

# Greater Dandenong Annual Report 2014–15



# our vision

## Our Vision

Greater Dandenong is a safe and vibrant city of opportunity for all – to visit, work, live and play.

## Our Key Strategic Objectives

### People

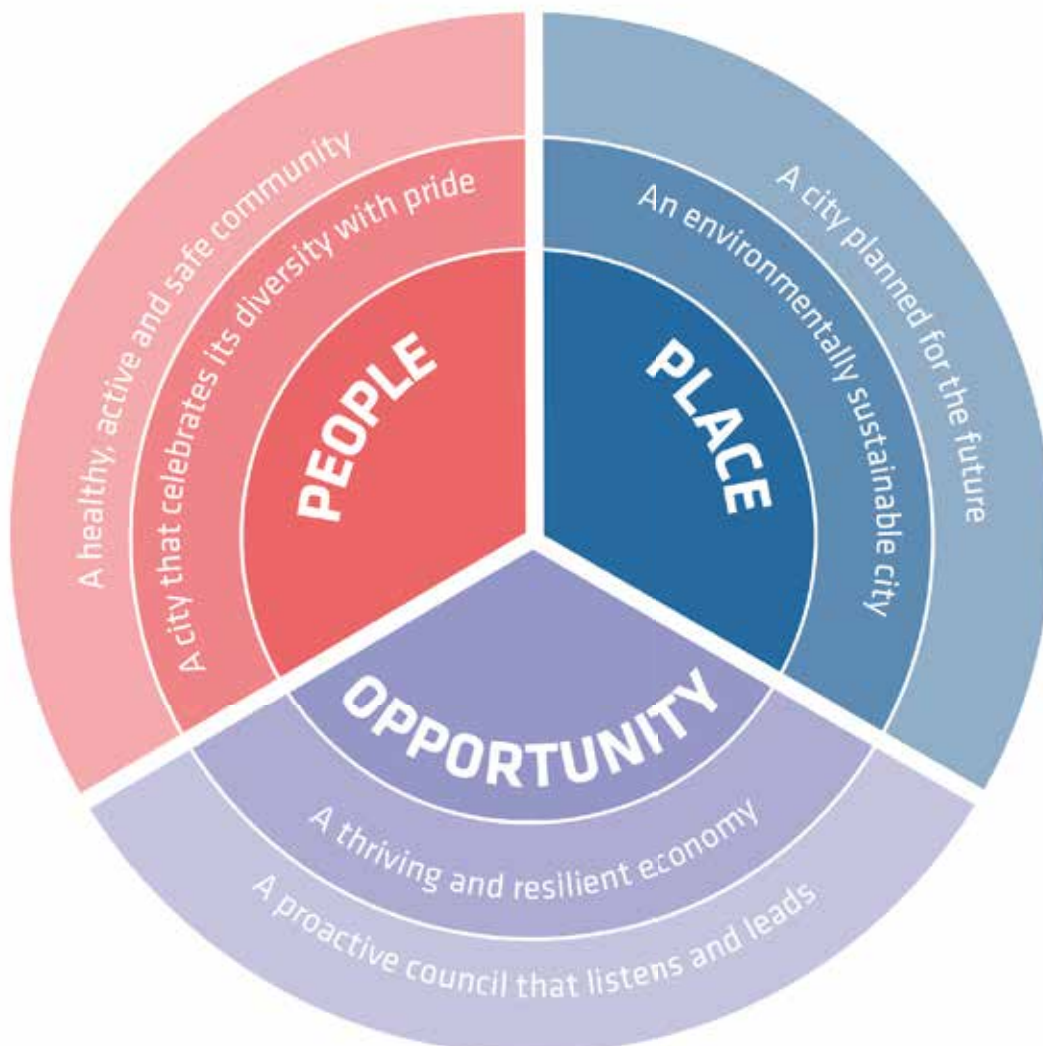
- ▶ A healthy, active and safe community
- ▶ A city that celebrates its diversity with pride

### Place

- ▶ An environmentally sustainable city
- ▶ A city planned for the future

### Opportunity

- ▶ A thriving and resilient economy
- ▶ A proactive council that listens and leads



# Our Great City



## Great Place

- ▶ Recognised as the capital of Melbourne's south-east
- ▶ Outstanding new library facility and civic space in central Dandenong
- ▶ Victoria's manufacturing heartland and home to 12,500 businesses
- ▶ Playground and picnic areas upgraded across the city
- ▶ Boasting 197 parks with 616 hectares of open space, 25 sports reserves and 17 bushland areas covering approximately 42 hectares
- ▶ Revitalisation of activity centres – Dandenong, Springvale and Noble Park
- ▶ Quality infrastructure including 670km of local roads and 60km of bike and footpaths

