heart in Dandenong and provide wonderful indoor and extensive outdoor meeting spaces for the community.

2012–13 can be counted as another successful year for Council. But with each successful year comes a new challenge – to meet if not exceed community expectations and on this basis, 2013–14 presents as yet another opportunity to serve the people and businesses of Greater Dandenong to the best of our corporate ability.

I thank Council for its leadership and the many wonderful staff who remain committed to local government service within the City of Greater Dandenong.



John Bennie  
**Chief Executive Officer**