

**CITY OF GREATER DANDENONG**

*1997/98 Annual Report*

## **OUR VISION**

The new City will:

- ◆ plan effectively for its future
- ◆ build partnerships with its citizens
- ◆ lead regional sustainable economic growth
- ◆ achieve an attractive physical environment and civic amenity
- ◆ promote our cultural diversity
- ◆ foster and provide mutual support and caring for people
- ◆ enable all citizens to take pride in Greater Dandenong as a great place to live, work, play or visit.

## **OUR MISSION**

We will respond to our citizens' needs by providing service which is:

- ◆ equitable
- ◆ accessible
- ◆ safe
- ◆ high in quality
- ◆ cost effective

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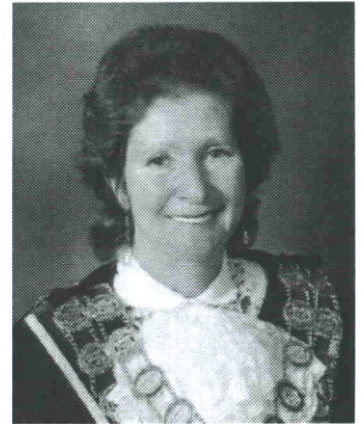
## MAYOR'S MESSAGE

Fifteen months have passed since democratically-elected Councillors resumed responsibility for the development and well-being of the City of Greater Dandenong. These fifteen months have been very hectic and a great deal has been achieved, perhaps the most important achievement being the re-establishment of a role for elected Councillors in the life of the City. I wish to thank my fellow Councillors for the effort they have put into this important task.

In this time, Councillors have focused on gaining an understanding of the financial position of Council and addressing a number of important policy matters including development of the new Planning Scheme and planning the infrastructure needs of the City for the next few years. These tasks will continue into the forthcoming year and I am confident residents will be pleased with the outcome of Council's deliberations when adopted prior to the end of the 1998 calendar year.

Council has also spent time during the last year developing strategies and community approaches to problems associated with drug use and the increasing impact of gambling. Both activities are serious problems for the Greater Dandenong community and Council is working closely with the police and community agencies to find ways in which the harm associated with these activities can be minimised. More work is still required in these areas in forthcoming years.

A further issue of concern to Council in 1997/98 was the rise in racism which has been a consequence of the emergence of a certain political influence. The views expressed by this political party

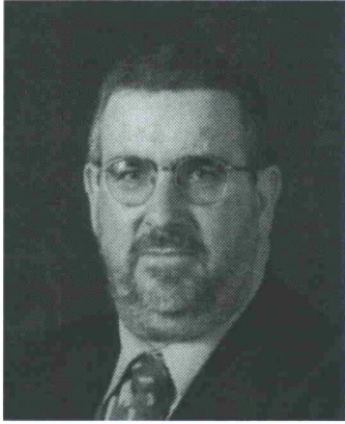


have had an unfortunate polarising impact on the Australian community and caused many to question the success of multiculturalism. This has led to a great deal of distress for many people within the Greater Dandenong community, even though we are one of the best examples in Australia of the success of multiculturalism and the richness that this can bring to a community. My consistent stance as Mayor has been a complete refusal to dignify the views of a certain political party on multiculturalism. We at Council are committed to continuing to develop Greater Dandenong as a multicultural community and to demonstrate how people of all races and faiths can continue to work and live together in harmony for the benefit of all.

1997/98 was a very successful year for the City of Greater Dandenong and has provided a strong foundation on which the new City can continue to build for the future.

Cr Roz Blades  
Mayor





## **CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT**

As the Mayor has indicated in her introduction to this Annual Report,

1997/98 was a successful year for the City. Councillors and staff worked well together in 1997/98 and this is directly reflected in tangible results to the community.

Councillors faced a particularly difficult time in 1997/98 coming to grips with financial and management systems developed during the Commissioners' period and determining if these should continue or be reviewed.

Policies and practices have been reviewed where necessary, and changes made to reflect what Councillors see as important to meeting the expectations and needs of the Greater Dandenong community. Councillors have spent many long hours in these endeavours, a commitment sometimes not recognised by many in the community.

A highlight of the 1997/98 year was undoubtedly the opening of the Visy Cares Youth Centre by the Governor of Victoria, bringing to fruition a project some five years in the making. The support of Visy

Industries and the Victorian Government in the development of this project is acknowledged.

Another highlight of the year was the response by Council staff to the contaminated food incidents which occurred in the Springvale area. While both of the actual incidents took place in the previous year, the bulk of the work undertaken to ensure such incidents do not recur took place during 1997/98.

Council staff worked closely with the Victorian Department of Human Services, Casey Institute of TAFE (now Chisholm Institute) and individual food retailers to develop a positive and innovative training and education program for all people involved with the food industry in the Springvale area. The success of this program was acknowledged by the Victorian Minister for Health, The Hon Rob Knowles, earlier this year when he launched a major food safety initiative in a Springvale Road bakery.

1997/98 has also been a year of significant new private investment in the municipality, particularly in the industrial sector. Industrial land take up in Springvale South, Dandenong and Dandenong South has been very high, with a large number of new factory developments being constructed. All

of these developments bring new business and new employment prospects to the City. Such development is vitally important to the future of Greater Dandenong and the surrounding region.

A great deal of staff attention was committed to improving the efficiency of our services to customers in 1997/98. While there is still room for improvement, considerable gains were made during the year, particularly in terms of residents contacting the City by telephone, or visiting one of our three service centres. Call drop out rates and call waiting times were reduced dramatically in Council's call centre and queues reduced in Council's service centres by introducing new opportunities for the payment of rates and other charges.

These improvements, along with many others, were reinforced by an organisation-wide requirement for individual business units to develop service charters. Charters outline in simple, easy-to-understand language, exactly what residents and others doing business with Council can expect when they request or receive a service. This project will continue into 1998/99 and result in further significant service improvement to residents.

In addition to these achievements, I am pleased to report that Greater Dandenong

concluded the 1997/98 year in a sounder financial position than it commenced.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all City of Greater Dandenong staff for their efforts during 1997/98. A solid team effort has seen improvements to service delivery across the board and I am confident the benefits of this hard work will flow through to 1998/99 and future years.

We are well on the way to consolidating Greater Dandenong as Melbourne's second City and as the regional centre of south-east Melbourne.

Warwick Heine

Chief Executive Officer