## Great People

- ▶ Over 150,000 residents
- ▶ People from over 150 different birthplaces
- ▶ Nearly two-thirds of residents were born overseas
- ▶ Two-thirds of residents speak languages other than English
- ▶ An active and committed volunteer community

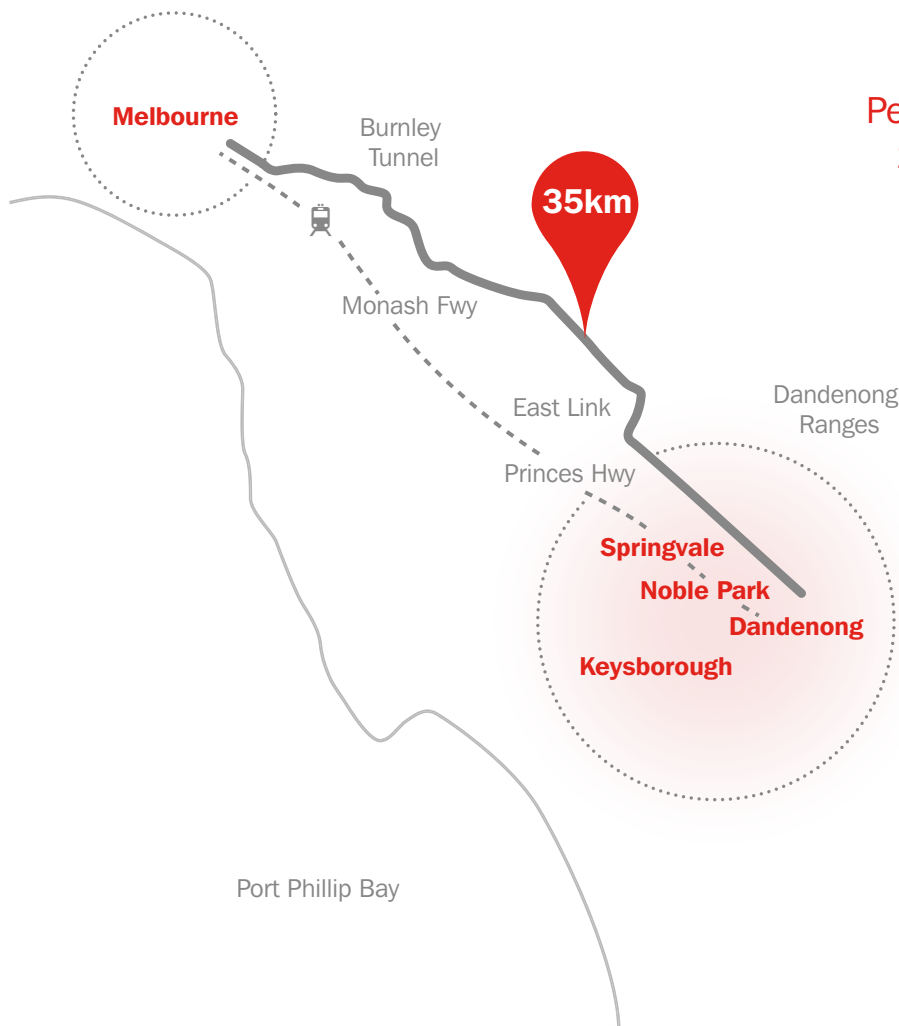
## Great Times

- ▶ State-of-the-art cultural facilities including the multi-million dollar Drum Theatre
- ▶ Arts events and festivals held monthly
- ▶ Dandenong's new Harmony Square and Urban Screen evolving as a key community venue
- ▶ Over 150 active sports clubs
- ▶ Over 400 local community groups and service clubs
- ▶ Indoor and outdoor swimming pools
- ▶ Victoria's largest Lunar New Year festival

## Great Shops

- ▶ The iconic Dandenong Market
- ▶ Little India and Afghan Bazaar cultural precincts
- ▶ Modern shopping complexes at Dandenong and Keysborough
- ▶ Wide variety of cultural cuisine and fresh produce
- ▶ Extensive range of factory outlets
- ▶ Showcase of cuisines from around the world

# our city



People from over  
150 different  
birthplaces

# Our Great City



## 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 150,000 people live in Greater Dandenong.

### Cultural and Language Diversity

Greater Dandenong is the most culturally diverse locality in Victoria, with over half of its population born overseas, from 150 different birthplaces. Major birthplaces include Vietnam, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, India, China, Italy, Greece, Bosnia, Afghanistan, New Zealand and Britain.

The number of overseas-born residents in Greater Dandenong has risen steadily in recent years, growing by 14,000, or nearly a fifth, in the five years to 2011. Each year, a further 2000 recently-arrived migrants settle in Greater Dandenong, the highest rate of settlement in any Victorian municipality. One-third of these settlers are refugees, largely from Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Iran, Burma and Pakistan.

The cultural diversity of this city is reflected in its wide range of religious faiths, which include Buddhism, adhered to by 18 per cent of residents, Islam 11 per cent, Hinduism 4 per cent and Christianity 50 per cent.

Nearly two-thirds of the residents of Greater Dandenong speak languages other than English – the largest proportion in Victoria and twice the metropolitan level. Among the more widely-spoken languages in this community are Vietnamese, Khmer, Chinese, Greek, Punjabi and Sinhalese. One in seven residents however has limited fluency in spoken English – four times the metropolitan level.



*Masala Football Club, based in Noble Park North, is a local club dedicated to diversity and bringing new players to Australian Rules Football.*

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# Message from the Mayor



Greater Dandenong is a city built on acceptance and inclusion, and we are proud of our projects and initiatives.

## Message from the Mayor

Building on the strengths of our rich and diverse community, Council continues to invest in the growth and development of a municipality recognised as the capital of Melbourne's south-east.

In the annual state-wide Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey, Greater Dandenong performed well above the state average in all areas. This is an outstanding achievement, and reflects our commitment to excellent customer service and continuous improvement.

Over the past year we have welcomed investment in key areas of sport and early childhood education. Nine kindergartens have been redeveloped, and some of our premier sports venues – including Noble Park Skate Park and Edinburgh Reserve – have undergone major upgrades and extensions.

We are proud to have received several prestigious awards including:

- ▶ Best in the State – Excellence in Family Day Care Awards
- ▶ Innovation in Facility Design Award for Noble Park Aquatic Centre
- ▶ Victorian Local Governance Award for the Youth Services Community Links Project
- ▶ 'Multicultural Australia – Strength in Diversity' Award (2014 National Award for Excellence in Local Government)

Our community enjoyed many events and festivals including the Family Sustainability Festival; Jamie's Ministry of Food Mobile Kitchen; Springvale Lunar New Year, Snow Fest, and the Pop-Up Springvale food event. We were also delighted to open the Springvale Asian Gateway – a spectacular landmark joint project for one of our key precincts.

Community consultation continues to be a priority, and is now enhanced by our collaboration with Our Say which seeks your views on Council projects and plans via online forums. Expressing your expectations, aspirations and ideas helps us to improve our services.

Keeping our city clean and safe is imperative, and we are committed to improving security, health and wellbeing. To remain vigilant and proactive, we have hosted forums on family violence and gambling, and implemented a graffiti prevention and removal management plan. We also successfully completed the 'Great Bin Swap' which replaced all garbage, recycling and green waste bins.

To advance the health of our environment, the Greater Dandenong Green Wedge Management Plan sets out the vision for the 'green wedge' around our city. This wedge provides spacious relief from surrounding urban development and supports a range of environmental and cultural activities.

Greater Dandenong's 2014–15 year concluded with the official naming of our civic centre's public space. 'Harmony Square' reflects the character of Greater Dandenong and importantly, its ability to embrace and nurture our diverse community.

Greater Dandenong is a city built on acceptance and inclusion, and we are proud of our projects and initiatives. They exemplify outcomes of sound planning and support a range of activities carefully located and designed to respect the important environmental, cultural heritage, water management, landscape, and amenity values and functions of the region.

Cr Sean O'Reilly  
**Mayor**





# Chief Executive Officer's Report



...the Greater Dandenong Civic Centre is everything Council planned it to be – it is welcoming, popular, a place of great interest and a valued community asset.

## Chief Executive Officer's Report

Just over one year on from the opening of the most significant piece of civic infrastructure built in this City since 1888 – when the Dandenong Town Hall was opened – the Greater Dandenong Civic Centre is everything Council planned it to be – it is welcoming, popular, a place of great interest and a valued community asset.

The remarkable levels of attendance and participation experienced upon opening have continued throughout the 2014–15 year – community pride and satisfaction for the facility has grown and more people in the community are now regarding this facility as *'their own'*. The new Dandenong Library has experienced further growth in attendance and is now hosting some 22,000 visits per week (up from 7,000 visits per week on opening). The Civic Square – now named *Harmony Square* following an extensive process of community consultation – attracts increasing numbers of people to a wide variety of events across all days, nights and seasons.

It is worth repeating a statement made at this time last year, that *'this Centre – with its Library, state of the art community facilities, civic square, next generational screen, community meeting spaces and commercial rental opportunities – has exceeded all expectations'*. This remains the case.

Council has not wasted any time in shifting its focus to another, strategically important civic site/facility and in 2014–15, confirmed its commitment to deliver the *'Springvale Civic Centre Master Plan'*.

Adopted in the previous year, steps have now been taken toward the planning and implementation of this important Springvale Plan. A key implementation component – and hypothesized funding source for the Master Plan – was the sale of the former Springvale Council Depot, some two hectares of land on the edge of a vibrant and culturally diverse activity centre. De-commissioning of this site and preparation for its sale and re-development has taken a long, but necessary period of time and at 30 June, the site was under Tender. In 2015–16, the results of that land sale – and the anticipated benefits to the Greater Dandenong community and this site's development – will be reported. Elsewhere on this broader civic site, Council granted approval for the demolition of the former Council offices – retaining the Springvale Chamber and community meeting rooms for a Springvale customer service centre and meeting spaces – as a first step towards a significantly enhanced civic space. The community has long awaited the creation of more passive and accessible open space and this will emerge immediately from the demolition exercise.

The long advocated and awaited grade separation of road from rail at the Springvale Rail Station was completed by the State Government this year and improved safety and accessibility to the four quadrants of the activity centre were immediately apparent. In 2015–16 and the years ahead, the full potential of the Springvale activity centre will materialise off the back of this critical State investment.

Grade separations in numerous other locations have been on Council's advocacy agenda for a long period of time and Council welcomed the 2015 announcement that the State would grade separate the rail line from Corrigan, Heatherton and Chandler roads, among a first tranche of metropolitan wide crossings. Council is to be commended for its long, consistent and productive advocacy and has been rewarded for its efforts with this most welcome announcement.

But like all other things, challenges immediately arise – to be confronted and addressed in the collaborative way Council manages all such matters – with the design, form, appearance and impact of these separations being addressed in true partnership between Council and the relevant state delivery agencies.

The *'elephant in the chamber'* so to speak has to be *'rate capping'* and in 2014–15, Council began to think about the model and implications of a yet to be legislated commitment by the State, to *'cap'* a council's capacity to increase revenue from rates. *'Rate capping'* – if legislated – will commence in 2016–17 but consistent with the prudent approach to financial management to date, Council is already strategising to minimise impact on this city – its people and its infrastructure.



Dandenong's new Civic Square has been named Harmony Square to reflect the diversity and character of our city.

## Council's Strategic Focus

In 2014–15, Council has demonstrably maintained its focus on:

- ▶ **Advocacy for better outcomes** – the referenced grade separations being principal among these – 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, ongoing 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); and,
- ▶ **Creating a sound and sustainable financial strategy** that ensures operational resourcing and capital investment 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 Council.

## Capital Investment

\$38.77 million was expended on all projects in this year, of which \$18.12 million was dedicated to asset renewals. It is most important that a properly determined ratio of renewal and refurbishment to total project investment is maintained to ensure that previous infrastructure investments remain at standards that are serviceable and reflect favourably on the city. Council monitors this ratio very closely over time.

## Sound Financial Management

Council's operating result was a surplus of \$48.66 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 – and has every intention of maintaining this position despite the economy, the projected impacts of rate capping, cost pressures and community expectations – and will be well placed to do so, provided it continues the sound and prudent approach that it has applied over a decade.

# Chief Executive Officer's Report

## Capital Improvements

As stated on the previous page, of the \$38.77 million spent on capital improvements during the year, \$18.12 million was on asset renewals with a further \$4.97 million on upgrading and expanding existing infrastructure assets.

The funding of basic infrastructure – roads, footpaths and drains – is always a challenge, but it is pleasing to report that in 2014–15, \$9.23 million was spent on this essential area. This significant investment continues to underpin the importance of Council's maintenance and protection of existing assets.

An extensive list of improvement projects was completed in 2014–15 and these are outlined elsewhere in this report – the list reflects another successful year of achievement. But with each successful year comes a new challenge – to meet if not exceed community expectations and on this basis, 2015–16 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 ongoing leadership; strong stewardship in the protection of over \$1.6 billion in community assets; and, the many wonderful staff who remain committed to local government service within Greater Dandenong.



John Bennie PSM  
**Chief Executive Officer**